

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

Life in a fallen world is all too often characterized by broken trust, strained relationships, and unmet expectations. Intentionally or not, we are constantly hurting others and being hurt by others. As a result, the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18 describes our need both to forgive others and to be forgiven by them. As we explore this parable, we will see how God's abundant forgiveness changes the way we live and relate to Him and to the people around us.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Matthew 18:21-35

TEACHING OBJECTIVES

1. To present and exegete the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:21-35.
2. To explain what forgiveness is and why we need God's forgiveness.
3. To promote a greater appreciation for God's mercy.
4. To encourage a lifestyle of forgiving others.

QUOTATIONS

Look how they will answer it another day, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer. –Matthew Henry

We are not to limit our forgiveness to any fixed number of times. As often as a brother injures us, and asks forgiveness, we are to forgive him. It is his duty to ask forgiveness. If he does this, it is our duty to declare that we forgive him, and to treat him accordingly. If he does not ask us to forgive him, yet we are not at liberty to follow him with revenge and malice, but are still to treat him kindly, and to do him good. –Albert Barnes

BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do Jesus' instructions in Matthew 18:15-20 influence your understanding of the parable in Matthew 18:21-35?
2. What does this parable say about your condition before God? Describe the spiritual debt that you owe to God. How has God handled this debt?
3. How does an awareness of the extent of your own sin affect the way that you regard other people's sins against you? How does God's forgiveness of your sins change the way that you relate to other people?
4. When do you find it most difficult to forgive someone? What kinds of requirements and conditions do you wait for people to meet before you forgive them? Have you been withholding forgiveness from someone who has sinned against you?