

Forgiven & Forgiving!

Ice-Breaker: *(Group Leader - Have everyone in your group answer this question. Start with one person and then proceed around the group in a circle until the last person has answered. Be specific with who you would like to start with.)*

- **Got Back Pain?**
 - Describe a time that you lifted/carried something heavy and it ended up hurting you?

Matthew 18:21 - 35 Tough Text to Consider: *(Group Leader - Ask 1 person to read the following story by Jesus.)*

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times."^[9]

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold^[h] was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins.^[i] He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

Group Questions: *(Group Leader - Ask 2 or 3 specific people to answer these questions.)*

- Give a description of this story in one paragraph or less?
- Is your first reaction to this story positive or negative? Go ahead and be honest!

Matthew 6:12 *(Group Leader - Ask 1 person to read the following verse.)*
and forgive us our sins,
as we have forgiven those who sin against us.

Group Questions: *(Group Leader - Ask 2 or 3 specific people to answer these questions.)*

- Why does Jesus tie together: The forgiveness from God towards us with the forgiveness we extend to others?
- Why should we forgive?
- How do we forgive?

Steps to Forgiveness: *(Group Leader: These are suggested steps to practice forgiveness. There are other practical tools to work out forgiveness. Encourage the group to discuss ideas they have or applicable ways to forgive that they have used.)*

The acrostic **PAIN** can be used to remember the steps used to walk out forgiveness.

P - Perspective: Starting with the proper perspective of what we have been forgiven of leads to praising God. The next step is to get a proper perspective of the wrong done to you. If you take a moment and talk with someone about your situation, discovering the level of hurt you, will have an outside perspective of the wrong. This helps in the process of forgiveness because simply trying to disregard a hurt often leads to bitterness as it stays in the dark. This will also give you the opportunity to hear if the hurt has merit or is a simple misunderstanding.

A - Accept: Acceptance of a wrong done to you is the first step in grabbing the ability to forgive the wrong. The act of forgiveness is not for the weak, but the strong. You step into God's power when you recognize a wrong has been done to you and you release it. It is impossible to forgive if there has not been a wrong.

I - Imagine: If you will meditate on where you want to be in the future, you will find that freedom for your soul is a deep desire. Unforgiveness is like carrying a weight that kills us from the inside. Be free because Jesus has set you free and stay free by forgiving others. Unforgiveness is bondage!

N - Never Avenge: Make a vow that you will never avenge the wrongs done to you. Ask God to empower you to release vengeance and take on the position of the cross by absorbing wrongs and dispersing love. That is a powerful position. It is important to recognize that we do not even have the power to counter the wrongs done to us. That position belongs to Jesus.

- *Romans 12:19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the LORD.*

* **Note:** *As you practice forgiveness there will often come a point of connection with the person who has wronged you. That point of connection will be a second act of freedom as you pre-determine to love them and act on it with kindness rather than wrath. This point of connection will also serve as a guide to the position of your heart.*

Closing Memorization: *(Group Leader - Ask the group to quote this from memory.)*

- *Our Father in Heaven. May your name be kept Holy. May your kingdom come, soon. May your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us today the food we need, **and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us.***

Closing Prayer: *(Group Leader - Please pray this with your group.)*

- God, keep us forgiven with you as we forgive others.
 - *The intention of this prayer is to remind us that forgiveness from God and to others is tied together in the story that Jesus told and The Lord's Prayer.*

Thanks: Thanks to everyone for coming to group.