



## “Payback or Pullback”

Matthew 18

### Small Group Plan

*If you devote your life to seeking revenge,  
first dig two graves.*

— Proverb

*He that cannot forgive others  
breaks the bridge over which he must pass himself.*

— Thomas Fuller

*Everyone say forgiveness is a lovely idea,  
until they have something to forgive.*

– C.S. Lewis

### OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- Describe the emotional weight of deep financial debt.
- What would you do to celebrate, if all your debts were suddenly paid?
- When would it be difficult for you to forgive? Why?

### LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

#### — UNFORGIVEN —

Matthew 18:21-25

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. <sup>23</sup> “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> 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.

- Why do you think Peter asked this question?
- How does it feel to need, but not have, forgiveness?
- How serious is it to be in debt to God?
- What is Jesus trying to illustrate by using the 10,000 talent, impossible to pay, debt?

## — FORGIVEN —

### Matthew 18:26-27

<sup>26</sup> “The servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup> The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

- The master “took pity” — compassion, sympathy, kindness. How can we feel another person’s wounds?
- Do you believe it’s true that we won’t let go of **our hurt** — “cancel debt” (v. 27) — until we feel **their hurt**? Explain.

## — UNFORGIVING —

### Matthew 18:28-30

<sup>28</sup> “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded. <sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ <sup>30</sup> “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

- How could someone need mercy, receive mercy, but not give mercy?
- Notice all the violent words: “grabbed” “choke” “demanded” “refused.” How would you describe the inner life of such a person?
- Why do some hold on to and even rehearse their emotional wounds?
- The story says, “he found” someone who owed him (v. 28). Why do some **search** for a way to forgive, while others **search** for a way to be hurt and angry?

## — UNFORGIVABLE —

### Matthew 18:32-35

<sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. <sup>32</sup> “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ <sup>34</sup> In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. <sup>35</sup> “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

- What caused the “other servants” distress?
- What caused the master’s anger?
- There are four players in this story: “the other servants” (v. 31), “the master” (v. 32), “the wicked servant” (v. 32) and “the jailers” (v. 34). If verse 35 identifies God as the master, who do the other characters represent?

### **USE IT / APPLY IT ...**

- What is a “seventy-seven times” forgiveness?
- How does **quantity forgiveness** (v. 21) differ from **quality forgiveness** (v. 35)?
- Why is forgiveness sometimes given with “strings” attached?
- What are the strings?
- Close by thanking and praising God for His complete forgiveness.