

Calvary Chapel  Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

2nd Grade

Sunday Morning

Study 23

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

The Objective is the key concept for this weeks lesson. It should be the main focus of the study

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The “Main passage” is the basis of the study, where the other verse support the objective of the lesson.

These are the books of the Bible we will be memorizing. New books for this month are in bold. If a student can memorize all the books up to this month’s books, you may give them a prize from the “reward box” found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God’s Word.

Objective This lesson will use the parable of the unforgiving servant to show why we must forgive others.

Key Verses

Matthew 18:21-35—Main Teaching Passage

Ephesians 2:1-5

Romans 5:8

Books to Memorize

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, **Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum**

Hook

Announce at the beginning of class that no one is to draw on the board. A little later, your assistant should draw on the board. After they apologize, forgive them and kindly ask them to erase it. A bit later, have them do it again, and then a third time. After the third time, ask the class if they think you should forgive your assistant. Ask how many chances the assistant should get.

Tell the class that in today’s story, Jesus is going to tell us how many times we need to forgive others. Have them guess how many it will be.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

Today's parable begins in Matthew 18:21 with Peter asking Jesus how many times he needed to forgive someone who sinned against him. Peter suggested seven times (which was more than the three times most rabbis suggested in that day), but Jesus told him to forgive seventy times seven (490) times, and then told a parable to explain His answer.

In the parable, there was a servant who owed his master 10,000 talents (tens of millions of dollars in today's money). The master came to collect his money, but the servant was unable to repay his debt. He begged his master to give him more time, and the master went even further and completely forgave his debt. The servant no longer owed anything!

Then the servant went out and found another servant who owed him 100 denarii (around \$10,000-20,000). He grabbed that servant by the throat and demanded his money back. The other servant begged for patience to pay him back, but he refused and threw that servant into prison until he could repay his debt. Some of the other servants heard about this and told their master what happened. He was furious and they brought the first servant to him. He called that servant wicked, pointing out that he had forgiven a much larger debt, and so the servant should have shown mercy like his master did. He sent that servant to prison until he could repay all his debt. Jesus finished by saying that this parable shows us what happens when we don't forgive others.

LOOK

It's easy to read today's parable and get angry at the servant. After his master had forgiven such a large debt, how could he not show forgiveness to his fellow servant, who owed him much less money? It's outrageous, but Jesus said it to make a point. Just as it was ridiculous for the servant not to forgive his friend after all his master had done for him, it is even more ridiculous for Christians not to forgive others when Jesus have forgiven us of a far greater debt.

In the story, the servant owed his master a huge debt. It would have been nearly impossible for him to pay his master back, even if he worked the rest of his life. When he asked for more time, the master knew that even then he could never repay his debt, and so he forgave him of everything. Yet Jesus has done something even greater for us. Because of our sin, we deserved death and eternal separation from God. There was nothing we could do to repay our debt, but Jesus forgave all of our sins by dying on the cross for us. The Bible says that we were dead in our sins, but He made us alive by forgiving us (Ephesians 2:1-5).

The interpretation/
exegesis of the
passage. What does
this passage mean?
How does this passage
apply to my life?

LOOK (Continued)

The servant's friend may have owed him a lot of money, but it was nothing compared to what he owed the master. The same way, I'm sure all of us have had other people sin against us. Maybe they hurt you, called you a name, took something from you, or did something else to upset you. Yet no matter how much someone does to you, no one will ever sin against you more than you have sinned against God. Since Jesus forgave our sins by dying on the cross, we must forgive others when they sin against us.

So what does it mean to forgive? It's more than just not hurting someone back when they hurt you or trying to get even. It means that we don't hold their sin against them. When we forgive, we let go of any anger, bitterness, or sinful desires we have against the person who wronged us. They may never even apologize for what they did, but as believers, that doesn't take away our responsibility to forgive. After all, the Bible says that Jesus forgave us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). True forgiveness is also unlimited forgiveness. When Jesus said to forgive others 490 times, he didn't mean we stop forgiving at the 491st sin. After all, if you truly forgave that person, you wouldn't be holding the first 489 sins against them in the first place. Forgiving others is tough, but if we ask the Lord for help, we can forgive others just as He has forgiven us.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

As a class, review the books of the Bible Genesis-Nahum.

Review the lesson by asking the students to go over the events of the parable. Why should Christians forgive others? What does forgiveness look like?

Pray: Thank the Lord for forgiving all of our sins. Ask Him for help to forgive others.

Parent Question: Why should we forgive others?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 18:21-35 by David Guzik

C. Forgiveness in the Kingdom Community: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

1. ([Mat 18:21-22](#)) Peter's question about forgiveness and Jesus' answer.

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

a. **Up to seven times?** Peter, in light of what Jesus said about agreement and unity, hoped to sound extremely loving by suggesting forgiving a repentant brother up to *seven* times when *three* times was the accepted limit taught by many Jewish rabbis of that time.

i. "The Rabbis discussed this question, and recommended not more than three times...Peter's *seven times* is therefore generous, but Jesus' reply does away with all limits and calculations." (France)

b. **Up to seventy times seven:** Jesus answered unexpectedly, saying we are to forgive the repentant an unlimited number of times. *Unlimited* is surely the idea behind **up to seventy times seven**; it would be strange if Jesus expected us to count offenses against us up to 490, and at the 491st offense, to deny forgiveness.

i. "His allusion to [Genesis 4:24](#) neatly contrasts Lamech's unlimited vindictiveness with the unlimited forgiveness of the disciple." (France)

2. ([Mat 18:23-24](#)) The debt of the first servant.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents."

a. **Who wanted to settle accounts with his servants:** The king in this parable expected his servants to be faithful and honorable in the way they conducted his business. Therefore, one day he examined their work and would **settle accounts** with them.

b. **Who owed him ten thousand talents:** Commentators list the modern value of 10,000 talents as anywhere between \$12 million and \$1 billion USD. The figure clearly represents an unpayable debt.

3. ([Mat 18:25-27](#)) The master forgives the debt.

"But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt."

a. **His master commanded that he be sold:** Of course, the man **was not able to pay**. Therefore the master commanded to sell the debtor, his family, and all he had. This would not satisfy the debt; slaves at their top price were sold at a talent each (and usually sold for much less). Yet it would bring some measure of justice.

i. “Top price for a slave fetched about one talent, and one-tenth that amount or less was more common.” (Carson)

b. **Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all:** The promise of the servant made no sense. He spoke as if all he needed were **patience**; that if he were given enough time he could actually pay this massive debt. The disciples listening to Jesus would think this was humorous.

i. “Many a poor sinner is very rich in resolutions. This servant-debtor thought he only needed *patience*; but indeed he needed forgiveness!” (Spurgeon)

c. **The master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt:** The master showed mercy prompted by **compassion**, forgiving a debt that obviously could never be repaid – despite whatever promises the servant made.

4. ([Mat 18:28-30](#)) The forgiven servant refuses to forgive.

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.”

a. **One of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii:** The servant who had just been forgiven an unpayable debt **went out and found** the one who owed him money. Upon meeting him, he immediately assaulted him (**took him by the throat**) and demanded payment.

i. The debt was real. 100 denarii was roughly equal to 100 days’ wages. This was not an insignificant amount, but it was almost nothing compared to the debt forgiven by his master. It was actually 1/600,000 of the debt owed to the **master** by the first servant.

ii. **He took him by the throat.** “There is no word I am acquainted with, which so fully expresses the meaning of the original...as the *Anglo-saxon* term *throttle*: it signified (like the Greek) to *half choke* a person, by *seizing his throat*.” (Clarke)

iii. “The debt was very, very small, but the claim was urged with intense ferocity. Our little claims against our fellow men are too apt to be pressed upon them with unsparing severity.” (Spurgeon)

b. **Have patience with me, and I will pay you all:** The man who owed the smaller debt used the exact same plea and promise that brought mercy to the man who had the greater debt. But it gained nothing, and the forgiven servant put the man into a debtor’s **prison**.

5. ([Mat 18:31-34](#)) The judgment of the unforgiving servant.

“So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.”

a. **When his fellow servants saw what had been done:** There is no mention in the parable of the first servant’s conscience bothering him about his conduct. It was **his fellow servants** that recognized the wrong that was done.

i. “Others could see the evil of his conduct if he could not.” (Spurgeon) Sometimes we are painfully – and to

our embarrassment – blind to our own sinful, fleshly conduct.

b. You wicked servant...delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him:

When the master heard of this, he was understandably angry. It was just wrong for a man who has been forgiven so much to then be so unforgiving. He then gave the first servant what he deserved – justice instead of mercy.

6. ([Mat 18:35](#)) Genuine forgiveness, from the heart, is required of all who have been forgiven.

“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.”

a. **So My heavenly Father also will do to you:** The principle is clear. God has forgiven such a great debt, that any debt owed to us is absolutely insignificant in comparison. No man can possibly offend me to the extent that my sins have offended God. This principle must be applied in the little things done to us, but also to the great things done unto us.

i. “We incur greater wrath by refusing to forgive than by all the rest of our indebtedness.” (Spurgeon)

b. **If each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses:** With this, Jesus taught an important and often neglected principle regarding forgiveness. There are many sincere Christians who withhold forgiveness from others for mistaken reasons – and they feel entirely justified in doing so.

i. Their reasoning works like this: We should not forgive another person who sins against us until they are properly repentant. This is because repentance is mentioned in the context of our commands to forgive (such as in [Luke 17:4](#)), and because our forgiveness to others is to be modeled after God’s forgiveness of us. Since God does not forgive us apart from repentance, so we should not forgive others unless they properly repent to us. We even have the *duty* to withhold such forgiveness and to judge their repentance, because it is ultimately in their best interest to do so.

ii. This thinking – even if it means well – is incorrect and ultimately dangerous. This parable shows us why it is incorrect for us to think, “God doesn’t forgive me without my repentance; therefore I must withhold forgiveness from others who sin against me until they properly repent.” That thinking is wrong, *because I do not stand in the same place as God in the equation, and I never can. God stands as One who has never been forgiven and never needed forgiveness; I stand as one who has been forgiven and needs continual forgiveness.*

iii. Therefore – if it were possible – we should be *far quicker* to forgive than God is, without precondition of repentance, because we stand as forgiven sinners who must also forgive. We have *an even greater obligation to forgive than God does.*

iv. Since we have been forgiven so much, we have no right to withhold forgiveness from others. We are the debtor forgiven almost an infinite debt; will we hold on to the small debts others owe to us? If anyone had the right to withhold forgiveness it is God – and He forgives more freely and more completely than anyone we know. What possible right do we have to hold on to our unforgiveness?

v. It is also important to understand that a distinction can and should be made between *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. True reconciliation of relationship can only happen when both parties are agreeable to it, and this may require repentance on one or both of the parties in the conflict. Yet forgiveness can be one-sided.

vi. Furthermore, forgiveness does not necessarily shield someone from the civil or practical consequences of their sin. For example, a homeowner may personally forgive the man who robbed his house, yet it is still appropriate for the robber to be arrested and put in jail. On a personal level, forgiveness is required. On a civil

and societal level, the man should be punished by the magistrates ([Romans 13](#)).

vii. Nevertheless, the principle clearly stands. In context, this parable was given to make us *more forgiving*, not *less forgiving*. No one could reasonably read this parable and think that Jesus was trying to restrict the forgiveness of His disciples.

viii. People who read this, “Therefore be somewhat stingy with forgiveness as your Father in heaven is somewhat stingy with forgiveness” miss the whole point of the parable. Instead, *Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful* ([Luke 6:36](#)).

ix. **From his heart:** This makes the command all the stronger. “If we forgive in words only, but *not from our hearts*, we remain under the same condemnation.” (Spurgeon)

c. **So My heavenly Father also will do to you:** It would be wrong to make this into the idea that unforgiveness itself is the unforgivable sin. It is better to say that forgiveness is evidence of truly being forgiven, and that habitual unforgiveness may show that a person’s heart has never really been touched by the love of Jesus.

i. “Those who will not forgive cannot expect to be forgiven.” (France) As James later wrote, *judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy*. ([James 2:13](#))

ii. Additionally, we remember the punishment of the unforgiving man in the parable of Jesus: the master **delivered him to the torturers**. There are many poor souls who are *tortured* by their own unforgiveness toward others.