

Shifting Sands
A story of forgiveness

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Once there were two children who were the best of friends. But every once in a while they would get into a fight and hurt each other's feelings. "I never want to see you again," they would shout at each other. But after a while they would make up and play again. One day they fought so hard that one friend pushed the other. The boy's pride was so hurt that he ran home and this time he told his mother, "I never want to see him again. "I want to get even. He hurt me, I'm going to hurt him, too."

His mother smiled as she put her arm around him and hugged him close. "This reminds me of a story my parents used to tell me." She took her son in her lap. "The world of the desert is very harsh. Strong winds turn the sand into an endless ocean of shifting waves. Sometimes even the footprints of the camel caravans are erased faster than writing on a chalk board. The hills are so high and the valleys so deep people easily get lost. The hot sun beats down, making it very difficult to travel.

Two friends were walking through the desert. A large sandstorm came up and they began to feel lost. They argued about the right direction: "You've made us lose the way," one shouted. This made the other so angry that he slapped his friend in the face.

The one who was slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, he wrote in the sand:

"TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SLAPPED ME IN THE FACE."

When the storm blew over, they started their journey again and soon found an oasis. There in the middle of the desert were trees, and grass, and a nice pond. They decided to take a bath. The one who had been slapped rushed in first and forgot to check for quicksand. He got stuck and started drowning. Quickly the other friend threw him his robe and helped him climb out. After he recovered from nearly drowning, he wrote on a stone:

"TODAY MY BEST FRIEND SAVED MY LIFE."

The friend who had just saved the other was surprised and asked, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand, and now, you write on a stone, why?" The other friend replied, "When someone hurts us we should write it down in sand where the winds of forgiveness blow it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where no wind can ever erase it."

The mother smiled down at her son. "Our Prophet Mohammed taught everyone to love one another and always show forgiveness. Why don't you go and forgive him? He is probably missing you right now."

Thoughts:

So my fellow travelers, even good friends sometimes fight and hurt each other. By forgiving them we should always remember the good things they have done for us and not let the bad things bother us.

Essential Question:

Why is it important to forgive?

Background:

This story has been adapted and appears to have been written by that famous author, Unknown.” The setting and teaching matches the strong message of forgiveness in the Qur’an. In Islam, the Prophet Mohammed had ordered that even those who had fought against him be forgiven.

Versions of this story exist in many cultures:

A French proverb is quite close: “Write injuries in sand, kindnesses in marble.”

The Chinese sage, Confucius, expressed it: “Forget injuries, never forget

kindnesses.” The oldest version of this story exists in the ancient Hindu text, the

Ramayan.

Lord Ram counsels: “Our anger should dissipate like a wave in the water. When we write on stone it will never go away.”

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