



“Power To Forgive”

Matthew 18

Small Group Plan

Even the closest of friends and family will sometimes hurt each other. And living with wounds and hurts can be difficult. As one old poem puts it:

*To live above, with the saints we love,
That will be grace and glory.
But, to live below, with the saints we know,
Well, that's another story.*

But Jesus shows us that if we quickly condemn those who hurt us, we bring out the worst in them and in us. But if we learn how to create an atmosphere of love and forgiveness, we can instead find the best in all of us. This is exactly what God has done in our lives. No one has been hurt more than God. And no one has been more forgiving than God.

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT ...

- What would you do to celebrate if all your debts were suddenly forgiven?
- Why is it difficult to forgive?
- Who is the most forgiving person you have ever known? Describe them.

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— THE QUESTION —

Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ 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?” ²² Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

- Have you ever thought about the limits of your own forgiveness? Describe them.
- Why would one person have one limit and another person have a higher limit?
- What does Jesus think about the whole concept of limiting forgiveness?

— THE STORY —

Matthew 18:23-27

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 talents 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 “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.

- Why did Jesus choose money to illustrate forgiveness?
- What does Jesus’ story say about being generous and kind?
- Who needs kindness the most and who usually gets it? Are they the same people?

— THE DOUBLE-STANDARD —

Matthew 18:28-31

²⁸ “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. ²⁹ “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you 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 greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

- What did the “other servants” see in the heart of unforgiving servant?
- Describe the attitude of a forgiven but unforgiving person?
- How does Jesus’ parable speak to our anger when we are wronged?

— THE LESSON —

Matthew 18:32-35

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 turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵ “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.”

- Why are some of Jesus’ sternest comments directed toward rigid, inflexible attitudes?
- Imagine and describe Peter’s thoughts after hearing Jesus’ answer to his question.

USE IT / APPLY IT ...

- Thinking about the attitude of the unmerciful servant, how would Jesus respond to the following slogans widely spoken today?

“An eye for and eye”

“Business is business”

“He made his bed, now let him lie in it”

- What happens to **forgiveness received** if it does not become **forgiveness extended**?
- Lewis Smedes has written:

No two people, no two families, ever weigh pain on the same scale ... If you hurt me and I retaliate in kind, I may think I have given you only what you deserve, no more. But you will feel it as a hurt that is too great for you to accept. Your passion for fairness will force you to retaliate against me, harder this time. Then it will be my turn. And will it ever stop? An eye for an eye becomes a leg for a leg and, eventually, a life for a life ... Gandhi was right: if we all live by “an eye for an eye” the whole world will be blind. The only way out is forgiveness.

— From *Forgive & Forget - Healing The Hurts We Don't Deserve*

- Close by asking God for a better understand of His amazing grace — an understanding that cannot be contained but must be shared.