



THE PARABLES OF JESUS

SESSION 4

Parable of the Unmerciful Servant: *Leaders Guide*

ICE BREAKER

Start off with an ice breaker to get everyone warmed up.

HANGOUT NIGHT

Hangout Night is next week March 17th. Spend time discussing with your group.

WELCOME

Now let's be real for a moment, life in a fallen world is often characterized by broken trust, strained relationships, or unmet expectations. Whether it is intentional or not, we are constantly either hurting others **OR** being hurt by others. As a result, we're either seeking forgiveness **OR** delivering vengeance [I said we're going to be real for a moment]. This "conflict" that goes on inside of us [seeking forgiveness or delivering vengeance] should have received a reprieve when Christ came into our life.

Today, we will be in [Matthew 18:21-35](#) and will be reading the parable of the Unforgiving Servant. Through this parable we will see our need to **forgive** others and to be **forgiven** by them. As we explore this parable, we will see how God's never-ending forgiveness changes the way we live and relate to Him as well as the people around us.

QUESTION

Curious – by raise of hand – how many of you would classify yourself as a person who:

- Constantly hurting others and seeking out forgiveness?
- **OR** you're being hurt and delivering vengeance?
- Is there a "C" option?

QUOTE

Look how they will answer it another day, who, though they bear the Christian name, persist in the most rigorous and unmerciful treatment of their brethren, as if the strictest of laws of Christ might be dispensed with for the gratifying of their unbridled passions; and so they curse themselves every time they say the Lord's prayer. - *Matthew Henry*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Matthew 18:21-22](#)

Before talking about the parable of the unmerciful/ unforgiving servant in [Matthew 18:21-35](#) we should know that Jesus gave instructions about responding to sin between individuals in [Matthew 18:15-20](#). Quite often, [Matthew 18:15-20](#) is used to understand how to handle church discipline when there is a conflict between church members.

This is a difficult passage for the church. It was in the past and it still remains a difficult passage in the present. The parable we are going to talk about today follows on the heels of this difficult text.

This parable is the honestly the same issue BUT on the flip side. This passage is not about the one who sins – but the one who is sinned against. And Jesus will teach us through this parable that when we are sinned against, our response MUST be in line with the gospel.

In **verses 21-22**, you can almost see how Peter is working through what Jesus is teaching them and how his response [which I think it is hilarious that Peter is the one who is processing this – considering that he is the one doing the offending] his forgiveness is to be in line with what Jesus is teaching them.

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 18:23-27**

A talent was a measurement of money in those days [don't know if silver or gold] and it was measured by weight. Immediately you should ask, *"how much money do I owe when you stop counting and start weighing..."*

- Roughly a talent weighed 75lbs.
- Now this guy owed 10,000 talents. *[there will be math in this lesson today.]*
- So, he owes **750,000 lbs of money**.

This is a great debt - and requires great mercy. In **verse 27**, we see the three-fold response of the merciful king.

- He had **pity** on the servant.
- He **released** the servant.
- And, he **forgave** the servant's debt.

QUESTIONS

What seems to be Peter's view of forgiveness? How does this compare to your own?

For what does the first servant in the parable ask? Can he make good on his promise? How is this similar to ways we approach God?

What three things does the master initially do for the servant [verse 27]?

- *Why do you think that each act is significant?*

What does this parable say about our condition before God?

- *Describe the spiritual debt that you owe to God.*
- *How has God handled this debt?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read **Matthew 18:28-34**

These two guys are equals – this WOULD be the equivalent to your family member or friend. But the debt is not comparable:

- One owes 100 denarii [that's 100 days of wages] - which could be paid back reasonably.
- More math = 6000 denarii in a talent x 10,000 [number of talents owed in the 1st half of the parable] = roughly **60,000,000 days wages**.
- 60,000,000/ 365 = **roughly 164,383 years that the forgiven servant owed the king**.

So, by taking the two halves of the parable it seems that everything is different:

- Different debts.
- Owed to two different people.
- Even the ability to payback is different.

But, there's one thing that is the same – let's look in [verse 29](#). Just like in the first half, the offending servant pleaded for patience and mercy - 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.'

- This is the only thing that is the two men in debt make the exact same [plea](#).

QUESTIONS

What are the similarities and differences between the two servants' debts, their pleas, and the response they get?

How does the first servant's lack of mercy impact others?

- *What is the end result for him?*

How does God's forgiveness of your sins change the way that you relate to other people?

- *What kinds of requirements and conditions do you wait for people to meet before you forgive them?*

SCRIPTURE

Have someone in the group look up and read [Matthew 18:35](#)

Our mindset is that when people "wrong us" or "sin against us" that we want them to get what they deserve. But, Jesus tells us that those who are in His kingdom will extend mercy BECAUSE mercy has been extended. Those who are unwilling to forgive others who sin against them will not be forgiven by God and will be given the punishment that they deserve for their sin against Him. This is direct – but it's just that simple.

QUESTIONS

What warning does Jesus give in [verse 35](#) to those who do not forgive others?

- *Are there people who you do OR you have struggled to extend forgiveness?*
- *How can Jesus' parable motivate you or guide in you that relationship?*

CONCLUSION

This parable is a picture of the gospel – a picture of God's mercy – a picture of the Kingdom of Heaven. Here's how:

- The gospel is about a [relationship](#) between a servant and a King. By the way, we're the servant.
- The gospel is all about an infinite [debt](#). We owe Him everything.
- The gospel is about a just [punishment](#).
- The gospel is about a merciful king that provides [forgiveness](#).
- And, the gospel is about a [change](#) that should happen in us – mercy received produces mercy given.

The parables we will be discussing this spring are:

- ***Hangout Night Next Week!***
- ***The Parable of the Prodigal Son - Luke 15:1-3, 11-32***
- ***The Parable of the Talents - Matthew 25:14-30***
- ***The Parable of the Ten Virgins - Matthew 25:1-13***
- And, ***the Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37***

I would encourage you to read ahead and study these parables in the days and weeks ahead. I am excited to see where this study leads us as a group and individually in understanding the teachings of our Lord, Jesus Christ.