

# SERMON STUDY GUIDE



## Part 5 // “Parable of the Unforgiving Servant”



The Kingdom of Heaven is God's rule in our hearts and lives. The parables are the secrets of what the kingdom is and how it operates. The teachings of living in the Kingdom of God seem completely opposite from how we have learned to live in our society. The Kingdom of God is right-side-up living! It's the world that is upside down! No wonder so many people are tired and weary; they have spent their whole lives living upside down. Here, we journey through Matthew's Gospel using the parables to explain the Kingdom of Heaven to our upside-down world!

## ICE BREAKER QUESTIONS

- What is something fun you've done over the past week?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What are your favorite Thanksgiving traditions?

# GOING DEEPER INTO THE MESSAGE

## Read Matthew 18:21-35 (CSB)

21 Then Peter approached him and asked, “Lord, how many times must I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times?”

22 “I tell you, not as many as seven,” Jesus replied, “but seventy times seven.

23 “For this reason, the kingdom of heaven can be compared to a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle accounts, one who owed ten thousand talents<sup>[q]</sup> was brought before him. 25 Since he did not have the money to pay it back, his master commanded that he, his wife, his children, and everything he had be sold to pay the debt.

26 “At this, the servant fell facedown before him and said, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 Then the master of that servant had compassion, released him, and forgave him the loan. 28 “That servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him, started choking him, and said, ‘Pay what you owe!’

29 “At this, his fellow servant fell down<sup>[q]</sup> and began begging him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.’ 30 But he wasn’t willing. Instead, he went and threw him into prison until he could pay what was owed. 31 When the other servants saw what had taken place, they were deeply distressed and went and reported to their master everything that had happened. 32 Then, after he had summoned him, his master said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. 33 Shouldn’t you also have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And because he was angry, his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured until he could pay everything that was owed. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to you unless every one of you forgives his brother or sister from your heart.”

### **POINT 1-The bar is always raised in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

In this passage, Peter approaches Jesus to ask about forgiveness, wondering how many times he should forgive someone who wrongs him. Jesus responds with the parable of the unforgiving servant, illustrating that in the Kingdom of Heaven, forgiveness is not just a matter of numbers but a reflection of our understanding of God’s grace.

When it comes to forgiveness, much like Peter, we are looking for what our minimum and our maximum is. How many times do we forgive? What if the injury still hurts? The Kingdom of Heaven raises the bar of our expectations and our involvement. Forgiveness is something that we receive from God and extends toward others.

Peter was wondering what the lowest level of engagement was when it came to forgiveness. Jesus raises the bar of our engagement in many areas of our lives, especially in the realm of forgiveness.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What do you think prompted Peter to ask Jesus about the limits of forgiveness? How does this question reflect common struggles in our own lives?
- In the parable, how does the servant's debt compare to the debts others owe him? What does this comparison reveal about our understanding of forgiveness?
- How does this parable challenge or reinforce your understanding of God's forgiveness towards you?

### **POINT 2- Extending mercy is proof that my debt was wiped clean.**

Why are we encouraged to extend extravagant forgiveness? Because we have received extravagant forgiveness! Imagine, just for a moment, all of the ways in which God has been graciously forgiving toward you! It could be the forgiveness of an ill word that was spoken, a decision that you wish you could undo, maybe a thought that you wish you didn't think, something you are not proud of, something that you've hidden in the past. When we fall, mess up, or live apart from God's direction, when we bring it to God in repentance, He responds with forgiveness. God has not limited His forgiveness toward you or others, and as His image-bearers, we should not limit our forgiveness toward ourselves or others as well.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Have you ever struggled to forgive someone? What were the circumstances, and how did you navigate those feelings?
- In what ways can forgiving others free us from emotional or spiritual burdens? Can you share a time when forgiveness brought you peace?
- What do you think are the long-term effects on a person who refuses to forgive, as suggested by the servant's fate?
- After reflecting on this passage, what specific action can you take this week to extend forgiveness to someone in your life?