

Talk to Me

LEARNING TO PRAY LIKE JESUS



vGROUP STUDY



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Written by Joshua Hagans.

Design, layout, and illustrations by Christopher Wilson.

"FORGIVE US"

According to Matthew 6:12, Jesus wants us to forgive our enemies. We are to pray, “forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Forgiveness is like releasing a debt. Jesus uses the word “debt” to describe unforgiveness, which is appropriate if you think about it. Whenever we are hurt, we often treat the offender as if they are a debtor—that they have taken something from us. Put another way, they create a debt in our relationship; that’s why we say, “you owe me an apology.” Christian author and pastor, Andy Stanley observes that when we don’t get the debt paid, we hold it against our offender because we feel like we are victims.¹

- Think to yourself for a moment; have you ever felt like a victim, and if so, when?
- Reflect on the last time you felt cheated; what was that like, and do you still feel bothered by it?
- Do you struggle with unforgiveness, and if so, why do you think it is so hard to forgive your debtor?

In Matthew 18:21–35, Jesus told the story of an unforgiving servant. This parable is about a man who had just been forgiven a debt that he could never repay. And yet, despite experiencing such a generous offer of forgiveness, this man turned around and failed to forgive others what they owed to him.

²¹Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

Matthew 18:21–27

Today when we read this passage, the rhetorical impact is lost on us—we fail to grasp how much 10,000 talents is. According to Bible Scholar, John Noland, 10,000 talents was the equivalent of 200,000 years of hard labor.² Jesus is using an exaggeration to make a powerful point: this man owed something that he could never repay.

- How would you have felt to be forgiven of 10,000 talents?

- Imagine how thankful this man was. If you had been forgiven of this much, do you think you'd find it easier to forgive others that owed you?

²⁸But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' ²⁹So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' ³⁰He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.

Matthew 18:28–30

Imagine the shock of the very first crowd that heard this story. This servant had just been forgiven 200,000 years of hard labor, and he could not forgive his fellow servant the insignificant sum of 100 denarii.

- Compare verse 26 with verse 29; Notice the similarity between the words used by the two servants. Why do you think the unforgiving servant could not hear his own cries in the plea of the one that owed him?

- What would you have said to this unforgiving servant?

³¹When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. ³²Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' ³⁴And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. ³⁵So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Matthew 18:31–35

- Who do you think the king represents in this parable (Hint: God the Father)

- Who do you think the unforgiving servant represents in this story?

¹⁴For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

Matthew 6:14

- According to Jesus's words, what do you think he is saying to you? Who has forgiven your debts?

When we forgive, we let go of debts because God has forgiven us our debts. But what does this mean practically? Here's something to keep in mind: forgiveness doesn't mean to reconcile. There are plenty of people in our lives who we need to forgive, but we may never see reconciliation. To forgive means we relinquish our right to repayment. Why? Because when we forgive, we let go of our own sense of justice and put it into the hands of the one who is Just.

- What would you say are the characteristics of someone who is bitter? Do you think bitterness is evidence of unforgiveness? Why?
- Do you have bitterness?
- Spend some time in prayer thinking about ways you might need to forgive others. End by thanking Jesus for his forgiveness.

REFERENCES

¹ Sermon found on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HP5lwLqtNWc> (accessed 2/08/20).

² John Noland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, the New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2005), 756.