

A Call to Solidarity: Police Officers Give and Get New Beginnings

If you choose to use the lesson over 2 sessions we have outlined recommended activities for the first session (A) and second session (B). Instructors should feel free to use whichever activities you think best for your class or group. We advise giving students the sheet with the definitions of the virtues and an overview of the story before each session.

Lesson Goals

- Appreciate the importance of listening in living out empathy in entering into another person's situation and perspective
- Realize the value of caring (empathy, compassion, generosity) and forgiveness in building relationships, unity, and solidarity
- Inspire students to live with perseverance and a work ethic in striving toward their goals
- Realize our individual call to live in solidarity with others and the fulfillment that comes from living in solidarity with others
- Inspire students to treat others with greater respect in viewing each person as an individual with his/her own unique dignity and value, as opposed to making assumptions about others as a member of a group

Primary Virtues

Caring—to help others; a caring person lives with empathy in trying to understand another person's situation, compassion in desiring to help others, and then with generosity in acting to help.

Forgiveness—to stop being angry, resentful, and desiring vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you; to grant pardon for an offense or debt; to free yourself from anger and another from guilt.

Solidarity—unity from a shared common purpose, interest and / or goal; active loyalty within a group; mutual support within a group; being present with others.

Secondary Virtues

Respect for Others—showing full appreciation of the worth and dignity of others and of ourselves, and not judging others by their circumstances.

Perseverance—trying hard and continuously in spite of obstacles and difficulties.

Leader Introduction

In America today, it seems that much of the news and emphasis in our lives focus on what divides us rather than what does, and could, bring us together. Although there clearly are issues in our nation that divide us, there are so many more shared goals and acts of kindness that can unite us. Today, we are going to learn about and discuss two stories that show how unity and solidarity can be achieved by living with empathy, compassion, generosity, and forgiveness.

Film Clip: Police officers empower a young man with a bike

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S1rBIWOCE3E>

Film Clip: Wrongfully convicted man forgives the police officer who put him in jail

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7wffHBQKq74>

Leader Summary

These two stories of Officer Keffer and Jourdan, and former Officer Andrew Collins and Jameel demonstrate how the lines between black and white, older and younger, and officer and civilian can be invitations for mutual understanding rather than reasons to divide us. Let's discuss how as students and young citizens, we are also called to step into others' stories and to live with compassion, generosity, and forgiveness to establish a greater sense of unity and solidarity within our own communities.

Discussion Question Options *(discussion prompts / answers are in parentheses)*

Before beginning our discussion, let's read over the virtues and their definitions *(included within the online lesson as a separate document)*.

1. What are examples from both / either story of individuals living with empathy, compassion and generosity? (In addition to the obvious and powerful examples from Officer Keffer, his fellow officers, don't forget that Jameel was generous in offering forgiveness to Andrew.) **(A)**
2. Would you say it was luck that Jourdan was noticed by Officer Keffer who took the time to listen to him? Or did Jourdan create his luck, his opportunity, through his efforts and dedication to his work? **(A)**
3. Solidarity is about people or different groups uniting around a shared purpose, ideal or goal. What are the shared purposes or ideals that the individuals in the these two stories united around?
(First story –Officer Keffer and Jourdan share a strong desire to work toward their goals and respect each other for this, Jourdan is interested in becoming a police officer. Second story – Andrew and Jameel share the desire to make a new life for themselves outside of prison.) **(A)**

4. How easy or difficult do you think it would have been for Jameel to forgive Andrew in the second story?

Do you think you should—and could—forgive someone who committed that type of injustice against you? **(B)**

5. What are some good things that come from forgiveness in the story of Andrew and Jameel? (Jameel seems to have a sense of peace and happiness; they both gained a new friend and relationship – each other. Weave into the discussion the idea that people across cultures and history who forgive others after having great injustices committed against them often experience a sense of peace and a better ability to move forward in their lives.)

Let's talk about some examples of when we forgave someone and we experienced good results. **(B)**

6. Both stories show the ability to achieve a greater level of solidarity with others. Do you think we can do better in building a greater level of solidarity within our own school, sports teams, among our friends and larger community? For those areas where you think we can improve, let's talk about the shared goals, interests and / or purposes that can better unite us. **(B)**
7. Mahatma Gandhi said, "The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong." Do you agree with this quote, and if you do, why do you think it requires strength to forgive? **(B)**

Journal Writing Options

1. Write about a situation where it was difficult to forgive someone. Describe what happened and how you felt during that time.

If you forgave the person, write about how it affected you, the other person and your relationship. If you haven't forgiven the other person, write out the reasons why you think it may now be a good idea for you to forgive and how you think it will likely affect you, the other person and your relationship.

2. Write about a time you established a friendship with someone whom at first you didn't think you would likely have enough in common with to become friends. What interests, goals or activities did you share that helped you to develop a friendship?

Extended Activity Option

Ask the class to offer up issues that are presently causing division within their school, local community or our nation. These can be as simple as a school discipline policy, to as large as a government policy. Choose one issue for the focus of this activity. Ask students to discuss the issue by offering up arguments and perspectives on each side of the issue. Write a quick statement for each argument / perspective on board with pro / for on one side and con / against on the other.

Then next to each argument / perspective, ask students to come up with a goal or value that underlines or is the motive for each point and write these on the board. For example, aggressive policing could have the underlying goal of public safety and respect for others; whereas, aggressive policing viewed as unfairly targeting minorities, has the underlying values statement of a violation of justice and a lack of respect for others.

Finally ask students to discuss:

- Do we agree with the goals and values of both sides of the issue, even the side we don't agree with?
- After doing this exercise, do we now have a greater appreciation of the side we didn't initially agree with?
- Do we think we can achieve greater unity with others if we focus more on underlying goals and values of both sides, instead of only our views of the results of the policy or issue?

Character Action Media

Connecting Virtues to Our World

www.characteractionmedia.com

[Current Links in Education](#)

[Copyright 2017](#)

[1126 Dartmouth Road, Flossmoor, IL 60422](#)

