

# Storytime with Jesus

## "The Unforgiving Servant"

**Bible Story: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant – Matthew 18:21-35.**

As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we forgive others their debt against us since Jesus forgave our debt against Him.

### Introduction:

1. Do you remember what a parable is? **Parables are stories Jesus told to teach us important lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven.**

Parables are stories Jesus told to teach us important lessons about the Kingdom of Heaven. From them, we learn what Heaven is like, what God is like, and what we should do as citizens of Heaven. We learned in the Story of the Soils that the message of The Gospel will be received differently by different people.

The parables remind us that we represent the Kingdom of Heaven and we represent Jesus everywhere we go in the world.

In today's parable, we will study one characteristic of believers in Christ. We will learn one way that we are supposed to behave as Christians.

Follow along with me as I read from Matthew 18:21-35. Listen to the story carefully.

### **Matthew 18:21-35**

*<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, when my brother sins against me, how many times must I forgive him? Should I forgive him as many as 7 times?"*

*<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, "I tell you, you must forgive him more than 7 times. You must forgive him even if he does wrong to you 70 times 7.*

*<sup>23</sup> "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who decided to collect the money his servants owed him. <sup>24</sup> So the king began to collect his money. One servant owed him several million dollars. <sup>25</sup> But the servant did not have enough money to pay his master, the king. So the master ordered that everything the servant owned should be sold, even the servant's wife and children. The money would be used to pay the king what the servant owed.*

*<sup>26</sup> "But the servant fell on his knees and begged, 'Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.' <sup>27</sup> The master felt sorry for his servant. So the master told the servant he did not have to pay. He let the servant go free.*

*<sup>28</sup> "Later, that same servant found another servant who owed him a few dollars. The servant grabbed the other servant around the neck and said, 'Pay me the money you owe me!'*

*<sup>29</sup> "The other servant fell on his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me. I will pay you everything I owe.'*

*<sup>30</sup> "But the first servant refused to be patient. He threw the other servant into prison until he could pay everything he owed. <sup>31</sup> All the other servants saw what happened. They were very sorry. So they went and told their master all that had happened.*

*<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called his servant in and said, 'You evil servant! You begged me to forget what you owed. So I told you that you did not have to pay anything. <sup>33</sup> I had mercy on you. You should have had the same mercy on that other servant.' <sup>34</sup> The master was very angry, and he put the servant in prison to be punished. The servant had to stay in prison until he could pay everything he owed.*

*<sup>35</sup> "This king did what my heavenly Father will do to you if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."*

## Discussion:

Let's start with the conversation that takes place just before this parable.

- Peter asks Jesus how many times he is supposed to forgive someone who sins against him, who does something wrong to him.
- Peter guesses that seven times should be enough. It seems like a strange number to pick out, doesn't it? It also seems like a lot of times to forgive someone when they keep sinning against you.

Imagine you are playing soccer with a group, and your best friend keeps stealing the ball from you. You hardly get to play because they are being such ball hogs! But every time your best friend steals the ball, he at least says he's sorry.

I don't know about you, but by about the third or fourth time that happens, I don't think I would want to play soccer anymore. What do you think? *(Give students a moment to share. They will surely come up with their own experiences of slights and grudges that they should keep in mind for the rest of the lesson),*

*Remind them not to share names or specifics, as that would be gossip and would hurt another's feelings.)*

Peter probably thought he was being very generous by saying he could forgive someone seven times. A lot of Rabbis, who were the Jewish religious teachers at the time, said that it was plenty to forgive someone three times. Most people in Jesus' time thought that if you forgave someone three times and they still wronged you, that you would not have to forgive them.

So, with that in mind, Peter's guess that forgiving someone seven times seems awfully kind.

But Jesus has a different idea of what forgiveness looks like.

- How does Jesus respond to Peter in verse 22 of Matthew 18? *(Allow a student to respond.)*

- Jesus says we must forgive them **seventy times seven times!** Let's do a little math to figure out exactly how many times that is. **Seventy times seven is 490!** Now that is a lot of times to forgive someone.
- Think of our story of playing soccer with our friend, or a time in your own life where someone kept sinning against you and hurting your feelings. Can you imagine forgiving them 490 times?
- It's not likely we could forgive someone 490 times and still be kind to them and not be bitter or angry with them. But do you think that is really what Jesus means? Do you think he really wants us to forgive people exactly 490 times, and then we **stop** forgiving them? I don't think so.
- For one thing, that would be really hard to keep track of. I would have to keep a little notebook with people's names in it, and little tally marks for every time I forgive them.
- Jesus does NOT want us to do this. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:5 that love keeps no record of wrongs.
- **As Christians, we love everyone.**  
Jesus told us in Mark 12:31 that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. So, if we love everyone, and keep no record of wrongs, then we shouldn't be keeping tally marks of the number of times we forgive someone, should we? That is literally keeping a record of the wrong things they do against us.
- So if Jesus does not want us to literally forgive 490 times, what do you think He means? (Allow a student to answer.)
- Jesus gives this really big number for two reasons. One is to tell us that we should forgive endlessly. We can't keep record of wrongs. We can't tally up the number of times we must forgive. We cannot keep track of the number of times we forgive. We must keep forgiving and forgiving and forgiving, no matter what, even if it means forgiving more than 490 times! The other reason He gives us such a big number is to tell us that we cannot forgive endlessly on our own. **We need Jesus to help us forgive.** So, Jesus sets up this parable, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, by telling us that we must forgive endlessly.

- Now let's look at the parable itself. There are three main characters. Who can tell me who they are? (Allow students to answer.)
- That's right, we have **the king, the servant who owed the king a big debt, and the servant who owed the first servant a small debt.**
- The king decided he wanted to settle his accounts. This means that he wanted everyone who owed him money to pay him back. So, he calls in this one servant who owes him A LOT of money. The original language says this servant owed the king ten thousand talents. This was a type of currency used at the time. One talent was equal to about 6,000 denarii. A denarii is what a worker got paid for one day of work. The servant would have had to work EVERY day for 164,383 years to pay off his debt! Obviously, this man owes the king a debt that cannot be re-paid.
- Does that sound familiar? Let's think of this parable in spiritual terms. Who does the king represent? (Allow a student to answer.) That's right, the king is representing God. Who is the servant supposed to be who owes the king a big debt? (Allow a student to answer.) Yes, WE are the servants who owe the king a big debt.
- Now of course we haven't borrowed money from God. The debt we owe is not financial, it is not material. **The debt we owe God is spiritual.**
- In Colossians 2:13-14. It says: *"You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for he forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross."*
- These verses tell us that we have a record of charges, or a list of things we owe God. We owe him because we sinned against Him. Our sin has separated us from God, and we need to be made right with him.

The problem is, we can never pay back our debt to God. Romans 6:23 says, *“For the wages of sin is death.”* Thankfully, Jesus died in our place and paid our debt to God. Romans 6:23 goes on to say, *“but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

Since Jesus has paid the debt that we owe God, we can have eternal life. We are free from the costs of sin, from the debt that we can't ever pay! How should this make us feel? **(Allow students to answer.)**

- We should be grateful, and very, very happy! How do you think the great debtor in our story should have felt? He should be grateful and very, very happy too! Is that what the story says, though? Nope.
- What does the debtor who owed the king more than he could ever pay do after being forgiven his huge debt? **(Allow a student to answer.)**
- Our parable says he went out to a fellow servant who owed him a much smaller amount and violently demanded that he pay the debt. This fellow servant owed 100 denarii, which is only 100 day's worth of work. When compared to the 164, 383 years worth of work the first servant owed the king, a few month's worth is practically nothing.
- Who, spiritually speaking, is the servant who owed the small debt? **(Allow students to answer.)** He's anyone who owes us anything. Of course I don't just mean people who owe us money. The fellow servant is the person who did something wrong or hurtful to us, **and they owe us an apology.**

Is it easy to forgive people who do wrong to us? Of course it isn't. **That is why we need Jesus to help us forgive.**

The end of this parable is a tough warning.

- What happened to the servant who owed the king an unpayable debt, after the king discovered he was unwilling to forgive his fellow servant?
- Matthew 18:34 tells us, *"the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt."*
- As we said, this man can never pay this debt. That means he will spend the rest of his life being tortured, all because he would not forgive as he had been forgiven.
- Jesus goes on to say in verse 35, *"That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."* If we don't forgive people, it means we deserve the punishment of hell.
- Now let's be clear here. We are still sinners. Sometimes we will mess up and not forgive people. **This DOES NOT mean we will go to hell.**
- If we believe in Jesus and do our best to follow Him, then we will go to Heaven. Forgiving others is not a way to earn a place in Heaven. It is evidence that we have a place in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, **we forgive others their debt against us since Jesus forgave our debt against him.**

**Let's Pray!**

**Memory Verse:** *"Do not be angry with each other, but forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, then forgive him. Forgive each other because the Lord forgave you". Colossians 3:13*

## Videos:

Here is a video to help explain the story as well:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ED3fzks-bhA> Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

<https://app.pureflix.com/videos/404186150842/play?autoplay=true&recommended=q%3Aveggie%20tales%20forgiveness> - Veggie Tales – God wants me to Forgive Them?

**Craft:** Forgive Each Other:

Need: Cut out template, crayons, markers, scissors googlie eyes, glue





Feel free to take a picture of their art work or share how your activity went!  
Post it on our Facebook page or share it on GroupMe. Have a Blessed Day &  
Week! Until we can meet again

~ *Teacher Chrissy*

Thank you to <https://ministry-to-children.com/> for their resources and helping share the gospel with all children.

Thank you to <https://truewayskids.com> for great craft ideas and templates

# Forgive each other



## What you need

- Template pages,
  - Coloring pencils,
  - Scissors,
  - Glue,
- Googly eyes (optional)

## What to do



Color the template pages and draw the face.



Draw around both your child's hands onto paper.



Cut out the objects. Glue arms and legs behind the heart. Glue on the hands.





