

Bible Stories for Adults

The Unforgiving Servant

Matthew 18:15-35

Opening

Gathering: Why do we find it so difficult to forgive others when they wrong us?

Today's Focus: Jesus teaches us to forgive others just as God has already forgiven us.

Key Verses: *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.* Matthew 18:18

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:36

Opening Prayer

Lesson

Our Forgiving Father (*Luke 15*)

What does God require of His people?

Matthew 5:48

What fraction of God's people can we expect to meet this requirement?

Romans 3:23

What should be the attitude of those of us who fall short of the requirement?

Luke 15:21

How does God respond when a sinner returns to Him?

Luke 15:20

Luke 15:22

Luke 15:23

Does God really celebrate the return of one sinner?

Luke 15:7, 10

How does God celebrate a sinner's return to faith?

Ephesians 2:8-9

How is this gift in contrast to what we really deserve?

Romans 6:23

Our Sinning Brother (*Luke 17*)

Should we ever expect Satan to stop tempting people to sin?

Luke 17:1

How bad is it for someone to tempt a child of God to sin?

Luke 17:2

What should we do if a brother sins against us?

Luke 17:3

Why did Pharisees teach that righteous people should forgive twice, three times if exceptional?

Amos 2:6a

What if you forgive him and he does it again?

Luke 17:4

Seven

If forgiving someone three times was not enough for Jesus, how many was enough?

Matthew 18:21-22

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Jesus' Forgiveness (*Luke 5*)

Why were the Pharisees upset when Jesus forgave people's sins?

Luke 5:18, 20-21

Why had Jesus forgiven the man's sins rather than healing his paralysis?

Luke 5:22-26

What did Jesus do with His authority to forgive sins before he ascended to heaven?

John 20:22-23

Why should we take forgiveness of others so seriously?

Matthew 18:18

Office of the Keys (*Matthew 16:19*)

Why did Martin Luther call this the Office of the Keys?

Matthew 16:19a

What is the Office of the Keys? (From Luther's Small Catechism)

It is that authority which Christ gave to His Church to forgive the sins of those who repent and to declare to those who do not repent that their sins are not forgiven.

What does this mean?

I believe that, when the called ministers of Christ deal with us by His divine command, especially when they exclude manifest and impenitent sinners from the Christian congregation, and, again, when they absolve those who repent of their sins and are willing to amend, this is as valid and certain, in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us Himself.

The Unrepenting Brother (*Matthew 18:15-17*)

When you are sinned against, are you to quietly accept it as your own problem?

Matthew 18:15

What is the intent of going to your brother, to confront him with his sin?

Galatians 6:1

What if the brother won't listen to you?

Matthew 18:16

What is it important to have witnesses?

Deuteronomy 19:15

Why are witnesses needed to establish the matter?

Luke 6:41-42

What if he still won't listen?

Matthew 18:17

What does Jesus mean to treat him like a pagan or a tax collector?

1 Corinthians 5:11-13

Is this expulsion intended as punishment for the evil?

1 Corinthians 5:6-7

What should we do if one who has been expelled repents and turns from his sin?

2 Corinthians 2:6-8

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Judging Others (*Matthew 7*)

Should we confront our brother with every sin we see, no matter how large or small?

Matthew 7:1-2

Does this mean that we should not judge others?

1 Corinthians 6:2-3

What parable did Jesus speak that best explains which sins we should bring up?

Matthew 7:3-5

The Forgiving King (*Matthew 18:23-37*)

What parable did Jesus give to show the importance of forgiving others?

Matthew 18:23

How much money was owed by the king's servant in the parable?

Matthew 18:24

What was the standard way of dealing with someone who couldn't pay a debt?

Matthew 18:25

Where did this practice come from?

Exodus 22:3b

How did the king show his mercy with the servant?

Matthew 18:26-27

The Unforgiving Servant (*Matthew 18:28-34*)

How appreciative was the servant and how long did he remain so?

Matthew 18:28

Did the servant remember the mercy he had received when he had the chance to give it?

Matthew 18:29-30

How did the king feel about the servant's response to his mercy?

Matthew 18:31-33

How was the servant then treated in response to the way he had treated the other servant?

Matthew 18:34

Our Forgiveness (*Matthew 18:35*)

What is the key message of this parable for us?

Matthew 18:35

How do we regularly ask for this treatment?

Matthew 6:12

Does God forgive us because we first forgive others, or vice versa?

Ephesians 4:32

When will God withhold His forgiveness to us?

Matthew 6:14-15

Does this mean that whether or not God has mercy depends on our desires or efforts?

Romans 9:14-16

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Mercy (*Luke 6:36*)

What is another way to state the message of this parable?

Luke 6:36

Was this a new truth introduced by Jesus?

Micah 6:8

And what can we expect by showing mercy to others?

Matthew 5:7

What reasons does Paul give for us to show mercy to others?

Colossians 3:12-14

What should we remember when we have opportunities to give mercy and forgiveness to others?

Luke 6:37-38

C. S. Spurgeon: *When you go to God, ask for mercy, not for justice. A mother went to the Emperor Napoleon to ask for mercy for her son. He had committed some breach of the French law, and the emperor replied, "Madam, this is the second time the boy has offended. Justice requires that he should die." She answered, "I did not come to ask for justice. I beg for mercy." He answered, "He does not deserve mercy." "Sire," she said, "it would not be mercy if he deserved it. I ask for mercy." When she put it that way, the emperor replied, "Well, then, I will have mercy."*

Closing Prayer

Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. How quick am I to forgive someone who wrongs me and then repents?
(*Matthew 18:15-22; 6:12-15; Genesis 50:15-21; Luke 17:3-4; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; Ephesians 4:32*)
2. How quick am I to recognize when I have hurt someone and then confess and repent of it?
(*Matthew 18:15-17; 5:23-24; Psalm 25:11; 51:4; Luke 15:21; Ephesians 4:25-27; 1 John 1:8-10*)
3. How well do I measure up to the standards that I apply to others?
(*Matthew 7:1-5; Ezekiel 35:11; Luke 6:37-38; Romans 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 6:2-3*)
4. When and how has someone shown mercy to me?
(*Matthew 18:23-27; 5:7; 1 Samuel 24; Romans 9:14-16; James 5:10-11; 1 Peter 1:3*)
5. When and how have I failed to show mercy to someone else?
(*Matthew 18:28-35; 6:14-15; 9:10-13; Micah 6:8; Luke 6:36; Colossians 3:12-14; James 2:12-13; 3:17; Jude 22-23*)