

PARABLES

THE STORIES TOLD BY JESUS

The Unforgiving Servant- Matthew 18:21-35
June 21st, 2015

OBSERVE & REFLECT

(This section is designed to encourage us to reflect on and observe the scripture and weekend sermon.)

READ Matthew 18:21-35

- ☀ Read the text at least twice. Try reading the text from two different translations.
- ☀ What do you observe in the text? What jumps out at you and grabs your attention? What questions do you have from the text? Pay attention to any action words or phrases and observe what the implications are.

INVESTIGATE & APPLY

(This section focuses on what the scripture has to say as we dig deeper into the Word. It is oriented to create discussion on the Scripture.)

1. What is the context of the passage found in verse 21? The Jewish principle was to forgive someone up to 3 times, but not to go beyond that. Why was Peter proud of his statement, and how does Jesus' response in verse 22 lead into the parable? What was Jesus saying?
2. The first servant owed a debt that equals around 2 billion dollars. Why would Jesus use such a large number? How does this apply to us?
3. What did the man beg for in verse 26? How did his master respond in verse 27? What does this show you about the nature of forgiveness?
4. The second servant owed the first servant a debt that equals around 3000 dollars. Yet, he refused to forgive him, even though the man said the exact same thing to him that he said to his master. What is Jesus trying to help us see here?
5. Why do you think Jesus wants us to forgive others for the wrongs they have done for us? What are the alternatives practiced by people who do not forgive? What effects does not practicing forgiveness have on our lives?

What is a Parable?

The word "parable" (*παραβολε*) comes from two Greek words, *para* which mean "alongside", and *ballo* which means "to throw". It literally means "throw alongside". In a parable, something familiar is placed alongside something unfamiliar or mysterious in order to help reveal the unknown. Jesus usually used the natural world, which was well-known by His audience, to teach about the unknown and mysterious kingdom that He was ushering in.

NEXT STEPS

- C.S. Lewis said, "Forgiveness is a beautiful word, until you have something to forgive." Think about the contrast that forgiveness creates. When we need to be forgiven for something, forgiveness is beautiful and we want mercy. Yet, often times when we need to forgive someone else, we are hesitant because we want justice. Have you felt this? When have you been given mercy, and how did it feel? When have you had to show mercy, and how did it feel?
- Usually, when this parable is read and forgiveness is discussed, someone in particular comes to mind. Has this happened for you? If so, forgive them. When Jesus said that we need to forgive "70x7" times, he was saying that we stop counting and offer others the grace that God offers us. Sometimes that is for many little offenses. But more often, it is for one large offense that causes pain and you must forgive day after day. Forgiveness is ultimately absorbing the pain that someone has caused you, as Christ has done for you on a cosmic scale.