

A study of Jesus' Parables

SAY "UNCLE"

Growing up, my friends and I would play a variety of games that, looking back, were dumb. The winner was the person who could inflict and/or take the most pain. Whether it was interlocking fingers and twisting one another's wrist or flicking quarters into knuckles, you lost when you gave up. Saying "uncle" hurt the pride, but it stopped the pain.

Throughout our study we've tried to pass on hard won lessons. Although none of us are perfect, at times we've experienced the fruit of having a heart of good soil and the foundation of Christ in our lives. Likewise, we've witnessed practical lessons on loving our neighbors, passing on Christ's invitation, and what it means to pray. Nothing, however, compares to today's parable.

In many ways, today's parable calls us to say "uncle" to the hurt that people cause in our lives—to give it up. Today's parable is about forgiveness and almost nothing is as difficult or life-changing. Forgiveness often requires letting go of our pride, but the amazing thing is though it hurts our pride, it stops the pain.

MATT 18:23–34

²³ "For this reason, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed 10,000 talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Because he was not able to repay it, the lord ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, children, and whatever he possessed, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything.' ²⁷ The lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the debt. ²⁸ After he went out, that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me!' ²⁹ Then his fellow slave threw himself down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you.' ³⁰ But he refused. Instead, he went out and threw him in prison until he repaid the debt. ³¹ When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were very upset and went and told their lord everything that had taken place. ³² Then his lord called the first slave and said to him, 'Evil slave! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me! ³³ Should you not have shown mercy to your fellow slave, just as I showed it to you?' ³⁴ And in anger his lord turned him over to the prison guards to torture him until he repaid all he owed.

SCOUTING REPORT

SETTING Disciples learning about forgiveness.

NEED Encourage believers to forgive in light of overwhelming forgiveness.

STORY Contrast between merciful king and unmerciful debtor.

TRUTH Believers should give God's forgiveness to others.

DISCUSSION

What situations exist that you think would be the hardest to forgive someone for?

1. How much did the king's slave owe? (24)
2. What solution was suggested? Used? (26-27)
3. How much did the second slave owe? (28)
4. What solution was suggested? Used? (29-30)

5. What repayment options existed between the two debts owed? (24, 28)

6. How big was the debt you've been forgiven in Christ? Is there anyone you need to forgive because of the forgiveness you've received?

Forgiving is sometimes the hardest thing we can do—forgiving others and forgiving ourselves. If you've struggled with this, or need someone to share with, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

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STUDY NOTES LIVE THE GOSPEL

On October 2, 2019 in Dallas, Texas, Amber Guyger awaited her sentence. The white, female, police officer, had mistakenly entered the apartment of her black neighbor, Botham Jean, thinking it was hers. Feeling threatened by the man in "her" apartment, she shot and killed him. The court convicted her of murder and sentenced her to 10 years in prison. But what happened next, shocked Amber, the courtroom, and the world.

Instead of the expected (and understandable) rage and anger, Botham's younger brother, Brandt, offered Amber forgiveness and urged her toward a relationship with Jesus Christ. Such amazing grace! One tweet (of thousands) read, "This young man is THE living gospel." Another tweeted, "When this guy says he follows the teachings of Christ, he means it." To watch the 3.5 minute video, scan the QR code.



A RICH KING ILLUSTRATES GOD'S FORGIVENESS

Jesus was asked a question, "Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother who sins against me? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, I tell you, but seventy-seven times!" (Matthew 18:21–22). To this question about forgiveness, Jesus shared a parable illustrating one more example of what the **kingdom of heaven is like**. He said, "It is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his slaves. As he began settling his accounts, a man who owed 10,000 talents was brought to him."

A talent was 6,000 denarii. So, if you have a calculator handy, one talent amounts to 20 years wages. That means paying back 10,000 talents would take 200,000 years, or 60 million days. All that to say, this debt was impossible times about 200,000.

The king knew the impossibility of receiving payment so **the lord ordered him to be sold** along with his family and everything he had. **Then the slave threw himself to the ground before him, saying, 'Be patient with me, and I will repay you everything.'**

On what basis can this slave make this claim? The claim of paying everything back is either completely ignorant or completely arrogant—what we can say for sure is that this man was completely desperate.

As the story goes, **lord had compassion on that slave and released him, and forgave him the wildly impossible debt**. You might think that this slave would be basking in the light of grace.

Not so. Immediately after these events **that same slave found one of his fellow slaves who owed him 100 silver coins. So he grabbed him by the throat and started to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe me!'** Like the first slave, this man pleaded for patience, yet the slave would not relent **and threw him in prison**.

GOD'S FORGIVENESS SHOULD CULTIVATE MERCY

It doesn't take an expert to understand the absurdity of this situation. Yes, 100 silver coins was a lot of money. It's about three month's salary, representing thousands of dollars in today's money. However, even at minimum wage, the first man was forgiven billions of dollars. "Why on earth," we ask ourselves, "would this man not be able to pass on the forgiveness that he received?" This question is the whole point of the parable.

Sin is an infinite debt offending an eternal God. In case you're wondering, "infinite" is a whole lot more than 10,000 talents. What's worse is that **the payoff of sin is death**—meaning an eternity of suffering apart from the Lord—but **the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 6:23). God promises to eradicate the sin debt for anyone **if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved** (Romans 10:9). Salvation is the forgiveness of an infinite debt.

Then, we leave this moment with the Lord, go back into real life, and people cause pain in our life. Betrayal, loss, theft, abuse, and neglect all point to the fact that sin still reigns in this world. As such, people will hurt us. In fact, the more trust we place in a person, the more deeply they will hurt us—and because all have sinned, they eventually will.

Remember that 100 coins was not a *slight* offense, it was a *major* offense. Some of you have been hurt deeper than I can imagine. Yet, anything another person may do to us is *finite*, whereas our sin is *infinite*. We forgive with the infinite grace of the Lord because he has forgiven us more than we can calculate.

Unforgiveness is a cancer of the soul. It only hurts you. Decide now that you won't live with it because the temptation *will* come. Yet, compared to the mercy of God, unforgiveness is absurd.

Does forgiving a person mean we place full trust in them again? No! Forgiveness is freely given, but trust is earned. Matthew 10:16–17 warns believers to **be wise as serpents and to beware of people**. I'm not going to trust my wallet to a thief, but the Bible calls me to forgive him if he steals it anyway.