**Live in Community**



Small Group Study



**Volume Overview**

**Recognize Sin**

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.17))

*The Bible has a lot to say about sin and forgiveness. It acknowledges the deep brokenness of this world and our individual life. It is only by understanding the depth of human sin that we can understand the remarkable work of God’s forgiveness. Because of His forgiveness, we escape the eternal consequence of our sin and can rightly respond to the call to live a holy life. We learn to receive forgiveness, put off sin, and show forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. We learn to pursue holiness in the midst of the world’s brokenness.*

**Session Overview**

**Show Forgiveness**

**Biblical Encounter:** The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant ([Matthew 18:21–35](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.21-35))

**Outcome:** Reflect God’s mercy toward your sin as you deal with those who wrong you.

*Forgiving others can be a challenge. Even Jesus’ disciples questioned how much forgiveness is enough. So, Jesus shared a parable about how a man who had been forgiven ignored the mercy he had just received. We are all offered forgiveness through Jesus, even though we don’t deserve it. How will we reflect that mercy toward others who have wronged us?*

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| *No supplies are needed for this activity.*  **Getting Ready**  • ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for the*** [**Facilitator Guide**](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)**.** |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [***BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads***](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Ask God to open everyone’s eyes to the unforgiveness they may feel toward people in their life who have hurt them. Ask that the Holy Spirit would soften their heart to forgive like Jesus did. Pray that they would be a mirror of Jesus’ mercy to others.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**  If you could only keep four apps on your phone, which ones would you keep, and why? |

In life, people are offended or hurt by others all the time. Everyone experiences situations where they must choose whether to forgive or not. What can help is knowing that Jesus showed us forgiveness when we didn’t deserve it. The challenge for us today is to reflect that same forgiveness and mercy Jesus showed us to those we interact with.

**Group Activity**

**Act Out the Story**

We are going to have some fun by acting out the parable in today’s Bible story. First, we need to divide into smaller groups of three or more students. Then I’ll read today’s story from the Bible. Your group will have a few minutes to come up with a skit that retells the story using today’s language and actions. Then you’ll share your skit with the group.

• *After the students are in groups, read the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (*[*Matthew 18:23–34*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.23-34)*). Then give the groups time to prepare their skit.*

• *Have each group act out the story.*

Great job bringing that parable of Jesus closer to us! Forgiveness is difficult. Maybe there’s a relationship in your life that is broken due to unforgiveness. Or maybe you were the one who hurt someone and need to ask forgiveness. Either way, if we hold these hurts and offenses in our heart too long, they will only hurt us. As we continue in this session, we’ll see that we can learn a lot from what Jesus taught. But before we dive into it, let’s watch today’s video.

**Watch**



**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

Today, we’re looking again at a parable told by Jesus after one of His disciples asked about forgiveness. Remember, a parable is a story that illustrates a deeper meaning. It’s a picture for us to clearly see the message Jesus was talking about.

**The King Forgave a Huge Debt**

Read [Matthew 18:21–27](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.21-27).

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| **QUESTION**  Did it surprise you that Jesus told Peter to forgive far more times than Peter suggested? Why or why not? |

It’s important not to think of Jesus’ answer literally. He isn’t saying that we should keep track and stop forgiving after 490 offenses. The point Jesus was making is that whatever the number of times we think we should forgive someone, it’s not enough.

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| **QUESTION**  How did the man in Jesus’ parable respond when the king said that his entire family would be sold to pay the debt? |

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| **QUESTION**  How do you think the man reacted when the king said he could walk away completely forgiven of his debt? |

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think the king was so willing to forgive the man of all his debt? |

In this story, a king tried to collect from a man who owed him millions of dollars, yet the man couldn’t pay. When the king threatened to throw the man and his entire family in prison, the man pleaded for patience to pay off his debt. Amazingly, the king completely forgave the debt. It’s interesting how quickly the king was willing to forgive.

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| **QUESTION**  Do you think God forgives us as quickly as the king forgave the man in debt? Why or why not? |

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think some people struggle to accept God’s forgiveness? |

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| **QUESTION**  Do you think people now are as forgiving as the king was in our story? Why or why not? |

Forgiveness can be challenging to give to others. Sometimes, it can even be hard to accept that we’ve been forgiven by God. But we can tell from this parable that forgiveness is important to Him.

**The Forgiven Man Wasn’t So Forgiving**

Read [Matthew 18:28–30](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.28-30).

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| **QUESTION**  What differences did you notice about how the forgiven man treated the one who owed him money compared to the way the king treated him? |

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| **QUESTION**  What similarities did you notice between how the two men who owed money responded when told to pay their debts? |

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| **QUESTION**  What questions would you ask the forgiven man who refused to forgive the small debt owed to him? |

It’s truly puzzling how someone could be so unforgiving after having just been forgiven of something so great. We’d expect the opposite. Someone should be willing to forgive easily because they have just been forgiven.

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| **QUESTION**  Why do you think some people forgive more easily than others? |

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| **QUESTION**  How does seeing this man’s awful reaction inspire you to think differently when it comes to showing mercy? |

It seems like moments after he was granted an incredible blessing of forgiveness, this man was unwilling to show the same generosity when the roles were reversed. To make matters worse, the debt owed to him was significantly smaller than what he had just been forgiven. His selfishness and pride influenced him to refuse grace to this man who owed him money. He had an opportunity to reflect mercy like he had just received, but he failed to do so.

**The King Wasn’t Pleased**

Read [Matthew 18:31–35](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mt18.31-35).

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| **QUESTION**  What was the reaction of the king who had forgiven the man’s large debt? |

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| **QUESTION**  Do you think the man’s decision not to forgive only affected him, or did it affect others as well? What makes you say this? |

We were told earlier that the man’s family would have been thrown in prison if the debt wasn’t paid. Now he was thrown in prison, so we know that his wife and children were left without a husband and father to provide for them. Choosing not to forgive doesn’t just affect us. It affects the people closest to us as well.

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| **QUESTION**  Do you think Peter’s thinking about forgiveness changed after Jesus finished the story? How so? |

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| **QUESTION**  How would you sum up the message Jesus was trying to get across to Peter and the other disciples? |

Following Jesus means doing as Jesus would do. This includes forgiving others regardless of what they’ve done. Jesus hears our pleas for forgiveness and forgives us.

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| **QUESTION**  How can we keep our eyes on Jesus’ example to forgive when we are often hurt by others? |

The king found out that the man he forgave had refused to show mercy. In fact, the king changed his mind and threw the man in prison to be tortured until the debt was repaid. The man’s actions caused him to end up where he had been headed in the first place. The king had been tremendously merciful at first, but he had little grace for those who didn’t offer mercy to others. We see now that God wants us to forgive others. Why? Because Jesus forgives us and wants us to be like Him.

**Did You Know?**

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| In the time of Jesus, slavery was not uncommon. In one form of slavery, people sold themselves for a predetermined time to cover a debt. This slavery wasn’t the same as modern slavery since this action was willingly done by the person. These volunteers also held significant rights, similar to a paid worker, just without the availability to come and go as they pleased. They couldn’t be abused or mistreated, and the slave would again be free either upon the completion of the allotted time or the death of the master. Yet, involuntary slavery also occurred. In severe instances, when a debt was beyond one’s ability to repay, a person—as well as their immediate family—could be forcibly sold into slavery by governing authorities. In that case, most rights were forfeited and they would, in a sense, become property. |

**Reflect**

**Reflect God’s mercy toward your sin as you deal with those who wrong you.**

This is a powerful illustration Jesus used to teach us that there is a price to pay if we are unwilling to forgive others. Our life should reflect generous mercy to those who have wronged us. It won’t always be easy to forgive, especially if you were really hurt. But imagine the huge cost Jesus took on to forgive our debt. He gave His life. There is nothing we go through in life that compares to what He did for us. We should follow His example and show mercy to those who have wronged us.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection after reading the questions. Then ask students if they want to share. Sharing your personal response may also be helpful to the students.*

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| **QUESTION**  Would you say you are someone who easily forgives or someone who has a difficult time forgiving others? Why? |

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| **QUESTION**  Without sharing the circumstances or people involved, are you ready to forgive someone who has wronged you? If not, what’s in the way? |

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| **Salvation Opportunity**  *Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*  Maybe you’re thinking about how the king showed such mercy to someone who couldn’t repay him. When you look at your life, you may feel like you’re not able to pay for your sins either. You need mercy. Thankfully, Jesus gave His life for you and offers mercy to all who call on Him.  **Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?**  *Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Activate**

Jesus wants us to be like Him in every area of our life. He isn’t just telling people to forgive, but also to put forgiveness into action. Let’s take a few minutes to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to us and bring to our mind anyone who may have hurt us that we have refused to forgive.

• *Give students time to reflect.*

Forgiveness is between you and God. Even though you may need to forgive someone multiple times, it’s important to know that forgiveness doesn’t mean you have to keep letting that person hurt you. You may want to speak with the person who has wronged you, but that isn’t a requirement of forgiveness either. If you’re not sure how to move ahead, ask a parent, trusted adult, or youth leader for advice.

**Conclusion**

This story of the unforgiving servant paints a very clear picture of what God expects from us. We must forgive like we’ve been forgiven. Also, showing forgiveness can let others know that we’re followers of Jesus by doing what He did. Because He gave us His mercy, we should do our very best to reflect that loving-kindness to others. Perhaps the best way to do this is by forgiving those in our life who hurt us.

**Prayer**

Heavenly Father, thank You for offering us forgiveness and mercy when we didn’t deserve it. We want to follow Your example and show Your love to others. Please help us to offer forgiveness even when we feel someone may not deserve it. We surrender our pride and hurt to You so that we can forgive those who have hurt us. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Thanks for learning from God’s Word about forgiveness with me. You really need to check out the Bible Engagement Project app this week. There are some great devotions about what we discussed today. See you next time!