

# 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 Servant script\*
- Bibles
- Calculator

Discussion Questions

**RESPOND//**  
15 minutes



Gift Box of Forgiveness

**SUPPLIES**

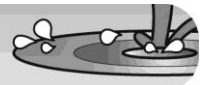
- Box (medium-sized)
- Wrapping paper (enough to cover box)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Ribbon (enough to decorate box)
- Index cards (1 per child)
- Pens or pencils

(Optional) Big Numbers Game Show

**SUPPLIES**

- Bell
- Optional: small prizes

**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.*

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## **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. A lot could go wrong! 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 flung open 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 of all 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, not even the loose sheep that knocked over the microphone. 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

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## **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.

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## **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 so, how do you earn the money?**
- **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?**
- **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: Acting Out the Narrative**  
**God Forgives**

### SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions (see Resources)
- King and Servant script (see Resources)
- Bibles
- Calculator

### PREPARE AHEAD

Print two copies of the script.

### 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?** Invite 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 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.** Assign the roles of the king and the servant to two child volunteers.

Hand each volunteer a script and emphasize that they should read their parts in their very best dramatic voices. You can have the children stand in front of the room or remain in their seats.

**Storyteller: 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—so much money that he could never hope to repay it. The king said to the servant:**

**King: Because you owe me so much money, I'm going to have you and your family sold into slavery to pay back a tiny part of your debt.**

**Servant: Please, my lord, have patience with me. I will pay back everything.**

**Storyteller (to the kids): Do you think the servant would really have paid the king back? No.**

**Let's stop right here. I want to find out what you think the king did. Who thinks the king sold the servant and his family into slavery? Raise your hand.** Invite responses. **Who thinks the king gave him more time to pay back**

the money? Pause for responses. **Who thinks the king told the servant not to worry about it—that he didn't owe him anything and was free to go?** Interact with responses. **Let's find out what the king did.**

King: **Okay. You don't owe me the money anymore. You're free to go.**

Storyteller: **Wow! I didn't see that one coming. The servant must have been so excited! On his way out he ran into another servant who owed *him* some money—but not as much money as the first servant had owed the king. Not even close.**

**What do you think the first servant did? Who thinks he forgave the other servant since the king had forgiven him so much more? Raise your hands.** Invite responses. **Who thinks he gave the other servant more time to repay him?** Encourage responses. **Who thinks the first servant yelled at the other servant to pay back what he owed him?** Pause for answers. **Let's see what happened.**

Servant: **Pay back what you owe me or I will throw you in jail until you do!**

Storyteller: **Wow! That wasn't a good way to respond. When the king heard about this, he was furious. He called the first servant in front of him and said:**

King: **Shouldn't you have had mercy on your friend like I had mercy on you?**

Storyteller: **Then the king threw the man in jail.**

Thank the actors for their performances and have them return to their seats.

**What does the word *forgiveness* mean? Is forgiveness saying, "I forgive you" when someone apologizes 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?** Encourage 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?** Invite 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 (Ephesians 4:32).**

**Peter asked Jesus, "Should we forgive up to seven times?" What did Jesus say in response?** Invite responses. **Good thinking. "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy-seven times!"** Give a calculator to a child in your group and ask him to multiply 70 times seven and then give you the total. **Wow! 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 answers. **Jesus meant we should forgive over and over and not even keep count. Why does Jesus tell us to forgive people over and over and over?** Interact with kids' responses. **God forgives, and He can give us everything we need to 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 can 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**
- **What did Jesus want to teach us by telling this parable? Matthew 18:35**
- **Why is forgiveness sometimes hard?**

**RESPOND**//15 minutes

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

**Gift Box of Forgiveness**

Kids will ponder places in their lives where they need to receive or offer forgiveness and the write on cards to drop in a box as a symbol of letting God work in those situations.

### SUPPLIES

- Box (medium-sized)
- Wrapping paper (enough to cover box)
- Scissors
- Tape
- Ribbon (enough to decorate box)
- Index cards (1 per child)
- Pens or pencils

### PREPARE AHEAD

Wrap the box with wrapping paper and ribbon so it looks like a present. In the top of the box, cut a slit that's big enough for an index card.

### 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.** Hand out the index cards and pens or pencils and invite your children to write the name of a person whom they need to forgive. They can also write about a situation in which they need to ask someone else to forgive them. Once the kids finish writing, give them a few moments to pray silently about the situations on their cards. After this time of prayer, encourage the children to drop their cards into the Gift Box of Forgiveness as a symbol of their willingness to ask God to help them forgive others or ask others to forgive them.

## (Optional) Big Numbers Game Show

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, the servant owed his master so much money that he might have felt like he couldn't count such a large amount! Today lead your kids in a game that's all about big numbers.

### SUPPLIES

- Bell
- Optional: small prizes

### SET UP

Place the bell at one end of the room on top of a table or flat surface.

### RELATE

Invite your kids to take turns as contestants in the Big Numbers Game Show. To play, divide your class into two teams. Have teams line up on one side of the room, across from the table with the bell. Ask the first person in line from each team one of questions below. These two players should race across the room to the bell. The first person to ring the bell gets to answer the question. If the child answers correctly, her team gets a point. If she answers incorrectly, the other team gets the chance to answer. Continue until each person in line has taken a turn. The team with the most points wins.

- 1. How many grains are in a pound of white rice?**  
a. 12,000    b. 29,000    c. 53,000
- 2. How many people live in the world?**  
a. 7 billion    b. 6 billion    c. 20 million
- 3. How many legs does the largest centipede have?**  
a. 300    b. 100    c. 50
- 4. How many miles is the earth from the sun?**  
a. 328,000    b. 5 billion    c. 93 million
- 5. How many bones are in the adult human body?**  
a. 174    b. 206    c. 322
- 6. How much saliva does the average person produce in her life?**

a. 10 gallons      b. 100 gallons      c. 10,000 gallons

7. **About how many hairs does each person have on his head?**

a. 100,000      b. 500,000      c. 1 million

8. **How many minutes are in a regular year?**

a. 150,300      b. 525,600      c. 730,200

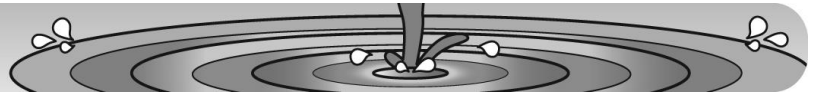
**Answer Key:**

1. b
2. a
3. a
4. c
5. b
6. c
7. a
8. b

## Developmentally Speaking

Third and fourth graders enjoy rough games and team sports. They may even be physically daring. As your children run for the bell in this activity, emphasize safety and respect toward others.

**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

Before you bless the children in your group, pray about the blessing that God would have you give to them.

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.