

The Unmerciful Servant

THE PARABLES OF JESUS – Part 4

September 20, 2026

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.

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 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. 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.

Matthew 18:21-34

The Question

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?”*

Matthew 18:21

The Answer

²² *Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

Matthew 18:22

What the Parable Illustrates

- The Amount of Debt

²⁴ *As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him.*

Matthew 18:24

- The Act of Forgiveness

²⁷ *The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

Matthew 18:27

- The Proper Response

³³ *Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’*

Matthew 18:33

Small Group Discussion Questions for the Week of September 20, 2026.

Opening

1. What are some Bible verses that you know of that talk about forgiveness? Explain.

Digging Deeper into the Scriptures

Read Matthew 18:21-34

1. Peter asks Jesus a significant question regarding how we must forgive one another (v. 21). How would you describe Peter's question?

What view of forgiveness does Peter's question reveal?

2. Jesus answers the question directly. How many times did Jesus say we must forgive? What does this number really suggest?

3. To illustrate His teaching on forgiveness, Jesus tells a parable, as a response to Peter's question. What would you say is at the heart of Jesus' answer to Peter?

Do you think we take this point seriously? Explain.

Read 1 John 1:9 and Hebrews 10:17

4. How does understanding God's faithfulness impact your view of His forgiveness?

Applying the Scriptures

1. Based on this parable, is God's forgiveness of us limited or unlimited? Conditional or unconditional?

Likewise, what about our forgiveness of others?

2. Take time to thank God for his forgiveness. Ask his help in forgiving those who have hurt or mistreated you.