



# TO FORGIVE OR NOT TO FORGIVE...

Life & Ministry of Jesus • U5#3 1st-3rd Grade • Nov.12, 2023

## Concept

God's forgiveness is based on His compassion, not our worthiness.

## Goal

Students will learn what it means to forgive another person.

## Passage

Matthew 18:21-35

Key Verse: "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" Matthew 18:33 (NIV)

## Planning Ahead

Lesson Supplies	Craft Supplies
<p><b>Introduction:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dry erase marker</li><li>• <i>Velcro</i></li></ul> <p><b>Lesson:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Crown</i></li><li>• <i>Baseball cap</i></li><li>• <i>Men's Hat</i></li><li>• <i>Director's Chalkboard</i></li></ul> <p><b>Optional Activity:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Helpful Hal's Treasury of Virtues, Mark Waite</i></li></ul>	<p><b>Activity Station:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• FORGIVE printed on acetate, 1/student</li><li>• Various bright colors of tissue paper</li><li>• <i>Shape paper punches</i></li><li>• <i>Hole paper punches</i></li><li>• Glue sticks</li><li>• Yarn, 12"/student</li><li>• Scissors</li><li>• Permanent marker</li></ul>

### \*TEACHERS PLEASE NOTE

For clarity, the italicized areas in the Planning Ahead section indicate supplies that are in—and should be returned to—your classroom SHARED SUPPLY bag.

# Background Information/Teacher Helps

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In answer to Peter's question regarding forgiveness, Jesus tells the parable of the unforgiving servant who received forgiveness but would not forgive. In that day Jewish Rabbis taught that it was right to forgive others up to three times. Beyond that, there was no command to forgive. In that light, Peter's suggestion that one should forgive seven times was actually merciful. By answering seventy times seven, Jesus indicated that forgiveness for others should be limitless just as His is also for us.

"To illustrate further why men ought to forgive one another the comparatively small offenses which divide them, Jesus told a parable to illumine God's greater forgiveness. The sum which the first servant owed to the king was exorbitant. If the Attic talent is intended, about 6,000 denarii were involved in just one Attic talent. Remembering that a denarius was a day's normal wage, the poor fellow owed something like 60,000,000 denarii. Even a nobleman could not have amassed such a fortune in a lifetime. On the other hand, the fellow servant owed only 100 denarii. After finding mercy from the king even to the extent of the cancellation of his debt, this abominable fellow subjected his fellow servant to the most stringent punishment for his failure to produce a far lesser sum." [1] "The servant's attitude is appalling.... Yet the amount is utterly trivial compared with what has already been forgiven him. The similarity of his fellow servant's plea (v.29) to his own (v.26) does not move this unforgiving man. He has him thrown into a debtor's prison (v.30)." [2]

In light of God's forgiveness toward us, Matthew repeatedly emphasized the importance of forgiving others. (See Mt. 6:14-15, Mt. 18:35.) "... the recall of the King's original forgiveness of the great debtor can only be intended to bring out the utter incompatibility of such harshness towards a brother on the part of one who has been consciously forgiven by God his great debt... It is this new relationship to God which must be the foundation and the rule for our new relationship towards our fellow-servants... But to us all there is the deepest seriousness in the warning against unmercifulness;... For, how often is our forgiveness in the heart, as well as from the heart, narrowed by limitations and burdened with conditions; and... to condemn without mercy him who does not come up to our demands...?" [3]

[1] Believer's Study Bible notes, QuickVerse, Matthew 18:23.

[2] Frank E. Gaebelin, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8, 1984, Zondervan Corporation, pp. 406, 407.

[3] The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah, 1993, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., pp. 678, 679, 680.

## Set Up

### Incorporation Lg. Group

### Introduction Lg. Group

For the Introduction, write “REVENGE” and “FORGIVE” on the white board. Lay the Velcro on the carpet perpendicular to the white board to divide the room into “REVENGE” and “FORGIVE” sides.

#### Activity Stations

- **Craft – FORGIVE Mosaic**

- **Instructions:** Give each student a printed FORGIVE transparency. Tear pieces of tissue paper. Rub a glue stick inside the outline of the letters and stick pieces of tissue paper to the glue. Put student's initials in the corner with a permanent marker. Punch two holes in the top corners. Tie a piece of yarn through the holes so student may hang the mosaic in their window.

#### “REVENGE <--> FORGIVE”

**Instructions:** Read a scenario and have the students decide if they would be more likely to forgive or to make the other person pay. Have the students move to the “REVENGE” side of the velcro line if they would want to make the other person pay or to the “FORGIVE” side of the velcro line if they would want to forgive.

#### Scenarios

- A friend called you a baby and said you are dumb. Would you want to make that person pay or would you forgive that friend?
- Your little brother fell on your favorite toy and broke it so it can't be fixed. Would you want to make him pay or would you forgive your little brother?
- Your mother told you not to eat any of the cookies she just made. You ate one anyway and your sister told on you. Would you want to make your sister pay or would you forgive her?
- Someone pushed you down on the playground and you fell and ripped your favorite shirt. Would you want to make that person pay or would you forgive him/her?
- A big kid took your backpack from you and wouldn't let you have it back. Would you want to make him pay or would you forgive that big kid?
- A group of friends in the neighborhood decided to go to the park to play, but they said you aren't invited today. Would you want to make them pay or would you forgive those friends?

#### Debrief

Everyone sit down now. We just thought about the ways other people hurt us and how hard it is to forgive them. It's very easy to see how mean someone else has been to us, isn't it? But do you think as much about the times you hurt other people? Have you ever called a friend a name? Have you ever broken your brother's or sister's favorite toy? Have you ever told on someone? Have you ever pushed anyone down?

## Introduction Continued

## Transition

## Lesson Lg. Group

Have you ever teased a younger child by taking something away and not giving it back? Have you ever told someone you don't want to play with them? Do you think others want to make you pay or forgive you? Why do you think others should forgive you, but you don't want to forgive them? Peter, a disciple of Jesus, asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who sins against him. Jesus answered by telling him a parable about forgiveness.

We are going to act out the parable that Jesus told His disciples. We will need your help to figure out what Jesus said should be done.

### **Drama - "The Unmerciful Servant," presented by teachers and students**

**Instructions:** Combine with another class or have students take parts in the drama. King, Servant #1 and Servant #2 will act out the parable as the narrator reads it. Teachers should play the parts of the narrator, the king and Servant #1. Students can play the parts of the Servant #2 and the director with the clapboard. Use as much exaggeration as possible to get the contrast between the response of the king and Servant #1. At the end of the reading of each section the narrator will say, "CUT;" the director will clap his/her clapboard. The other actors will freeze while the narrator gives the commentary. Involve the students in the interaction during the "freeze" time to get them engaged in the parable. Wear the provided hats and any other accessories (e.g., sunglasses) that will enhance your performance.

### **"The Unmerciful Servant"**

**Characters:** Narrator, King, Servant #1, Servant #2, Director

**Narrator:** King and Servant act it out as the following (Matthew 18:23-26) is read: "That is why the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. When he had begun to settle the accounts, a person who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. Because he couldn't pay, his master ordered him, his wife, his children, and all that he had to be sold so that payment could be made. Then the servant fell down and bowed low before him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything!'"

*CUT!*

**Director:** Clap the clapboard

*King and Servant freeze in place.*

**Narrator:** A debt is something you owe someone. The servant owed 2 billion dollars, more than anyone could ever pay in a lifetime. If you were the king, what would you do? Would you tell the servant, "tough luck you owe the money and you'll have to pay it back"? Or would you make him pay back at least what he could pay? Or would you tell him that he doesn't have to pay it back at all? Let's see what the king did.

## Lesson Continued

Read verse 27 while King and Servant act it out:

"The master of that servant had compassion and released him, canceling his debt."

*CUT!*

**Director:** Clap the clapboard.

*King and Servant freeze in place.*

**Narrator:** The king took pity on him, canceled the debt that the servant owed him and let him go. Can you imagine that? He let the guy go without paying anything. He didn't even make him pay what he could pay!

*King and Fellow Servant trade places*

**Narrator:** Read the following (verse 28a):

But when that servant went away, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii.

*CUT!*

**Director:** Clap the clapboard.

*Servant and Fellow Servant freeze in place.*

**Narrator:** 100 denarii is about what a man would make in a year. This was a debt that could be paid over time. What do you think the servant did, the one who had just been told that he didn't have to pay anything back? What would you do? Would you make the fellow servant pay what he could? Would you do the same thing the king had just done for you? Listen to what he did.

Read verse 28b-30:

"He grabbed him, seized him by the throat, and said, 'Pay what you owe!' Then his fellow servant fell down and began begging him, 'Be patient with me and I will repay you!' But he refused and went and had him thrown into prison until he could repay the debt."

*CUT!*

**Director:** Clap the clapboard.

*King and Fellow Servant freeze in place.*

**Narrator:** What do you think about this? What about this guy?! The king had just canceled the 2 billion-dollar debt that he owed, but he wouldn't cancel a very small debt that somebody owed to him. Not only that, he did not take pity and was really mean to his fellow servant. He grabbed him and choked him. Even when the fellow servant begged him, he had him thrown into prison until he could repay the debt. Let's find out what the friends and the king thought of what this servant did.

*King and Fellow Servant trade places*

**Narrator:** Read verses 31-33: "When his fellow servants saw what had occurred, they were very disturbed and went and reported to their master all that had happened. Then his master sent for him and said to him, 'You evil servant! I canceled that entire debt for you because you begged me. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?'"

**Narrator:** The friends were very upset and the king called him wicked. The king had forgiven his enormous debt. Therefore this wicked servant should have been willing to forgive the small debt his friend owed him.

### Debrief

In this parable, the servant begged the king to be patient with him until he could pay him back. The king was not only patient, he completely canceled the debt. He didn't even make him pay the amount of money he was able to pay. But when that forgiven servant saw a fellow servant who owed him a very small debt, he grabbed him and choked him and demanded that he pay him back. The servant who was forgiven a debt he could never repay was unwilling to forgive his fellow servant who owed him a very small amount. Do you think that was fair? Do you know what was really fair? It was "fair" for both servants to pay back the debt they owed. They both owed money and they were responsible to pay it back. Neither one of the servants deserved to be forgiven. But the king gave his servant a wonderful gift; he canceled the debt even though he had every right to make the servant go to prison until he paid him back.

### Good News

Jesus told this parable because He wanted the disciples to see what God is like. He is like the king and they are like the servant who was forgiven. Today's key verse says, "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?" (Matthew 18:33). Mercy is kindness and forgiveness given to a person who does not deserve it. It is NOT giving us what we deserve. Mercy is what the king had for the servant who owed him so much money. Mercy is what God has for us. We sin every day and we don't deserve His kindness and forgiveness. But He loves us so much that He doesn't want to give us what we deserve. Just like the king in the parable forgave the debt, God wants to forgive the debt we owe Him for our sin. So He sent His very special, only Son, Jesus, to earth to die on the cross to pay the debt we owe God for our sin. It is a free gift to us, but it cost Jesus His life. When we tell God that we want Jesus' death to count as the punishment we deserve, like that king, God will forgive us for all our sins and we will be His friends forever.

### What is Forgiveness?

Who knows what it means to really forgive someone? (Allow some time for answers.) When someone is cruel or unkind to you, you say that that person has really done something to hurt you. When you decide to forgive them, you make a choice not to make that person pay even though you are angry and hurt and think they deserve revenge. That is impossible to do unless we have been forgiven by God and have His Spirit living in us. When God has forgiven us for all our sin, we have the Holy Spirit in us and we can forgive others.

## Lesson Continued

### Transition

### Learning Activity#1 Sm. Groups

When someone hurts us, we can ask God to remind us of the ways He has forgiven us and then choose to forgive others just as He had forgiven us. Remember our key verse, “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?” (Matthew 18:33). None of us deserves forgiveness—it is the free gift of God.

Let’s get into small groups to talk about this a little more.

Open your Bibles to look up our key verse, “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?” (Matthew 18:33). Even though others really hurt us and we don’t think they deserve to be forgiven, we need to remember that Jesus forgave us for all the things we’ve ever done wrong and all the times we hurt other people.

- Do you remember what forgiveness is?
- When you forgive someone, does that mean what they did wasn’t wrong? If that’s true, then why do you have to forgive them?
- What happens to you when you won’t forgive someone? ...your friendship with that person? ...your friendship with God?
- What happens when you decide and forgive? ...your friendship with that person? ...your friendship with God?
- Is it always or ever easy to forgive? When you don’t want to forgive someone what can you do?

**Mission Prayer:** Talk about and pray for Oasis Giving campaign.  
Let’s pray!

### Transition

### Learning Activity# 2 Lg. Group

Let’s play a game.

#### **Game - “Forgiveness, Forgiveness”**

**Instructions:** Write “forgiveness” on a slip of paper. Fold it to fit in the palm of your hand. Seat the students in a circle with a student, the “guesser,” in the center. Each student will put the fingers and palms of their hands together, fingers outstretched. The teacher, “forgiver,” will put their hands together in the same way with the slip of paper in her/his hands. With hands together, the teacher will go around the circle, “slice” apart the hands of each student from the palm to the fingertips, and secretly drop the slip of paper in the hands of a student. Go all the way around the circle until you are back to the first student. The “guesser” will try to determine who received the forgiveness slip of paper. If the guess is correct, the “guesser” becomes the “forgiver” and the student who received the forgiveness slip of paper becomes the “guesser.” If the guess is incorrect, the “guesser” remains the “guesser” and the student with the forgiveness slip of paper becomes the “forgiver.”



## Optional Activity

### **Story – “The Hollyhonk Gardens of Gneedle and Gnibb,” Helpful Hal’s Treasury of Virtues**

**Goal** – To illustrate what happens when we chose to and not to forgive each other.

#### **Debrief**

What happened when Gnibb and Gneedle chose not to forgive each other? (They built fences, walls, angry, hateful, lonely, miserable, became bitter.) When they chose to forgive each other, they were friends and no longer lonely; they chose to love each other and were no longer bitter and angry.