

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



Jar of Coins

SUPPLIES

- Jar (small)
- Coins (at least 3 per child, various kinds)

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



Forgiven on the Cross

SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pens
- Construction paper (several sheets, various colors)
- Scissors
- Decoupage glue
- Paintbrushes (1 for every 2–3 children)
- Disposable bowls (1 for every 2–3 children)
- Wooden cross (approximately 3' tall)
- Worship music: “Forgiven,” TruWorship *Radio the World*

(Optional) Right Price?

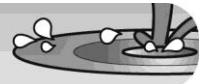
SUPPLIES

- Small items (8; examples: liter of soda, carton of laundry detergent, pack of gum) or

images of expensive items (8; examples: sports car, yacht, mansion)

- Paper (3 sheets)
- Pens
- Optional: prizes (several)

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 document 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.

Jar of Coins

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

- Jar (small)
- Coins (at least 3 per child, various kinds)

PREPARE AHEAD

Place the coins in the jar.

RELATE

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

Invite the students to sit in a circle. Pass around the jar of coins and invite each student to take a few. Everyone should take at least one coin. Then have the kids add up the value of their coins to see who goes first in this activity. Start with the kid who holds the highest total of money and ask her to share facts about herself according to the number of coins she took from the jar. For example, if she took three coins from the jar, she must share three facts about herself. Go around the circle and make sure everyone gets a chance to share.

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 students 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?** Allow 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. Allow responses. **Who thinks he gave the other servant more time to repay him?** Invite responses. **Who thinks the first servant yelled at the other servant to pay back what he owed**

him? Interact with 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?** Pause for 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 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? Encourage 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 responses. **Jesus meant we should forgive over and 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
- **What did that servant do when he found that the other servant couldn't pay him back?** Matthew 18:30
- **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.

Forgiven on the Cross

Kids will ponder places in their life where they need to receive or offer forgiveness and then write on construction paper to attach to a cross.

SUPPLIES

- Paper (1 sheet per child)
- Pens
- Construction paper (several sheets, various colors)
- Scissors

- Decoupage glue
- Paintbrushes (1 for every 2–3 children)
- Disposable bowls (1 for every 2–3 children)
- Wooden cross (approximately 3' tall)
- Worship music: “Forgiven,” TruWorship *Radio the World*

PREPARE AHEAD

Cut different colors of construction paper into squares about two inches wide, or whatever size best fits the wooden cross you will be using (one square per child).

RELATE

Jesus shared the parable of the unmerciful servant to show His followers how we should forgive. Why do we need to forgive others? Why do we need forgiveness? Interact with children’s responses. We each sin by making choices that don’t please God. God forgives us because He loves us and wants to be in relationship with us.

Invite several kids to help you read the following verses about God’s forgiveness: Isaiah 43:25; Daniel 9:9; Psalm 103:8–10. **What do these verses tell us about God’s forgiveness? How do you feel knowing that God forgives you?** Invite responses.

Next, invite the students to spend some quiet time with God, reflecting on how He’s forgiven them. Hand out the paper and pens and invite your kids to write thank-you notes to God for His gift of forgiveness. During this time, play “Forgiven.”

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 your kids to take a square of colored construction paper and write on it what God might be saying to them about a situation where they need to experience forgiveness. **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.**

Once the kids write about these situations on the construction paper, encourage them to use the decoupage glue and paintbrushes to glue their thoughts to the cross to represent that they’re asking God to give them strength to forgive others or ask for forgiveness.

Developmentally Speaking

Fifth and sixth graders often let peer pressure affect their actions. Because of this, they may find it hard to worship freely in the presence of other kids. When possible, model worship for them, and let them spread around the room so they feel they have their own space in which to respond to God.

(Optional) Right Price?

In the parable of the unmerciful servant, the servant owed his master so much money he could never hope to pay it back! Challenge your kids in a game of Right Price? to see if they can guess how much different items cost.

SUPPLIES

- Small items (8; examples: liter of soda, carton of laundry detergent, pack of gum) or images of expensive items (8; examples: sports car, yacht, mansion)
- Paper (3 sheets)
- Pens
- Optional: prizes (several)

PREPARE AHEAD

Buy eight small items and write down the cost of each on a sheet of paper. Alternatively, print eight images of expensive items and write down the cost of each on a sheet of paper.

SET UP

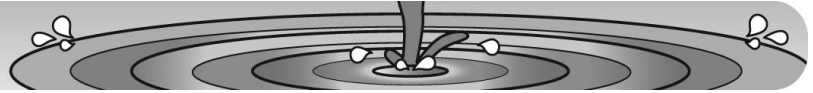
Display the images or items on a table.

RELATE

Have your class break up into two teams. If you have an uneven number of students, choose one of them to host the game and introduce the items. Have the teams line up on opposite sides of the room. Show the first person in line from each team the first item. Have the host ask how much the contestants think the first item costs. Give players a few minutes to discuss this with their teammates before writing an answer on a sheet of paper. Once both contestants have written down their guesses, the host will ask the contestants to share their answers. The team that comes the closest to

the correct price wins that round. Once the costs of all of the items have been guessed, add up the scores of both teams to find the winner. Discuss: **What would it feel like to have a debt so high you could never pay it back? How would it feel to have a huge debt taken away so you didn't owe anything at all?**

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.