



First Lutheran Church

Gospel of Matthew

Summer 2026 Reading Challenge



Deep Dive: Forgiveness

Talking to the Kids

We quickly teach our children to say "I'm sorry" when they do something wrong. When they hit a sibling, draw on the wall, or say something they shouldn't.

Apologies are only one part of the equation. The other part is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is when we truly let go of the fault against us. You said something you shouldn't have, and I do not hold that against you. You are forgiven.

You hit me, and you said I am sorry, you will not be in time out now, I forgive you.

We should be teaching our children how to forgive as much as we teach them how to apologize. Forgiving someone should be second nature for those of us who follow Jesus.

Week 9: Matthew chapters 17 and 18

- Matthew 18 offers three examples of forgiveness. First is when Matthew talks about how we are to treat one another in community. If we are wronged by another, we can talk it over, talk it over with a small group, or talk it over with the large group ... and when all else fails, we turn to the forgiveness and welcome Jesus had for outsiders to make for a brand new start.
- Jesus then answers a question from Peter with a mathematical equation. In some senses, this mathematical formula points us to infinity. We just keep forgiving. But it also begs us to ask ourselves the question, are we really forgiving someone if we are keeping count of the hurts the person is causing against us. Are we even supposed to count the times we forgive?
- We then have a parable about a servant who is forgiven a massive debt, but who does not forgive the small debt another owes him. This parable gets us asking the question about forgiveness -- have we really received God's forgiveness if we still hold someone else accountable to their sins against us?
- Forgiveness is tricky. Forgiveness is not easy. For God, we can use the illustration of a chalkboard, or an excel spreadsheet ... God is keeping track of our sins, and then Jesus comes along and erases the chalkboard or deletes the spreadsheet, and suddenly God has no memory of our sins and we are truly forgiven.
- But between us -- how do we forgive the one who broke into our car, killed a loved one, harmed us physically or mentally. The human scars and the damage of the most egregious sins linger far longer than the simple deletion of a computer file. Forgiveness does not equal forgetting. So we live in this quandry, this difficult space.
- Forgiveness from God is supposed to lead to new life. Forgiveness between one another is supposed to lead to new life as well. New life does not look like the old life. Forgiveness of a harmful ex-partner may look new as lives separate and never cross paths again. Forgiveness of one who broke into the house may look like new life when justice is served and the legal system passes judgment to be served. Forgiveness takes on many different forms as new life springs forward.
- There is a great scene in the third season of the TV Show *Ted Lasso*. Coach Lasso is dealing with his star player Jamie Tartt. Tartt has a long, difficult relationship with his drunk father and this is affecting his playing abilities. Coach says to Tartt, you've tried everything else, have you tried forgiving him? Tartt says, he doesn't deserve that. Coach says, you don't forgive him for him. you forgive him for you. This scene illustrates the complexity of forgiveness. Later in the season, not immediately, but later, we see Jamie Tartt reunite with his father, who is in a center getting medical help. Not all forgiveness plays out like it does in a TV script. But that episode becomes a parable for us to ask the question, who benefits from forgiveness? Is it the one being forgiven or the one offering the forgiveness?

Gathered by God, we live our faith with: Compassion, Grace, Gratitude, and Joy

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