

The Measure of Forgiveness (Matt. 18:21-35)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**

- Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 243-251
- "The rabbis limited the exercise of forgiveness to three offenses. Peter, carrying out, as he supposed, the teaching of Christ, thought to extend it to seven, the number signifying perfection. But **Christ taught that we are never to become weary of forgiving.** Not 'Until seven times,' He said, 'but, Until seventy times seven'" (COL 243).
- "The pardon granted by this king represents a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant. Man was under the condemnation of the broken law.... **He gave Himself for our sins, and to every soul He freely offers the blood-bought pardon. Here is the ground upon which we should exercise compassion toward our fellow sinners.** 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.' 1 John 4:11 (COL 244-245).
- "When the debtor pleaded with his lord for mercy, he had no true sense of the greatness of his debt. He did not realize his helplessness. He hoped to deliver himself. 'Have patience with me,' he said, 'and I will pay thee all.' **So there are many who hope by their own works to merit God's favor. They do not realize their helplessness.** They do not accept the grace of God as a free gift, but are trying to build themselves up in self-righteousness. **Their own hearts are not broken and humbled on account of sin, and they are exacting and unforgiving toward others.** Their own sins against God, compared with their brother's sins against them, are as ten thousand talents to one hundred pence—nearly one million to one; yet they dare to be unforgiving" (COL 245).
- "He who refuses to forgive is thereby casting away his own hope of pardon" (COL 247).
- Vs 24: Ten thousand talents: About 60 million day's wages. If he worked every single day to pay off that debt, it would **take him 164 383 years to settle** – an absolute

impossibility. Compare this to the 100 denarii owed to him (vs 28) – something that could easily have been paid back in a few months.

- “But the teaching of this parable should not be misapplied. **God's forgiveness toward us lessens in no wise our duty to obey Him.** So the spirit of forgiveness toward our fellow men does not lessen the claim of just obligation. In the prayer which Christ taught His disciples He said, “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Matthew 6:12. By this **He did not mean that in order to be forgiven our sins we must not require our just dues from our debtors.** If they cannot pay, even though this may be the result of unwise management, they are not to be cast into prison, oppressed, or even treated harshly; but **the parable does not teach us to encourage indolence.** The word of God declares that if a man will not work, neither shall he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10.) The Lord does not require the hard-working man to support others in idleness. With many there is a waste of time, a lack of effort, which brings to poverty and want. If these faults are not corrected by those who indulge them, all that might be done in their behalf would be like putting treasure into a bag with holes. Yet there is an unavoidable poverty, and we are to manifest tenderness and compassion toward those who are unfortunate. We should treat others just as we ourselves, in like circumstances, would wish to be treated” (COL 247).
- “**Too often when wrongs are committed again and again, and the wrongdoer confesses his fault, the injured one becomes weary, and thinks he has forgiven quite enough. But the Saviour has plainly told us how to deal with the erring: ‘If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.’** Luke 17:3. Do not hold him off as unworthy of your confidence. Consider ‘thyself, lest thou also be tempted.’ Galatians 6:1 (COL 249).
- “If your brethren err, you are to forgive them. **When they come to you with confession, you should not say, I do not think they are humble enough. I do not think they feel their confession. What right have you to judge them, as if you could read the heart?** The word of God says, “If he repent, forgive him. And if he trespasses against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.” Luke 17:3, 4. And not only seven times, but seventy times seven—just as often as God forgives you” (COL 249).
- “Give the erring one no occasion for discouragement. **Suffer not a Pharisaical hardness to come in and hurt your brother. Let no bitter sneer rise in mind or heart. Let no tinge of scorn be manifest in the voice. If you speak a word of your own, if you take an attitude of indifference, or show suspicion or distrust, it may prove the ruin of a soul.** He needs a brother with the Elder Brother's heart of sympathy to touch his heart of humanity. Let him feel the strong clasp of a sympathizing hand, and hear the whisper, Let us pray. God will give a rich experience to you both. Prayer unites us with one another and with God. Prayer brings Jesus to our side, and gives to the fainting, perplexed soul new strength to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Prayer turns aside the attacks of Satan” (COL 250)
- “Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit. He who is unmerciful toward others shows that he himself is not a partaker of God's pardoning grace. In God's forgiveness the heart of the erring one is drawn close to the great heart of Infinite Love. The tide of divine compassion flows into the sinner's soul, and from him to the souls of others. The tenderness and mercy that Christ has revealed in His own precious life will be seen in those who become sharers of His grace.... [See] Romans 8:9” (COL 251).
- “**It is true that he may once have received forgiveness; but his unmerciful spirit shows that he now rejects God's pardoning love.** He has separated himself from God, and is in the same condition as before he was forgiven. He has denied his repentance, and his sins are upon him as if he had not repented” (COL 251)

- “But the great lesson of the parable lies in the contrast between God's compassion and man's hardheartedness; in the fact that **God's forgiving mercy is to be the measure of our own**. ‘Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?’ We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but *as* we forgive. **The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own**” (COL 251)
- Some Bible texts on conflict:
 - Settle private issues privately (Matt. 18:15-17)
 - Don't go to bed angry (Eph. 4:26)
 - Do not keep a record of wrongs (1 Cor. 13:5)
 - Think before you speak (Prov. 15:23, 28)
 - Do not return insult for insult (1 Pet. 3:8-9)
 - Check your motives for wanting to fight (James 4:1-2; Prov. 13:10)
 - Pursue peace and edification (Rom. 14:19)
 - Avoid needless quarrels (Prov. 20:3; 2 Tim. 2:24)
- Forgiving and trusting are not the same. Trust must often be rebuilt, but we can always forgive.
- Notes from presentation by Annie Machamire’s presentation on ‘Forgiveness’ at the 2020 SID Elders’ Convention
 - “Psychologists generally define **forgiveness** as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they **actually** deserve your **forgiveness**.”
 - Forgiveness lies at the very core of what it means to be a Christian
 - **Common Excuses for Unforgiveness**
 - He doesn’t deserve to be forgiven. What he did to me is too much. Moreover, he is not repentant.
 - I can’t afford to attend the same church with her.
 - He owes me an apology. I will consider forgiveness if he makes a public apology and pays for his sins.
 - **How to Forgive Someone Who Has Hurt You**
 1. Move on – Don’t keep holding onto the past
 2. Reconnect with God, and spend significant time in prayer & God’s Word
 3. Pray for the person who has offended you, even if you don’t feel like doing so
 4. Try to see things from the other person’s perspective.
 5. Switch the focus from blaming others to understanding yourself
 6. Take responsibility for your part
 7. Surrender your resentments (anger or annoyance at being treated unfairly)
 8. Be kind instead of right
 9. Stop looking for occasions to be offended
 10. Refrain from judgement and criticism
 11. Where possible, see how you can practically do that person good (e.g. by dropping off muffins, sending an encouraging note, helping in their time of need. That removes a great deal of pain)
 - **Benefits of Forgiveness**
 - ⇒ Forgiveness makes us Christlike. Lack of it breeds hatred (1 Jhn. 3:15)
 - ⇒ It brings the forgiver closer to God (Matt 6:12)
 - ⇒ Reduces depression
 - ⇒ Peace, friendship and unity

- *Read Matt. 18:21-35. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
- **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - Why is it often difficult to forgive someone who commits the same offense several times?
 - What common excuses do we use in order NOT to forgive people?
 - When someone who has hurt you, comes to ask for forgiveness, what is the Christian way to respond, in both attitude and behaviour?
 - Does forgiving always mean that we will trust the offender afterwards? Elaborate.
 - Does forgiving mean forgetting?
 - Why is an unforgiving spirit so deadly?
 - Give a few examples of how we sometimes forgive with strings attached?
 - What should we do if we don't feel like forgiving others?
 - What practical things can you do on your journey of forgiving someone?
 - What are the benefits of forgiveness?
- **Application Questions** (select a few depending on your time. *One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - Relate an experience when you were angry and did not want to forgive someone?
 - Is there someone in your life that you currently need to forgive? What is your next step in moving closer to reconciliation?
 - Do you know of any people that are hostile to each other at the moment? Is there a way you can try to bring reconciliation between the two?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "Even though I am not the guilty party, I will call a friend whom I recently had a difference with, and try settle matters."

6. Share *(Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith)*

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer

Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference