

The UNFORGIVING SERVANT

Matthew 18:21-35

The STORIES

JESUS  TOLD

— INTRO

WELCOME TO WEEK FIVE, THE FINAL WEEK OF THE STORIES JESUS TOLD SERIES!

As you get ready to dig into the parable of The Unforgiving Servant, take a moment to refresh yourself on (or even bookmark) the [COMA Overview](#) and [Worksheet](#) to help you navigate your group time together and have on-hand for your own time in Scripture beyond this series.

READ



AS A GROUP, READ MATTHEW 18:21-35

One person could read the whole passage, or you could take turns reading verse by verse. Note any initial thoughts or questions that come to mind. It's okay if you aren't super confident or clear; the Context and Message sections below will help clarify your journey through the text.

CONTEXT

After noting your initial observations, read through the context of the passage provided below. Note how these insights challenge or clarify your understanding of the story.

Peter sparks Jesus' story by asking a question. One that, for many of us, is likely more familiar than we'd care to admit. Peter asks Jesus if he can stop forgiving the same thing after the seventh time. He's essentially asking, "What's the bare minimum? What's the least I can do and get away with?" Peter thought he was being generous by offering forgiveness seven times, as the standard requirement set by rabbis was to forgive the same offense three times.

Through the parable, Jesus illuminates how it's not about how much we have to forgive. It's about remembering all we have been forgiven by God and having that grace inform and shape our hearts so we can truly and deeply forgive others.

OBSERVATION

With the text's context in mind, reread the passage together. When you're finished, pause for a few minutes to silently note your own observations and questions. Utilize the Observation questions listed on the [COMA Overview sheet](#) to guide you. Remember, we believe every word is inspired by God and included for a reason.

When your group is ready, share both your initial observations and how those were impacted by the context of the story. Share anything particularly interesting, curious, confusing, or convicting. Notice if there are any themes for you and your group.

MEANING

DISCUSS THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS TOGETHER AS A GROUP TO HELP DRAW OUT THE MEANING OF THE AUTHOR'S TEXT.

1. Imagine you're the servant in the parable when the king threatens to sell you and your family into slavery and sell everything you own to repay your debt. Then he forgives the entire debt and lets you go. What would you say to the king?
2. Why should the original servant forgive the fellow servant if he clearly owes him a debt?
3. Since we owe an unpayable debt to God - our sins - how should we respond to his offer to forgive us of those sins? What is our response to God's forgiveness?
4. When we've been wronged, we can long for revenge or justice. How do you see justice through the lens of forgiveness in this parable?

Note: UTILIZE THE MEANING QUESTIONS ON THE [COMA OVERVIEW SHEET](#) FOR ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION, IF DESIRED.

APPLICATION

Jesus makes a clear statement at the end of this parable in verse 35: “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.” If we are to expect forgiveness from God, we are commanded to forgive our neighbors for their offenses against us. This type of forgiveness is informed by the grace we have already received in Jesus, not just because it might feel like “the right thing to do.” True forgiveness is formed by the humility of knowing how much we’ve been forgiven ourselves.

1. The fellow servant begged for the same forgiveness the original servant received, but the original servant refused. Where are you refusing forgiveness to someone who “owes you” or has wronged you?
2. Who do you need to reach out and offer forgiveness to? What’s likely to get in your way of actually doing that?
3. It’s easy to forget how much we’ve been forgiven by God. When we do, our hearts become hard toward others. Share ideas across your group about how you can place yourself in a position to be reminded of your need for God’s grace and of God’s willingness to grant it to you.

PRAYER

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING PRAYER PROMPTS TO GUIDE YOUR TIME WITH GOD AND YOUR GROUP:

- Thank God for his unending grace in your life.
- Thank him for the sacrifice of his son Jesus so we can receive his grace.
- Ask God to bring the right people to mind who need your forgiveness and for God to reveal his love for them to you. Allow God’s grace to inform your own and ask for strength and confidence to take the step to reach out to those people on your heart and mind this week.

KEEP GOING

Each week, we’re providing additional resources to help you continue to learn how to read, navigate, and study Scripture beyond the stories Jesus told. We hope these additional “tools in your toolbox” will help you engage in Scripture more clearly and consistently.

[This I Know - 7 Motivations for your Bible Habit](#)
by Life.Church

[The Bible Explained](#)
by Life.Church and illumiNations

[30 Days in the Gospel of Mark](#)
by Berea Ministries