

Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY TEACHER'S PACKET

4 Year Olds

Sunday Morning

Study 13

M is for Merciful

M is for Mercy

The Objective is the key concept for this week's lesson. It should be the main focus of the study.

These are the key verses that you will find helpful in teaching your study this week. The "Main passage" is the basis of the study, where the other verses support the objective of the lesson.

There is a memory verse for the students that relates to every study. If a student can memorize the verse for the following week you may give them a prize from the "reward box" found on your cart.

An introductory activity or question that will settle the class, draw their attention to the study and prepare their hearts for God's Word.

Objective To show the connection between mercy and forgiveness and to teach that God's mercy and forgiveness are infinite.

Key Verses

Matthew 18:21-33—Main Teaching Passage

Ephesians 2:4-5

Psalm 51:1-4

Lamentations 3:22-23

Luke 6:36

Memory Verse Jeremiah 10:10a (March Memory Verse)

But the LORD is the true God;
He is the living God and the everlasting King.

Hook

Take the bucket on your cart and fill it with water. Gather the students around the bucket and tell them that you are going to see how much water is in the bucket. Using the eye dropper on your cart, start to count the number of drops of water in the bucket. Have the students count with you (you can count up to around 20 drops). Show them that you are at 20 drops and have only just begun. There must be thousands of drops in the bucket.

Now ask them how many drops of water there are in whole ocean. It is so big that it's uncountable! Tell the students that each drop of water represents God's forgiveness. Just like the ocean, His forgiveness never runs out. In fact, Lamentations 3:22 says that His mercy never ends, it is new every morning.

What does the Bible say? This is where we will read a passage or series of passages that teach on the subject of the day.

BOOK

In Matthew 18, Peter asked Jesus to what extent we should show forgiveness. At what point do we stop forgiving people? After we have forgiven them 7 times? Jesus' response to this far exceeded Peter's small number: "Forgive up to 70 times 7." The point that Jesus was making is that our forgiveness should be limitless, just as the Father's forgiveness is limitless.

Jesus explained this by telling a parable of a king whose servants had borrowed lots of money. When one of the servants could not repay his debt, the King declared that the servant, his wife, and his child would be sold into slavery. The servant fell on his knees and begged the King to be patient, that if he gave the servant more time he would be able to pay back the debt. Notice the king's response: "Then the master was moved to compassion, released him, and forgave his debt" (vs. 27). The king was owed a large sum of money, but because he had compassion on the servant, he forgave the debt. The servant should have suffered the consequences for not being able to repay the king, but in his mercy, the king released him.

The interpretation/
exegesis of the passage.
What does this passage
mean? How does this
passage apply to my life?

LOOK

Grace is when we receive a reward that we do not deserve. Justice is when we receive a punishment that we do deserve. Mercy is when we do not receive a punishment that we do deserve. The concept of mercy goes hand-in-hand with forgiveness. We cannot show mercy without also being forgiving.

In the story presented in Matthew 18, we are the servant that has borrowed more than we can pay. Our debts are not financial; our debts are spiritual. When we sin against the Lord, there is a consequence that is required, a price that must be paid. The problem is, we can't pay that price. We simply don't have the ability to pay off the debt we have incurred with God.

Just like the king in our story, God looks at us with compassion. He loves us so much that He sent His only Son Jesus into the world to pay the price for our sins, forgiving us and showing us His incredible mercy. But do you know the best part? God's forgiveness is infinite. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins, He paid the price for every sin that had ever been committed and every sin that ever would be committed. That means that Jesus is willing to show you mercy and forgiveness for every wrong thought, word, or action you will ever commit.

LOOK (Continued)

How do we receive this forgiveness? Just like the servant in our story, all we have to do is ask. We need to stand before our God and cry out, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psalm 51:1-2).

The unfortunate part of our story is that the servant who was shown incredible mercy and forgiveness would not show that same mercy and forgiveness to others. He should have been so thankful that the king forgave Him that he would have gone and blessed those around Him by forgiving them as well, he was angry and demanding. Luke 6:36 tells us that because God has been merciful to us we need to be merciful to others. So when someone offends us, or hurts our feelings, we like God should be willing to forgive them and show them mercy, not just once, but every time they ask, just like God does with us.

What is my response to this passage of Scripture? How should my life change according to what this passage teaches me? What are the practical things I can do throughout the week to make this true in my life?

TOOK

Ask the class, “What does mercy mean?” and, “How often should we forgive people?” Remind them we should forgive in the same way we have been forgiven.

Give the opportunity for the students to ask forgiveness for something that they have done wrong.

Pray: Thank the Lord that His mercy and forgiveness are infinite. Ask Him to help us to show love, mercy, and forgiveness to the people around us.

Parent Question: How does God show us mercy?

FURTHER STUDY

Commentary on Matthew 18 by David Guzik

Forgiveness in the Kingdom Community: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

1. (21-22) Peter's question about forgiveness and Jesus' answer.

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

a. **Up to seven times?** Peter, in light of what Jesus said about agreement and unity, hoped to sound extremely loving by suggesting forgiving a repentant brother up to *seven* times when *three* times was the accepted limit taught by many Jewish rabbis of that time.

i. "The Rabbis discussed this question, and recommended not more than three times...Peter's *seven times* is therefore generous, but Jesus' reply does away with all limits and calculations." (France)

b. **Up to seventy times seven:** Jesus answered unexpectedly, saying we are to forgive the repentant an unlimited number of times. *Unlimited* is surely the idea behind **up to seventy times seven**; it would be strange if Jesus expected us to count offenses against us up to 490, and at the 491st offense, to deny forgiveness.

i. "His allusion to Genesis 4:24 neatly contrasts Lamech's unlimited vindictiveness with the unlimited forgiveness of the disciple." (France)

2. (23-24) The debt of the first servant.

"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents."

a. **Who wanted to settle accounts with his servants:** The king in this parable expected his servants to be faithful and honorable in the way they conducted his business. Therefore, one day he examined their work and would **settle accounts** with them.

b. **Who owed him ten thousand talents:** Commentators list the modern value of 10,000 talents as anywhere between \$12 million and \$1 billion USD. The figure clearly represents an unpayable debt.

3. (25-27) The master forgives the debt.

"But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt."

a. **His master commanded that he be sold:** Of course, the man **was not able to pay**. Therefore the master commanded to sell the debtor, his family, and all he had. This would not satisfy the debt; slaves at their top price were sold at a talent each (and usually sold for much less). Yet it would bring some measure of justice.

i. "Top price for a slave fetched about one talent, and one-tenth that amount or less was more common." (Carson)

b. **Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all:** The promise of the servant made no sense. He spoke as if all he needed were **patience**; that if he were given enough time he could actually pay this massive debt. The disciples listening to Jesus would think this was humorous.

i. "Many a poor sinner is very rich in resolutions. This servant-debtor thought he only needed *patience*; but indeed he needed forgiveness!" (Spurgeon)

c. **The master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt:** The master showed mercy prompted by **compassion**, forgiving a debt that obviously could never be repaid - despite whatever promises the servant made.

4. (28-30) The forgiven servant refuses to forgive.

"But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took *him* by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt."

a. **One of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii:** The servant who had just been forgiven an unpayable debt **went out and found** the one who owed him money. Upon meeting him, he immediately assaulted him (**took him by the throat**) and demanded payment.

i. The debt was real. 100 denarii was roughly equal to 100 days' wages. This was not an insignificant amount, but it was almost nothing compared to the debt forgiven by his master. It was actually 1/600,000 of the debt owed to the **master** by the first servant.

ii. **He took him by the throat.** "There is no word I am acquainted with, which so fully expresses the meaning of the original...as the *Anglo-saxon* term *throttle*: it signified (like the Greek) to *half choke* a person, by *seizing his throat*." (Clarke)

iii. "The debt was very, very small, but the claim was urged with intense ferocity. Our little claims against our fellow men are too apt to be pressed upon them with unsparing severity." (Spurgeon)

b. **Have patience with me, and I will pay you all:** The man who owed the smaller debt used the exact same plea and promise that brought mercy to the man who had the greater debt. But it gained nothing, and the forgiven servant put the man into a debtor's **prison**.

5. (31-34) The judgment of the unforgiving servant.

"So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him."

a. **When his fellow servants saw what had been done:** There is no mention in the parable of the first servant's conscience bothering him about his conduct. It was **his fellow servants** that recognized the wrong that was done.

i. "Others could see the evil of his conduct if he could not." (Spurgeon) Sometimes we are painfully - and to our embarrassment - blind to our own sinful, fleshly conduct.

b. **You wicked servant...delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him:**

When the master heard of this, he was understandably angry. It was just wrong for a man who has been forgiven so much to then be so unforgiving. He then gave the first servant what he deserved - justice instead of mercy.

6. (35) Genuine forgiveness, from the heart, is required of all who have been forgiven.

"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

a. **So My heavenly Father also will do to you:** The principle is clear. God has forgiven such a great debt, that any debt owed to us is absolutely insignificant in comparison. No man can possibly offend me to the extent that my sins have offended God. This principle must be applied in the little things done to us, but also to the great things done unto us.

i. "We incur greater wrath by refusing to forgive than by all the rest of our indebtedness." (Spurgeon)

b. **If each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses:** With this, Jesus taught an important and often neglected principle regarding forgiveness. There are many sincere Christians who withhold forgiveness from others for mistaken reasons - and they feel entirely justified in doing so.

i. Their reasoning works like this: We should not forgive another person who sins against us until they are properly repentant. This is because repentance is mentioned in the context of our commands to forgive (such as in Luke 17:4), and because our forgiveness to others is to be modeled after God's forgiveness of us. Since God does not forgive us apart from repentance, so we should not forgive others unless they properly repent to us. We even have the *duty* to withhold such forgiveness and to judge their repentance, because it is ultimately in their best interest to do so.

ii. This thinking - even if it means well - is incorrect and ultimately dangerous. This parable shows us why it is incorrect for us to think, "God doesn't forgive me without my repentance; therefore I must withhold forgiveness from others who sin against me until they properly repent." That thinking is wrong, *because I do not stand in the same place as God in the equation, and I never can*. God stands as *One who has never been forgiven and never needed forgiveness*; I stand as one who has been forgiven and needs continual forgiveness.

iii. Therefore - if it were possible - we should be *far quicker* to forgive than God is, without precondition of repentance, because we stand as forgiven sinners who must also forgive. We have *an even greater obligation to forgive than God does*.

iv. Since we have been forgiven so much, we have no right to withhold forgiveness from others. We are the debtor forgiven almost an infinite debt; will we hold on to the small debts others owe to us? If anyone had the right to withhold forgiveness it is God - and He forgives more freely and more completely than anyone we know. What possible right do we have to hold on to our unforgiveness?

v. It is also important to understand that a distinction can and should be made between *forgiveness* and *reconciliation*. True reconciliation of relationship can only happen when both parties are agreeable to it, and this may require repentance on one or both of the parties in the conflict. Yet forgiveness can be one-sided.

vi. Furthermore, forgiveness does not necessarily shield someone from the civil or practical consequences of their sin. For example, a homeowner may personally forgive the man who robbed his house, yet it is still ap-

appropriate for the robber to be arrested and put in jail. On a personal level, forgiveness is required. On a civil and societal level, the man should be punished by the magistrates (Romans 13).

vii. Nevertheless, the principle clearly stands. In context, this parable was given to make us *more forgiving*, not *less forgiving*. No one could reasonably read this parable and think that Jesus was trying to restrict the forgiveness of His disciples.

viii. People who read this, "Therefore be somewhat stingy with forgiveness as your Father in heaven is somewhat stingy with forgiveness" miss the whole point of the parable. Instead, *Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful* (Luke 6:36).

ix. **From his heart:** This makes the command all the stronger. "If we forgive in words only, but *not from our hearts*, we remain under the same condemnation." (Spurgeon)

c. **So My heavenly Father also will do to you:** It would be wrong to make this into the idea that unforgiveness itself is the unforgivable sin. It is better to say that forgiveness is evidence of truly being forgiven, and that habitual unforgiveness may show that a person's heart has never really been touched by the love of Jesus.

i. "Those who will not forgive cannot expect to be forgiven." (France) As James later wrote, *judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.* (James 2:13)

ii. Additionally, we remember the punishment of the unforgiving man in the parable of Jesus: the master **delivered him to the torturers**. There are many poor souls who are *tortured* by their own unforgiveness toward others.