

Home Groups | Week of October 25, 2015  
Matthew 18:21-35 | Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

**Ice breaker question:**

Imagine that all your debts were suddenly canceled. How would you celebrate?  
(*Serendipity Bible*, by Zondervan)

**Discuss:**

1. How does it make you feel thinking you may have to forgive someone 77 times? Is it easy or hard to forgive? Why?
2. How would you feel if you were the master and saw your servant treating someone badly after you had forgiven his or her debt? As a person in authority, what would you do?
3. Author and theologian Frederick Buechner says “the pride that keeps us from forgiving is the same pride that keeps us from accepting forgiveness.” Why, in our pride, do we cling so tightly to grudges and the wrongs that others have done to us?
4. Repeated conflict with someone can harden our hearts. How is it possible to maintain a softened, compassionate heart needed to offer forgiveness? Have you ever felt like the unforgiving servant in verses 28-30?
5. What is something you have learned that has helped you in resolving conflict? If you have been the first to say, “I’m sorry, please forgive me,” how has the other person reacted?
6. How does it make you feel knowing God has forgiven you far more than you could humanly forgive someone else? How does God’s forgiveness to you translate into action in your own life?

**Telling Our Stories:**

Share more about your stories this week with your group by answering the question: “What scripture has been on your mind since we last met?”

**Prayer:**

In your group, close with the Lord’s Prayer. Focus on the words, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” Discuss briefly if this phrase has new meaning after this week’s study.

Additionally, keep the following prayer requests from our church family in mind as you close.

- > Please pray for continued healing for Talbot Sumners, Chuck Vogt, and Hadley Lehr.

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**Upcoming service opportunities at ZPC:**

- > If you sing, play an instrument, paint, dance, or do another form of art, ZPC’s Worship Director Don Nieman would like to know about it.  
[[donn@zpc.org](mailto:donn@zpc.org); 317.873.6503]

**Background for home group leaders:**

Forgiveness is difficult. We can be humbled when we realize God has forgiven us for all our mistakes, failures, and sin. When we accept that forgiveness, it can empower us to forgive others. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus gave the example to pray, “forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.” May we learn to pray and to live in this way of forgiveness.

**[Question 1]** Offenders in Jesus’ day had to forgive three times. Peter suggests going further by forgiving seven times. Jesus answers that our forgiveness needs to be almost limitless, if we are to be forgiving as God the Father is forgiving.

**[Question 2]** The master in the story is angry, and turns the unforgiving servant over to the jailers. God is forgiving but also just. Our natural inclination would be anger. As a person of authority in a workplace or in a family, we need to use our authority for both forgiveness and justice.

**[Question 3]** If we’re honest with ourselves, we like being able to point out the wrongs others have committed against us because it allows us to feel we are better than the person who wronged us. We are the innocent victim and they are the ones guilty of hurt and pain. When we truly forgive, we surrender that position of the innocent victim, the position of being in the right. Proud hearts make it very difficult to both forgive and accept forgiveness.

**[Question 4]** There are examples of those who have hard hearts in scripture who are not forgiving – the Egyptian Pharaoh to Moses, and Saul to David when David becomes more popular than Saul. We can see the examples of a hard heart and know we don’t want that. Understanding God’s grace given to us can help us to extend that grace with a soft heart to others.

**[Question 5]** It can be a wonderful thing to be the first person to say “I’m sorry, please forgive me.” This humility can often lead to a good response by your adversary. Ask your group if they have experienced this. God gives his forgiveness first, as does the master in the story – after the servant begs for mercy (verses 26-27).

**[Question 6]** We know what love is because God first loved us. John describes this in detail in 1 John chapters 3 and 4. This kind of an almost unbelievable love and forgiveness should lead us, as Christ’s disciples, to offer an amazing amount of grace and forgiveness in our own lives.