

FORGIVEN PEOPLE FORGIVE

Matthew 18:21–35 – Bible Study Lesson Summary

Central Theme

We forgive because we have been forgiven.
Forgiveness is not weakness — it is spiritual freedom.
Grace received is meant to become grace released.

This lesson from Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant reminds us that forgiveness is not simply a command; it is a transformation of the heart that affects our attitude, our tone, our relationships, and even how we view ourselves.

Introduction – The Freedom We Celebrate and the Freedom We Resist

Forgiveness is one of the most celebrated blessings of the Christian faith, yet one of the most difficult practices of the Christian life. We gladly receive God's mercy but often struggle to extend it to others — and at times, even to ourselves. Jesus teaches that forgiveness is not optional equipment for believers; it is a kingdom principle that shapes both our spiritual health and our relational well-being.

Key Scripture:

Matthew 6:12 – *“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”*

Point I – Remember What You've Been Forgiven Of

Matthew 18:24–27

The first servant owed a debt he could never repay, yet the king canceled it entirely. This illustrates the magnitude of God's mercy toward us. Salvation is not a payment plan; it is a cancellation. When we truly remember how much we have been forgiven, humility grows and pride fades. Gratitude becomes the soil where compassion begins.

Key Truths

- God's mercy meets us at our weakest moments.
- The cross represents full forgiveness, not partial relief.
- Remembering grace softens the heart toward others.
- Humility makes forgiveness possible.

Supporting Scriptures

- **Psalm 103:10–12** – God removes our sins far from us.
 - **Ephesians 2:4–5** – God is rich in mercy.
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Point II – Refuse a Hardened Heart

Matthew 18:28–30

The forgiven servant refused to forgive a smaller debt. His heart remained unchanged. Unforgiveness often appears not in loud words, but in quiet attitudes, tone of voice, body language, and strained interactions. Grace must transform both belief and behavior.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, *“Forgiveness is not an occasional act; it is a constant attitude.”* Forgiveness is not only something we pray about — it is something we practice daily in how we speak and respond.

Key Truths

- Unforgiveness hides in attitude, tone, and posture.
- Bitterness affects spiritual growth and relationships.
- Forgiveness begins internally before it shows externally.
- Our demeanor often reveals the condition of our heart.

Supporting Scriptures

- **Ephesians 4:31–32** – Remove bitterness; choose kindness.
 - **Romans 12:18** – Live at peace as far as it depends on you.
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Point III – Release the Debt

Matthew 18:31–35

Unforgiveness becomes a prison for the one who holds it. Releasing the debt is not excusing wrong behavior; it is reclaiming personal peace and trusting God with justice. Forgiveness is a decision that leads to emotional, relational, and spiritual freedom.

This release also applies inwardly. Sometimes the hardest person to forgive is ourselves. Yet Scripture reminds us that God not only forgives but cleanses and restores.

Key Truths

- Forgiveness frees the heart from emotional bondage.
- Peace begins with intentional release.
- Self-forgiveness is accepting God’s mercy, not excusing failure.
- Healing often follows the decision to forgive.

Supporting Scriptures

- **Colossians 3:13** – Forgive as the Lord forgave you.
 - **Romans 12:19** – Leave justice to God.
 - **1 John 1:9** – God forgives and cleanses.
 - **Hebrews 12:14** – Make every effort to live in peace.
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Conclusion – The Freedom of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is not forgetting the past; it is freeing the future. It removes bitterness, restores peace, and aligns our hearts with the character of God. Forgiveness allows healing to begin where resentment once lived and enables us to move forward without carrying unnecessary emotional weight.

Affirmation:

Forgiven people forgive.

Forgiven people remember mercy.

Forgiven people pursue peace.

Forgiven people grow in grace.

Personal Reflection Questions

1. When you reflect on God's forgiveness toward you, what emotions arise — gratitude, humility, relief, or something else?
 2. Is there a person or situation where you have struggled to extend forgiveness? What makes it difficult?
 3. Have you noticed unforgiveness appearing in your attitude, tone, or interactions with others?
 4. Is there an area in your life where you need to forgive **yourself** and fully accept God's grace?
 5. What practical step can you take this week to pursue peace in a relationship or within your own heart?
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Closing Thought:

Forgiveness does not change the past, but it transforms the future. When we forgive, we do not lose strength — we gain freedom.