

May 12, 2024

Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21–35
(Parable of the Unmerciful Servant)



God Forgives Remember Verse

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

LESSON OVERVIEW

CONNECT//
10 minutes



Find Your Match

SUPPLIES

- Coin cutouts*
- Scissors

GATHER//
30 minutes



Remember Verse

Game: Remember Verse
Chain

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse word strips*
- Scissors
- Tape

Storytelling

SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions*
- King and Servants cutouts*

- Bibles
- Craft sticks (3, jumbo)
- Scissors
- Glue

Discussion Questions

RESPOND//
15 minutes



Symbols of
Forgiveness

SUPPLIES

- Washable finger paint
- Disposable bowls (several)
- Water
- Paper towels and wet wipes
- Plastic tablecloth or tarp
- Construction paper (1 sheet per child, white)

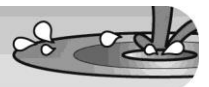
(Optional) Coin Toss

SUPPLIES

- Coins (1 per child)
- Buckets (2, small)
- Masking or painter's tape

- Optional: additional buckets (2–4)

BLESS//
5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 11*
- Bible

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:

Customizable copy of Lesson 10

2018–19 Scope and Sequence

TruStory How It Works

Small Group Enhancement

At Home Weekly: Lesson 10

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

I'd spent countless hours praying, organizing, and preparing for the children's annual church performance. The performance included live animals, open flames, and 200 small children. On the morning of the show, things fell into place. The animals arrived on time. Ample volunteers emerged to help. I even ushered 45 preschoolers into the sanctuary without any tears—including none of my own.

Right before the doors opened for the children to enter, a father walked up to me, angry because his child didn't have speaking lines in the performance. He shouted at me in front the volunteers, children, and parents. I was mortified. The blood drained from my face, my mouth went dry, and my mind went blank just as the cue came to start the show. The performance was a blur as I stumbled through everything. I felt devastated, even though no one and nothing caught fire. I'd known the father for years, taught his children, and visited his family's home. I felt grieved that he thought I'd purposefully excluded his child.

The family left the church that Sunday, and I haven't seen them since. Because there was no closure to the misunderstanding, it left me picking up the pieces of my shattered pride. Sometimes I still feel twinges of resentment when I think of the father. Yet through this incident, God revealed that my unwillingness to forgive is a way of building walls of self-protection. When I offered forgiveness instead, I was forced to open my heart and acknowledge my hurt. Then God was able to come in and heal. God forgives. And forgiveness brings healing.

Stacy White
The Gathering

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

Rabbinic tradition held that a person needed to forgive someone three times. In Luke 17:4, Jesus said that if someone sins against you seven times, you should continue to forgive them. In Matthew 18:21, Peter was perhaps trying to clarify Jesus' teaching when he asked if seven was the limit of forgiveness. In response, Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). Only a few versions of the Bible translate Matthew 18:22 as "seventy-seven times," including the commonly used New International Version, but another version states "seventy times seven," as found in other translations such as the New American Standard Bible and the New Living Translation. Jesus told the parable of the unmerciful servant to illustrate that we shouldn't limit the number of times we need to forgive others.

To understand the magnitude of the unmerciful servant's debt to the king, Jesus used a term denoting the largest number used in the first century. The Greek term is *murion*, often translated as "myriad," which means 10,000. And when the Bible describes the number of angels that exist, it uses the phrase "myriad upon myriad"—which means an incalculable number. But if you tried to relate it to today's economy, it would equate to somewhere between three billion and six billion dollars, depending upon how you calculate a day's wage. (The man owed the king 10,000 talents, and a talent was worth about 20 years of a day laborer's wages.)

Using this illustration, Jesus showed us there is no comparison between what is owed to us and what we have been forgiven. God forgives, and His forgiveness drives and motivates us to forgive others—just as we have been forgiven.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

One of the most tangible ways we can observe God's power is through the simple act of forgiveness. When God works

in us to forgive those who don't deserve it—or to humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness from those we've wronged—a miraculous thing happens: He heals our broken hearts. Only God can offer true healing and give us what we need to forgive others. Take some time to ask God to reveal the parts of your heart that still need to be healed. Whom in your life do you need to forgive? Whom have you wronged? From whom do you need to ask forgiveness? Come to God with these questions and invite Him to work His miraculous gift of forgiveness. Praise God who not only instructs us to forgive but also gives us the power of forgiveness through His Holy Spirit.

CONNECT//10 minutes



Children develop relationships with their leaders and one another through simple activities and conversation starters.

Find Your Match

In today's Scripture passage, a man owed a king a lot of money—more money than he could ever repay. Invite your kids to interact with money as you get started today.

SUPPLIES

- Coin cutouts (see Resources)
- Scissors

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Coin cutouts and cut them out. Make sure you have a coin for each child, and make sure each coin has a match.

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Welcome and greet children. Open your time by asking this question: **What would you do if you had so much money that it never ran out?**

Give a Coin cutout to each child. Encourage the kids to find their matching coins among the group. Once each child finds a match, have the pair spend a few minutes getting to know each other better by answering one of the questions below (or some questions of your own).

- **Do you get an allowance or earn money at home? If you earn it, how?**
- **Have you ever saved your money to buy something special? If so, what did you buy?**
- **Have you ever lost any money? How did you feel about that?**
- **Why do you think money is so important to people?**

GATHER//30 minutes



Children experience and learn more about God through prayer, storytelling from The Big God Story, an investigation into God's Word, and creative ways to memorize Scripture.

Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

Yet the LORD longs to be gracious to you; therefore he will rise up to show you compassion. For the LORD is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for him! Isaiah 30:18

Game: Remember Verse Chain

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse word strips (see Resources)
- Scissors
- Tape

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the Remember Verse word strips and cut them apart.

RELATE

Have children work together to put the words of the Remember Verse in order. Once they've done this, have them say the verse together. Then have the kids take the strips and link them into a chain while keeping the words in the correct order. Once they complete the chain, have them recite the verse again.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Matthew 18:21–35

Storytelling Technique: Puppets

God Forgives

SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions (see Resources)
- King and Servants cutouts (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Craft sticks (3, jumbo)
- Scissors
- Glue

PREPARE AHEAD

Print the King and Servants cutouts, cut them out, and glue each one to a craft stick.

RELATE

What do you think of when I say the word “money”? Invite responses. **Great thoughts! Money can be a good thing or a difficult thing, especially if we don't do the right things with it. Money can even lead to people not getting along and having to forgive one another.**

Have you ever had to forgive someone for something? Pause for responses. **Was that easy or difficult to do? Why?** Interact with children's responses. **Forgiving another person can be difficult at times.** Consider sharing an age-appropriate story from your life about forgiveness. **When someone does something or says something to us that's wrong, we can be hurt by those things. When I've been hurt by someone, I really don't want to forgive that person.**

But I know that God is the only One who can take away the hurt I feel inside. When God heals me, I can forgive others from my heart. Let's take a look at God's Word to see what He has to say about forgiveness, because God forgives. Let's ask Him to teach us today. Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds. Encourage kids to open their Bibles to Matthew 18 and follow along.

As Jesus traveled with His disciples one day, one of those disciples, Peter, asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone who does something wrong. Peter asked, “Should we forgive up to seven times?” What do you think Jesus said? Read Matthew 18:22 as kids follow along. Interact with kids' responses. **Right—77 times! Jesus was teaching His followers a new way to think about forgiveness. Let's listen to the story Jesus told to help His disciples understand more about what He meant.** Hand out the puppets to volunteers. Encourage them to come to the front of the room and use their puppets to act out the parable as you read it.

One day a man was brought before the king. This man was one of the king's servants. This servant owed the king a lot of money—more money than he could ever pay back! So the king said to the servant, “Because you owe me so much money, I'm going to have you and your family sold into slavery!” The servant replied, “Please, my lord, have patience with me! I will pay back everything I owe.”

What do you think the king did? Invite responses. **Who thinks the king gave him more time to pay him back? Allow responses. Who thinks the king told him not to worry about it—that he didn't owe him anything and was free to go?** Interact with responses. **Well, for those who thought the king would tell the servant not to worry about it, you're right! The king told the servant, “All right, you don't owe me anymore. You are free to go.”**

Can you believe it? How amazing! The servant was probably very excited! But as he left, he ran into another servant who owed *him* some money—not as much as the first servant had owed the king, though. What do you think the first servant did? Do you think he forgave the other servant since the king had forgiven him so much more? Invite responses. **Did he give the other servant more time to repay him?** Pause for responses.

None of those things happened! Instead, the first servant told the other servant, “Pay me what you owe me! If you don’t, I’ll throw you in jail!” Wow! That wasn’t a good way to respond. When the king heard about it, he got very angry. The king called back his servant and said, “Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your friend like I had mercy on you?” Then the king threw the man in jail.

What does the word *forgiveness* mean? Is forgiveness saying, “I forgive you” when someone says he’s sorry for doing something wrong to you? Invite responses. Yes, that’s a part of forgiveness. Jesus said that we must forgive people from our hearts. How? Allow kids to respond. Good thinking. When someone hurts us, God has to heal the hurt we have inside first. Then we can ask Him to give us what we need to forgive the person who wronged us—and forgive that person from our hearts.

God forgives, and Jesus showed us how to forgive when He died on the cross for our sins. Did He ever sin? Allow responses. No, He didn’t—He’s perfect. But in His mercy, Jesus took all of our sin from us and placed it on Himself. He died for our sin so God could forgive us. We get to be with God forever and ever when we choose to trust Jesus. Jesus healed our relationship with God and put us on the path to life with God. Jesus forgave us of a debt—our sin—that we could never be able to repay. And because we’ve been forgiven by God, He calls us to also forgive others.

Peter asked Jesus, “Should we forgive up to seven times?” “No, not seven times,” Jesus replied, “but seventy-seven times!” Wow! That’s a lot of forgiveness! Do you think Jesus meant that we should only forgive someone this number of times and no more? What do you think He meant?

Interact with kids and their responses. Jesus meant we should forgive over and over and not even keep count. Why does God tell us to forgive people over and over and over? Interact with kids’ responses. That’s right—since God has forgiven our sins, we can forgive others. Through Jesus, God has shown us how to forgive. When we trust and obey Him, He will heal us and give us everything we need to forgive others. God is so good. Share a personal story of a time you forgave someone or someone forgave you.

Discussion Questions

- What does *forgiveness* mean?
- How did the king first show mercy to his servant? Matthew 18:27
- Why did the king later get upset with the servant? Matthew 18:32–33
- Why is forgiveness sometimes hard? Matthew 18:35

RESPOND//15 minutes



Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond to God through creative activities and games.

Symbols of Forgiveness

Kids will ponder places in their lives where they need to receive or offer forgiveness and then use finger paint to draw symbols or words to represent those situations.

SUPPLIES

- Washable finger paint
- Disposable bowls (several)
- Water
- Paper towels and wet wipes
- Plastic tablecloth or tarp
- Construction paper (1 sheet per child, white)

SET UP

Cover your workspace with the tablecloth or tarp. Fill the bowls with water.

RELATE

Jesus gave the ultimate example of forgiveness when He chose to die on the cross for our sins. We did nothing to deserve His sacrifice, but He died so we might be able to live forever with Him. Because God has forgiven us for so much, He asks us to forgive others too. Forgiveness is a gift that God gives to us, and He shows us how

to offer this gift to others.

Invite the children to spend some time in silent prayer. **Is there anyone whom you need to forgive or a relationship that you would like God to heal? It could be a friend or family member or teacher. Or perhaps you need forgiveness for something you said or did that may have hurt another person. Is there anyone whom you need to ask to forgive you? Ask God to show you if you need to ask for forgiveness.**

After the children spend time in prayer, give each one a sheet of white construction paper. Invite the kids to use the finger paint to draw symbols or words that represent the people or situations where they need to receive or offer forgiveness. For example, if they're hurt that a friend said something behind their back, they might draw an ear. If they're feeling guilty about ignoring a friend at school, they might draw a picture of their friend with a sad face. Encourage them to be as honest as they can about how they're feeling. As they create, suggest they to talk to God and ask Him to show them how to forgive or be forgiven in that situation.

Developmentally Speaking

First and second graders have a hard time distinguishing intervals of time. They may give examples of forgiveness from a long time ago, but they may feel like those situations happened recently.

(Optional) Coin Toss

In this game, kids will see who collects the most money by tossing coins into a bucket.

SUPPLIES

- Coins (1 per child)
- Buckets (2, small)
- Masking or painter's tape
- Optional: additional buckets (2–4)

SET UP

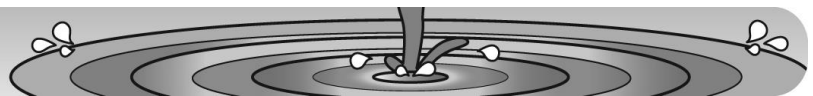
Use the tape to make a start line on the floor. Place the buckets side by side about six to eight feet from the start line.

RELATE

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, a servant owed his master so much money that he could never pay it all back. Today lead your kids in a game in which they compete in teams to see who collects the most money by tossing coins into a bucket.

To play, divide your class into two teams, have each team line up at the start line, and give every child a coin. Then, one at a time, have each child try to throw his coin into the bucket. When both teams finish, have a leader count the number of coins in each team's bucket. The team with the most coins wins! Optional: To increase the chances of the children getting their coins into buckets, you might set out two or three buckets for each team.

BLESS//5 minutes



Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 11 (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Gather your kids and read the following blessing from Colossians 3:13:

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

May you know God's forgiveness this week. May you forgive others as He has forgiven you.

Have your kids stand together in a circle. Invite leaders to walk around the circle and bless each child individually. Touch each child on the shoulder and say, (Child's name), **may the Holy Spirit help you to forgive others.**

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.