

Mid-Week Bible Study: RELATIONSLIPS

Week 2: FORGIVE

Text: Matthew 18:21-33

Introduction:

A lot of things come at a high price, but there worth it. Forgiveness is also in the high price category. While it can be costly, forgiveness is a great investment in any relationship. Forgiveness is the stuff of healthy marriages, families and churches. Relationships grow we let go of hurt, a wound, or a critical remark. Without it, our relationships remain unhealthy and messy.

Setting: Jesus earlier in Matthew 18:15-20 had taught on how believers should deal with those who sin against them. Thus, Jesus conversation and parable on forgiveness is centered on the concept of reconciliation.

Point: Forgiveness restores and strengthens relationships.

MATTHEW 18:21-22

Question: Is there a quota on grace, how many times should we let a person off the hook for the same offense?

VERSE 21: Peter asked this question after just hearing Jesus teach on reconciliation. As a result, Peter wanted to know hard at Jesus expected him/us to go in forgiving especially when it's a repeated offense by the same persons

- Peter's question specifically asked how brothers or sisters in Christ should respond to each other win a sin has been repeatedly committed.
 - One problem with this question is that it infers that we should give preferential treatment or forgive differently based on our relationship with a person.
 - Jesus teaching in this text applies to how believers should forgive all people and not just other Christians

Peter in asking his question speculated that there should be a limit. he suggests that the limit should be seven times.

- In the time of the text some Rabbis taught that the limit of forgiveness for the same offense was 3 times.
- Peter suggestion was 2x the grace other religious leaders taught.
 - So, while we need to give Peter credit for trying to see where Jesus was going. **But he did not go far enough.**

VERSE 22: Jesus answered Peter by telling him that believers must always practice forgiveness, no matter the amount of time these sin against them.

- We must be careful to draw the line at the number of offenses or claim that someone is out of forgiveness.
- Jesus replied to Peter giving him a different number: seventy-seven or seventy x seven based on how you interpret it.
 - But the point of Jesus response was not to give specific number of times that are required to forgive a person. ***But instead for the believer forgiveness must be unlimited.***

Jesus here was not stating that we should remain in forgive and abusive relationships.

- **God does expect you to forgive but not to continue getting abused or dehumanized.**
 - Thus, for married couples continued abused is a justified reason for divorce according to the Bible. ***Read Ephesians 5:28-30***
- Our problem is when we end a destructive relationship we often struggle with forgiveness.
- Staying in abusive relationship and seeking reconciliation at the same time may not be safe.
 - Even if we leave God still calls for us to forgive them.
 - Unforgiveness or grudges hinders all relationships.
 - ***Read Ephesians 4:31-32 & Leviticus 19:18.***
 - Forgiveness is for you more than the offender.
 - It helps you to no longer be a prisoner in the moment of the offense. It frees you.

MATTHEW 18:23-27

Verse 23: Jesus pushed his point of unlimited forgiveness but telling them a parable about the need to forgive.

Jesus began his parable using the usual phrase “*the kingdom of heaven is like*” ...

- This term is to help the disciples and us identify how believers are to behave.
- The parable is about a man with a major debt crisis. He owed the King a large sum of money
 - The King = God absolute ruler and authority
 - Debtor = us

VERSE 24-25: The King sought to settle/collect on his accounts. The text says this man owed the King 10,000 bags of gold. (A bag of gold = talents)

- Biblical Scholars and Theologians differ on the exact value of a talent as a unit of money.
- Yet 10,000 talents are an astronomical amount that not one could ever realistically repay.
 - As a result, the King intention on taking the man’s family as collateral for what he owed him.
 - Just like this man, we too have a sin debt we owe to God. A debt that we could never repay on our own.

VERSE 26: He fell to his knees begging for his family to not be taken and sold into slavery.

- The phrase “fell on his knees” symbolizes that the man recognized the King’s authority and his own helpless position.
 - They were not equals (the king had power & the man had nothing).
 - Interestingly the man asked for patience and not for the debt to be forgiven.
 - Possible because he could not imagine such debt being forgiven.

Question: What are some obstacles that hinder us for forgiving others?

VERSE 27: here Jesus described 3 important aspects of the master’s response:

- PITY
 - *Pity translated in Greek means “to be moved in the bowels”.* This phrase comes from the notion that in Jesus day, people believe that our deepest human emotions, positive or negative were located in the digestive system. *i.e. “I feel something in my stomach”*
 - He was moved by the servant’s hopelessness. Which prompted him to be merciful or compassionate.

- This same wording is how we describe Jesus' attitude towards us.

Question: How are grace and mercy connected to forgiveness.

- CANCELED DEBT
 - The master canceled the unpayable loan. The Greek word for canceled is described as forgiveness.
 - **Read Colossians 2:13-14**
- RELEASE/FREEDOM
 - The king released the man from slavery and indebtedness he had earned.

MATTHEW 18:28,32-33

The first servant did not learn his lesson and pay is grace forward.

VERSE 28: The 2nd servant owed the 1st servant only 100 silver coins (3 months of wages). While it's not a trivial amount it pales in compassion to what the 1st servant owed the king.

- Instead of forgiving the 2nd servant. The 1st servant violently threatens the man about what he was owed.
 - V. 29-31 highlight that the 2nd servant did and say the exact same thing that the 1st servant did and asked of the king. Yet his response was not the same as the king. **He chose rules over grace.**
- *In our relationship we must be careful to never offer grace to others. Especially since we are recipients of God's grace.*

VERSE 32: The response of the king suggest that the 1st servant wasn't shamed to act as he did. But instead he called in his debt publicly.

- As a result, the King called the 1st servant him **wicked.**
 - Our relationships with God should impact our relationship with others.
 - We must be careful to not pay God's grace forward in our relationships and be willing to forgive others the same way God has forgive us. **Read Matthew 22:36-40.**
 - We cannot claim to belong to God because of gods 'grace yet keep a record of wrongs. **Read 1st Corinthians 13:5**

Question: Why should forgiving others be an act of worship

VERSE 33: This verse summarizes the central truth Jesus was teaching about forgiveness through this parable.

- **Forgiveness is costly too, it cost Jesus.**
- The form of forgiveness Jesus calls for is only possible when performed as an act of worship.
 - Forgiveness leads to both gratitude and transformation.
 - Forgiveness is not an emotional reaction to a person but a grateful response to our loving Lord.
 - We forgive for His sake, as an offering to Him who has forgiven us.

Conclusion:

- **Evaluate.** Consider your current relationships and spend time identifying areas of unforgiveness in your heart.
- **Take a small step.** Make an effort to extend forgiveness in a relationship where you've been wronged or slighted. Take the first step even if you've done nothing wrong.
- **Take a large step.** Identify a relationship in which you need to be forgiven—one where you've contributed to bad feelings, or even where you're completely in the wrong. With humility, try to bridge the gap.