

## of Discipleship

June 20, 2021

### Day 1: Matthew 18:21-22

**Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'**

When we think about what happens when someone "sins against us," it means a change in our relationship with that person. In our day we can have a complete break in a relationship and not ever run into the person. However, if we live in an area where we will often run into the person it becomes hard to go about our daily business. Jesus is concerned here with restoring relationships, not getting even or being fair. Forgiveness is a demonstration of the Kingdom of God. Fairness is not a Christian ideal, it is secular one. Mercy and forgiveness are Christian ideals.

**Question:** Why do you think Jesus picked the number 77?

**Challenge:** Think of recently - who has "sinned" against you and how has that affected your relationship with them?

**Scripture:** Genesis 18:23-33

### Day 2: Matthew 18:23-25

**'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.'**

The story is told about a gentile king because in Judaism one could not sell children to pay a debt. The kingdom of heaven is compared to the whole story, not to the king who gives mercy. The language implies that the servant did not steal the money but made a bad investment. The money owed was beyond anything that could be paid back, even if the servant and his family were sold into slavery. It is an impossible figure to raise.

**Question:** Do you think the servant had responsibility for the king's money?

**Challenge:** Think about your debts - what would it take to pay off all your debts if it was demanded of you right now?

**Scripture:** Matthew 20:1-16

### Day 3: Matthew 18:26-27

**So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt.**

The fact that the servant expresses a willingness to make good on the debt (in a sense, work all his life) shows that he is not blaming the world for his mistake and is willing to accept responsibility. He knows that he has no legal or moral right to ask for forgiveness. The King also has no moral reason to forgive the debt - but he does. This is the first surprise in the parable. Notice the servant asks that the King have patience, not forgive him. This part of the story ought to remind us that we often bother God with trivial things and get angry when we do not receive them. God is ready to give us what we need for life - forgiveness of our sins. God does not mind hearing our concerns but God will give us what we need, not want we want.

**Question:** Why do you think the lord was willing to forgive the debt?

**Challenge:** Think of three reasons why debt should be forgiven and three reasons why it should not.

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:1-9

### Day 4: Matthew 18:28

**But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, "Pay what you owe."**

The servant's request of the fellow slave is not unreasonable. The debt is owed and the person ought to pay. If we charge something we ought to pay what is owed. If we incur any debt we need to pay that debt. Seizing the person by the throat leads us to suspect that the servant was not feeling gratitude for his debt being forgiven but more like he got away with something.

**Question:** Is credit a good or bad thing?

**Challenge:** How much power should a collection agency have in making someone pay a debt?

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:24-34

### Day 5: Matthew 18:29-30

**Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you." But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.**

"Have patience with me" sounds familiar. The fellow servant was not asking to be forgiven but for the other to just wait a bit. The ethical response to the request to wait would be to say OK and then set an acceptable time for repayment. The people listening to the story would expect that the one who was forgiven would respond with gratitude by allowing the other servant to pay the debt back as he was able. They would not expect the first servant to forgive as the King did. However the surprise was that the first servant throws his friend in jail.

**Question:** Why do you think they put someone in jail until the debt is paid?

**Challenge:** In what cases today will being in debt land you in jail?

**Scripture:** Matthew 13:36-58

### Day 6: Matthew 18:31-33

**When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?"**

The king expects the servant to do more than custom or society would expect. The correct response is to allow the other slave to repay later. The king is telling the servant to go beyond what the world expects and show mercy. It was not as if the king demands something that the king did not first show. Jesus expects us to go beyond fairness and justice, to be merciful and forgive. God has forgiven us so we too must forgive others. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not for the faint of heart.

**Question:** Have you found yourself in the position of being forgiven and not forgiving another?

**Challenge:** Can you come up with a working definition of mercy?

**Scripture:** Matthew 9:8-18