



STORY TIME

Great Life Lessons from the Parables of Jesus



LESSON 3 // HOW TO STAY FREE

Big Idea: As a wise teacher, Jesus often used stories—called “parables”—to communicate key spiritual truths. His parable in Matthew 18:21-35 teaches us how forgiveness is vital to living in freedom.

We learn that forgiveness needs to be part of who we are—our nature—and not just something we do. Becoming a forgiver like this begins with being forgiven. Receiving God’s forgiveness should change the way we treat others. Forgiving is giving, and giving always brings blessings. In contrast, withholding forgiveness (and grace) brings bondage. Ultimately forgiveness is a choice we have to make, not an emotion.

Matthew 18:21-23, 32-35 (NIV) *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?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ... Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”*

Start Talking:

Describe a time when you needed to forgive someone. How did you respond at that time? How would you respond today?

Start Thinking:

Read Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32; Colossians 2:13-14. How should being forgiven by God through Jesus impact the way we treat others?

Read Proverbs 10:12; 17:9; Luke 6:37-38; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. In what ways can forgiving others be viewed as an opportunity and not just an obligation?

Read Matthew 6:12; Ephesians 4:26-27; Hebrews 12:14-15. How does withholding forgiveness from others put us in bondage?

Read Romans 12:17-20. Why is it important to know that forgiveness is a choice and not a feeling? How should this make a difference in all your relationships?

Start Praying and Doing:

Ask God to show you any unforgiveness or bitterness in your heart that you may be harboring toward anyone. Make the choice to forgive the person/people you need to forgive.

Also choose to embrace the freedom that comes with the release of unforgiveness. Remember that this is not based on feelings but faith in God and a commitment to obey His Word.

If you are free from bitterness and unforgiveness, take some time to give the Lord thanks for His grace and forgiveness toward you!