

## The Unmerciful Servant

**Bible Passage:** Matthew 18:21-35

**Main Point:** God shows mercy to us so that we will show mercy to others.

**Key Passage:** Mark 6:34

**Big Picture Question:** Why did Jesus tell parables? Jesus told parables to teach people about God and His kingdom.

### Leader BIBLE STUDY

Jesus had been teaching His disciples when Peter asked Jesus, “How many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me?” Peter suggested seven times. Jews considered it standard to show forgiveness three times (see Job 33:29-30), so Peter probably thought he was going above and beyond. Jesus answered Peter’s question by telling a story about an unmerciful servant.

In the parable, a servant owed his master ten thousand talents. A talent was equal to about 20 years of wages. Ten thousand talents represented a debt that could never be repaid. Faced with debtors’ prison, the servant begged for more time to repay the master. Instead, the master released his servant and forgave the great debt.

The same servant went out and confronted a man who owed him a hundred denarii—about 100 days of wages. The man begged for more time, but the servant refused and put the man in prison. When the master heard what happened, he was angry that the servant who had been forgiven a great debt did not show mercy to the man who owed a small debt. So the master put the man in prison until he could pay his debt. Jesus concluded the parable by explaining that God would react in the same way to anyone who does not forgive his brother.

We are like the servant, and God is like the master. Because of our sin, we owe a debt we cannot pay. We deserve to be punished for our sin, but God the Father showed His love by sending His Son, Jesus, to pay the debt we owe. Jesus lived the perfect life we fail to live and died the death we deserve to die. We come to Him with nothing to offer but empty hands of faith. Those who trust in Jesus are completely forgiven.

As you teach kids, emphasize that God shows mercy to us so that we will show mercy to others—not just three times or seven times, but many times—not keeping count. We have been forgiven a great debt, so we can forgive others when they sin against us.

## The BIBLE Story

### The Unmerciful Servant

*Matthew 18:21-35* (bolded text can be read as a shorter version of the story)

Peter asked Jesus, “How many times should I forgive someone who wrongs me? Is seven times enough?”

Jesus answered, “Not just seven times, but seventy times seven times!” Then **Jesus told Peter a story to help him understand what forgiveness in the kingdom of heaven is like.**

**Jesus said, “One day, a king asked all his servants to tell him how much they each owed the king. One of the servants owed the king fifty million silver coins! The servant did not have any money to give the king, so the king ordered for the servant and his family to be sold as payment for the debt.**

**“But the servant fell on his knees and begged the king, ‘Please give me more time. I will repay you everything I owe!’ The king felt sorry for the man, so he let the man go and forgave the debt; the servant did not have to pay the king anything.**

**“As the servant was leaving, he ran into a man who owed him one hundred silver coins. The servant grabbed the man by the throat and choked him. ‘Give me the money you owe me!’ he demanded.**

**“The man fell to his knees and begged the servant, ‘Please give me more time. I will repay you everything I owe!’ But the servant refused, and he threw the man into jail.**

**“Some other servants told the king what happened. The king called for the servant he had forgiven. ‘You are an evil man!’ said the king. ‘I forgave what you could never repay, and you did not forgive the small amount.’ The king was angry. He punished the official and made him pay his debt.”**

**Jesus said, “This is what My Father in heaven will do if you do not forgive each other.”**

*Christ Connection: Nothing we do is enough to pay the debt we owe God and take away God’s punishment for our sin. Jesus came and died on the cross to pay for our sin and take the punishment we deserve. When we trust in Jesus, God forgives our sin completely. We can forgive others because God has greatly forgiven us greatly.*