

PROTOTYPE

"MODEL GRACE" MATTHEW 18:21-35

This Week's Core Competency

Love – I unconditionally and sacrificially love and forgive others. 1 John 4:10-12 *This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.*

This story of love and forgiveness has been told countless times, and yet it deserves to be told once more.

"During World War II Corrie ten Boom was confined in the concentration camp at Ravensbruck for her part in sheltering Jews from their Nazi oppressors. Her father died in another camp, and in the dehumanizing conditions of Ravensbruck she was not only humiliated and degraded, but she watched the life of her sister Betsy ebb away. Yet God's grace was real in the midst of all the suffering, and after the war she went to Germany to preach God's forgiveness.

Following one service, a man came forward whom she recognized immediately. One of the worst experiences in camp had been the delousing showers where the women were ogled and taunted by leering guards. This man was one of those S.S. guards, a man who had been one of the cruelest, especially to her sister. Now he stood in front of

Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.

- C. S. Lewis

her, with his hand outstretched. *'Ja fraulein, it is wonderful that Jesus forgives all our sins, just as you say.'* Corrie froze as all the memories flooded back, but the man carried on. 'You mentioned Ravensbruck. I was a guard there, but since then I have become a Christian. I know that God has forgiven me, but I would like to hear it from you as well. Fraulein, will you forgive me?'

Corrie stood there paralyzed. She couldn't forgive. Betsy had died there; she had been humiliated. At the same time, she was ashamed that she could preach about forgiveness but couldn't or wouldn't forgive. 'Lord, forgive me. I can't forgive,' she cried inwardly. As she prayed, she felt not only forgiven but set free. The glacier of hate melted within and her hand unfroze. As she reached out her hand and spoke her forgiveness, she felt another burden of the past fall away" (Gary Inrig, *The Parables*, 77, 78).

For Discussion

On forgiving others one author writes, "Unlimited forgiveness is not to be confused with sentimental toleration of hurtful behavior. Christians are often guilty of forgiving too much, too quickly. The misbehavior of alcoholics is not to be laughed off. Ministers who fail to control their sexual impulses are not to be lightly excused. Teenagers who betray their parents' trust are not simply to be forgiven; a much more loving course of action is to insist that they amend their behavior so that they can regain that trust. In these and other instances premature forgiveness is an easy way out that does little to help the offender or to heal a damaged relationship" (Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew, Interpretation*, 218). Agree or disagree?

day 1 ENCOUNTER – read God’s word to put yourself in touch with him.

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

23 "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. 24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. 25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' 27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Cf., another translation

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times?"

22 "No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven, 23 because the Kingdom of heaven is like this. Once there was a king who decided to check on his servants' accounts. 24 He had just begun to do so when one of them was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. 25 The servant did not have enough to pay his debt, so the king ordered him to be sold as a slave, with his wife and his children and all that he had, in order to pay the debt. 26 The servant fell on his knees before the king. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay you everything!' 27 The king felt sorry for him, so he forgave him the debt and let him go.

28 "Then the man went out and met one of his fellow servants who owed him a few dollars. He grabbed him and started choking him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he said. 29 His fellow servant fell down and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back!' 30 But he refused; instead, he had him thrown into jail until he should pay the debt. 31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were very upset and went to the king and told him everything. 32 So he called the servant in. 'You worthless slave!' he said. 'I forgave you the whole amount you owed me, just because you asked me to. 33 You should have had mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you.' 34 The king was very angry, and he sent the servant to jail to be punished until he should pay back the whole amount."

35 And Jesus concluded, "That is how my Father in heaven will treat every one of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." (GNT)

EXAMINE – what the passage says before you decide what it means.

- * Circle "my brother" in v. 21.
- * Highlight Jesus' answer to Peter's question in v. 22.
- * Circle "seventy-seven times" in v. 22.
- * Underline "the kingdom of heaven" in v. 23.
- * Box "like" indicating *comparison* in v. 23.
- * Circle "ten thousand talents" in v. 24.
- * Box "since" indicating *reason* in v. 25.
- * Circle "sold" in v. 25.

- * Box "to" indicating *purpose* in v. 25.
- * Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 28, 30.
- * Circle "a hundred denarii" in v. 28.
- * Box "instead" indicating *contrast* in v. 30.
- * Circle "wicked" in v. 32.
- * Box "just as" indicating *comparison* in v. 33.
- * Highlight "this is how" in v. 35.

day 2

EXPLORE – the answer to these questions to better understand what the passage means.

Consult the explanation of the message and the notes to follow if you need help.

1. What prompted Peter's question in verse 21?
2. Put what Jesus meant by his answer in your own words.
3. Describe the gist of the *contrast* introduced in verse 28.
4. Compare the size of the two servant's debts and explain the point of the *contrast*.
5. Compare the master's response and the forgiven servant's response to their two debtor's pleas and explain the point of the *contrast*.
6. What do you infer from verse 31?
7. Put the point of the rhetorical question in verse 33 in a simple declarative sentence.
8. Describe how the master treated the unmerciful servant.
9. **Discussion:** Talk about how his treatment of the unmerciful servant is like the heavenly Father's treatment of brothers who don't forgive brothers.

day 3

EXAMINE – an explanation of the message to better understand the meaning of the passage.

In light of what Jesus said regarding a brother "who sins against you" (vv. 15-17), Peter asked a legitimate question, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?" and generously proposed "Up to seven times?"

On the question one author writes, "Behind Peter's question, 'Lord how often . . . ?' are two possible concerns, one focusing on the offended party and the other on the offender. Experience suggests that there must be limits to patience with misbehavior, Peter may be asking, 'If my fellow Christian insults me repeatedly, must I go on suffering this indignity just because he always says 'Sorry, old boy!''? Or he may be proposing, 'Is it in the best interests of my brother for me to go on tolerating uncivil behavior when it is clear that his repentance is superficial and he has no intention of changing. These are legitimate concerns, but Jesus' answer addresses neither of them. Both have been dealt with in the previous paragraph, which encourages confrontation for offenses that threaten Christian fellowship" (Douglas A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation, 216).

Jesus no doubt stunned Peter with his answer. Rather than commend him for his forgiving spirit—Peter proposed forgiving more than twice as often as the Jews required—Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." Or in other words, countless times. Peter was speechless as Jesus went on to explain by telling the now familiar parable of the unmerciful servant. Following centuries of domestication and familiarity, the story has unfortunately lost much of its force. It would have been shocking radical when first spoken. The point of the story is impossible to miss. Before he told it, Jesus said we are to forgive each other without keeping track of the number of times we do. Then near the end, the rhetorical question makes it clear that we are to have mercy on each other just as God has had mercy on us (v. 33). And finally, in the last verse, Jesus said, "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart." Evidently we're supposed to forgive one another as often as we're asked to—and mean it.

The details of the story drive the point home. In the first scene, a king conducts an audit of his

ministers of state or provincial governors and discovers that one of them owes him an immense sum—thousands of talents or billions of dollars, take your pick—a sum impossible to repay.

Perhaps Jesus has the practice of tax farming in mind, in which case the man had bid a large sum for taxing rights and had not been able to produce the money. "Jesus is speaking of a vast sum; the man [in the parable] must have been a high official on special service to have been entrusted with such an amount (or perhaps the tax farmer over an especially rich province; Josephus speaks of the taxes from Palestine as amounting to 8,000 talents, Ant. 12.175; he also says that Antipas received 200 talents as taxes from Perea and Galilee and that Archelaus got 600 talents from his area, Ant. 17.318-20)" (Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, 473). In any case, it's a parable, and you get the picture.

With a view to recouping a portion of what he was owed, the king orders that the man along with his wife, children, and all his belongings be sold suggesting that the story is about Gentiles. Jewish law did not countenance the sale of a wife for her husband's debts. But when the servant begs him to be patient and give him extended terms, the king does more than grant his request. He cancels his debt entirely and lets him go!

In the second scene, the former debtor becomes a creditor. A fellow servant owes him a small fraction of what he had owed the king, but when that fellow servant pleads for patience and extended terms just like he had, "the pardoned embezzler stands on his rights and tolerates no breach of the original contract. He takes legal action to have the delinquent thrown into debtor's prison" (216). Other servants who know he had been forgiven but then refused to forgive, report what he had done—or better yet refused to do—to the king who doesn't think much of it.

In the final scene, the master calls his servant on the carpet. Listen to his words for they reveal the point of the parable. "You wicked servant," he says, "I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?" The king then turns the man over to jailers to be imprisoned

and tortured until he has paid in full all he owes. Since the man had no way of earning money in jail, not to mention the fact that he owed a fortune, the king's orders amount to a life sentence.

What Jesus said at the end is hard. Clearly God expects us to forgive one another and mean it. We don't have to forgive others in order to be saved, but once we are saved, our Heavenly

Father expects us to forgive just like we have been forgiven. But what if we don't? Will he revoke our forgiveness and punish us eternally? No, that takes the details of the story too far. God expects us to forgive one another, and if we don't, our fellowship with him will be hindered and we will face being disciplined for unforgiven everyday sins.

The Message of the Passage

God has forgiven us, so he expects us to forgive each other to avoid being disciplined for our unforgiven everyday sins.

day **4** **EMBRACE** – how God spoke to you in his word.

Our desire is to not be merely hearers of the word, but doers of the word as James suggests in James 1:22. Try some of the challenges below to apply what you have learned this week.

- **Journal your thoughts on the passage:**

–Write about what God wants you to know . . .

–Write about how God wants you to feel . . .

–Write about what God wants you to do . . .

“Model Grace”

(Use the space below for Sunday's message notes)

notes **N** STUDY – the commentaries to answer the questions.

- v. 21 **brother** Peter's question links vv. 21-35 to the preceding verses (esp. vv. 15-17). "As with the principles in vv. 15-16, Jesus' advice may work well with unbelievers too, but his primary focus remains on believers" (Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC, 282).
- v. 21 **seven times** "The teaching within Judaism (based on Amos 1:3; 2:6; Job 33:29, 30) is that three times was enough to show a forgiving spirit. Rabbinic Judaism recognized that repeat offenders may not really be repenting at all: 'If a man commits a transgression, the first, second and third time he is forgiven, the fourth time he is not' (b. Yoma 86b, 87a). The Mishnah is even less forgiving: 'If a man said, "I will sin and repent, and sin again and repent," he will be given no chance to repent . . . for transgressions that are between a man and his fellow the Day of Atonement effects atonement only if he has appeared his fellow' (m. Yoma 8.9)" (Michael J. Wilkins, *The NIV Application Commentary: Matthew*, 622).
- v. 22 **seventy-seven times** Or "seventy times seven" (cf. NKJV, NASB, NLT). "Seventy-seven times' is probably an allusion to Gen. 4:24, where Lamech proudly boasts to his wives that he will avenge himself seventy-sevenfold on anyone who dares to attack him. Forgiveness is thus presented as the antonym of revenge. Followers of Jesus must renounce the very human intention of getting even with someone who repeatedly injures them. They are called to be Lamech's polar opposite" (Hare, 216). In either case, the number whether "seventy-seven times" or "seventy times seven" is an example of *hyperbole*. Disciples are to forgive countless times.
- v. 23 **a king** Parable is not allegory. Nevertheless, in this common form of rabbinic story involving a king with servants or sons, "the king almost always stands for God; the servants, for God's people. Often obedient and disobedient servants provide a contrast between righteous and wicked behavior. Settling accounts is a natural metaphor for judgment" (Blomberg, 282-83).
- v. 24 **ten thousand talents** "The 'talent' was the highest known denomination of currency in the ancient Greek language, and ten thousand was the highest number for which the Greek language had a particular word (*myrias*; cf. our *myriad*)" (283). "The exact monetary value is difficult to determine, because the 'talent' was not a coin but a unit of monetary reckoning. A silver talent was about seventy-five pounds, valued at six thousand denarii. Since a denarius was the equivalent of a day's wage for a common laborer and if we use the year 2001's minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour in the United States, a common laborer could expect \$41.20 a day. A talent, therefore, would be worth approximately \$247,200 (cf. 25:15). Altogether, therefore, the man owes at least two and a half billion dollars. As extreme as those figures are, comparisons are difficult to appreciate since such a sum in first century Palestine would be far more disproportionate to the same sum in modern times. Some estimate that the amount is the equivalent of hundreds of billions of dollars. In any case, the hyperbole of the parable is dramatic" (Wilkins, 623). An increase in the minimum wage to \$7.25 an hour would make the talent worth \$348,000 and would boost the man's debt to three and a half billion dollars.
- v. 25 **sold** "Selling people into slavery to pay their debts was extremely common in the ancient world. The man begs for mercy and makes a promise he almost certainly will not be able to keep. To the astonishment of Jesus' original audience, the king pities the man and cancels his debt. Not only will he not sell him into slavery, but he will not require repayment of any kind. Sheer grace is at work here" (Blomberg, 283).
- v. 28 **a hundred denarii** A little more than three month's wages, or \$4,120 at the current minimum wage (\$5,800 if increased). Nothing to sneeze at but nothing in comparison to the billions owed by the first servant.
- v. 28 **choke** "Instead of reacting with the same compassion and grace, the first servant delivers physical punishment by choking him and, instead of selling him into slavery, throws him into the debtor's prison, an even more severe punishment than that threatened him by the king, which made repaying the debt impossible (18:29-30)" (624). The first servant's behavior is made all the more despicable by the disparity in their debts—\$2,500,000,000 versus \$4120
- v. 32 **wicked** Cf., "evil slave" (the NET Bible; NLT); "you worthless slave" (GNT); "you scoundrel" (NEB). "The adjective *poneros* may indeed have here its general connotation of 'bad' or 'unethical,' but in 6:23 and 20:15, where it modifies 'eye,' it connotes an envious, grudging, or miserly spirit. In the parable, therefore, it may signify 'mean-spirited'" (Hare, 217).
- v. 35 **this is how . . .** F F Bruce calls this verse "a very hard saying" and then again "a hard saying indeed!" (*The Hard Sayings of Jesus*, 77, 78). Is Jesus saying that forgiven people who refuse to forgive others will have their pardon revoked and subsequently be punished eternally? Although some believe that he is, their view presses the details too hard. The point of the parable is implied in verse 33. The forgiven servant should have had mercy on his fellow servant just as his master had had on him" (v. 33). The fact that he didn't left him liable for his sins in question.
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Family Time

Family time will help you take a break from your busy schedule and spend time connecting with your family.

Tips for your Family Time: Keep it simple! Be flexible! Do it often! HAVE FUN!!

This week's Family Time will require a little planning but I guarantee the results will be worth it.

Invite another family or two and head to the park for Family Olympics. Family and friends will have fun picnicking and competing in fun games.

Ideas for your Family Olympics:

- * Sack races with old pillow cases
- * Tennis ball throws
- * Tug of war
- * Obstacle courses are easy to build with simple household items or use the park's playground
- * Have a scavenger hunt to see which team can find the most unusual rock

Our core competency this week is Love. Nothing says love more to your family than time. Enjoy spending some quality time with them. When groups of people get together there is always the potential for conflict. If an issue arises during your Olympics, remind kids that a big part of love is forgiveness. Have fun and enjoy your games, Olympians!

What Does The Bible Say

Weekly Verse: Matthew 6:12

"Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors."

- *What did Jesus mean by "debt"?
- *Who did Jesus say to forgive?
- *Who is a "debtor"?

What Do You Think

*Why is it important to forgive people?

*Who do you need to forgive?

*What do you need to ask God to forgive you for?

What R U Going To Do

Write a note to God thanking him for forgiving your sins. Place the note somewhere special to read occasionally.

MEMORY TIME

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the Memory Verse throughout the house.

Core Comp

Love - Giving away lots of love and forgiveness even when others don't deserve it

Memory Verse

Matthew 6:13 "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

KIDPIX COUPON

I memorized CC ____ and Verse _____. Family completed **Say** _____ **Think** _____ **Do** _____

Child's name _____ Grade ____ Parent's signature _____

Earn tokens by completing the Bible study portion of this page.

Questions: Kids@pantego.org

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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Keith Smith (B.A. in Speech Communication, Texas Tech University and M.A. in Religious Education, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is the Family and Children's Pastor at Pantego Bible Church. Keith speaks at children/student camps across the country. He has developed a number of relational parenting seminars designed to motivate parents to empower their parenting by emotionally connecting with their kids. Keith lives with his wife, Denise, and their two children, Jordan and Alex.



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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.