

28.65b Forgiveness (Matthew 18:21–35)

✓ “Check” it out: opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows
[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher, not the student. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and/or visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Please give credit to the sources of pictures.
- Check also “Activities” and “Handwork” below for additional suggested items.
- (optional) The flannelgraph story, “Forgiving Others,” from *Evangelizing Today’s Child*, April 1971
- A chalkboard or white board and chalk or dry-erase marker
- Separate document, “28.65b 100 days to 200000 years graph”
- At least one ream of paper; three would be better

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: Vocabulary words are enlarged for flashcards at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.

- *to forgive*: choosing to release from one’s grudges others who have offended
- *one talent*: in Jesus’ day it would take 20 years for a day laborer to earn one talent (<https://chimesnewspaper.com/13189/opinions/parable-two-debtors/>)
- *one hundred denarii*: the wages a laborer would earn in 100 days in Jesus’ day (one denarius per day); one-third of a year’s salary, or four months’ wages (*Ibid.*)
- *mercy*: loving kindness (ESV); withholding deserved punishment

Scripture: (ESV)

Matthew 18:21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times [most translations read “seventy times seven”].

23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”

Introduction/Review:

After Jesus spoke with His disciples about their competing for the greatest positions in Christ’s kingdom, He preached to them about offenses, especially the offense of causing someone else to sin. He said, “If your hand, foot, or eye causes you to sin, it would be better to remove the offending body part in this life, leaving you maimed, rather than go to hell forever with that body part.” In addition, Jesus told them that the

offended person is protected by guardian angels and that Jesus cares for the offended (or lost) person as a shepherd seeks for a lost sheep. Jesus then gives the procedure to deal with offenses so that reconciliation, if possible, will take place. Prayer in all these situations is effective. The offended believer must still retain his “saltiness”—his or her godly qualities that will be a testimony to the world of the work of God within them. These six things Jesus proclaimed in our last lesson.

Story:

Peter’s question

Peter introduced our seventh, and last, proclamation by Jesus in this event. He came up to Jesus and said to Him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me (or offend me), and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”

Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”*

Let’s do the math: [use the chalkboard or white board] what is seven times seventy? [490.] [Teacher, show the chart found below with 490 numbered squares.] I would have trouble forgiving seven times; seventy-seven times would be beyond me without God’s grace, and four hundred ninety times is just about infinity in the forgiveness world. God is able to provide the grace to forgive even this many times.

This “astronomical” number is nothing compared to the numbers in the illustration Jesus gave. Here is the story He told:

The servant’s huge debt

A king wanted to settle accounts with his servants. One of his servants owed him ten thousand talents.

Let me explain. A talent was a lot of money! In 2018 ten thousand talents would have equaled almost \$300 million!** This figure changes from time to time depending on inflation and equivalent purchasing power; so a better, non-inflation way, to show this huge amount of debt is to state it in working days (or years) rather than in dollar amount. Do the math: if it took a worker twenty years to earn one talent, how many years would it take to earn 10,000 talents? [$20 \times 10,000 = 200,000$ years.] Thus, this debt would have taken an average worker 200,000 *years* to pay if everything he earned went toward that debt (<https://chimesnewspaper.com/13189/opinions/parable-two-debtors/>)!

Back to our story of the king. ✓It was impossible for the servant to repay this amount; so the king ordered, “You will be sold, your wife and children will be sold, and all that you have will be sold ✓so that I can get at least a small payment out of you!”

The servant fell on his knees, begging, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” (✓That, of course, would never happen!)

Compassionately, the king replied, “I pity you. I know you can’t pay this debt. I forgive it; you don’t have to pay. You may go.”

What an amazingly kind king! Such love! What a huge, unpayable debt he forgave!

The fellow servant’s small debt

Wouldn’t we expect the servant to be so grateful for this wonderful gift of forgiveness that he would continually think about the wondrous grace given to him? Maybe he would even pass on that grace to others.

To the contrary, that same servant went out, found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii (about one-third year’s wages—though much, much less than the first servant’s, yet a sizeable but payable amount). [Do the motions found in the next words.] The first servant seized his fellow servant, began to choke him, and demanded, “Pay me what you owe!”

This man responded just as the first servant had: he fell down and pled, “Have patience with me, and I will

pay you.”

✓Will the first servant, grateful and remembering the grace of his king, pity his fellow servant? [Pause.] No.

“Pay me what you owe! Off to prison with you. Stay there until the debt is paid!”

How could the debt be paid while the fellow servant was in prison? How unreasonable a punishment to a man of equal station! What totally harsh severity! How could the first servant do this?!

Let’s compare the debts of these two men. [Display the page from the document, “28.65b 100 days to 200000 years graph,” that has five squares on it.] Each square on this paper represents 20 days. The total number of days is what? [5 times 20 = 100 days.] That’s how much the second fellow servant owed.

[Show the page filled with squares from the above document.] Now look at the squares on this page. There are 2000 squares here. The total number of days represented by all the squares on this page is only 40,000 days (20 days x 2000 squares). Fifteen hundred (1,500) pieces of paper [show three reams of paper] filled with squares would give us an idea of how long 200,000 years would be.*** What a comparison to the five squares showing the mere 100 days’ debt of the second servant!

Will the first servant get away with his cruel actions? Oh, no. Other fellow servants were watching the first servant mistreat his fellow servant. They were very upset and conscientious enough to report to the king all that had taken place.

So the king summoned the first servant again and said to him [indignantly], “You wicked servant! I forgave you all that huge debt because you pled with me. Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?” In anger the king delivered the first servant to the jailers until he could pay all his debt ✓(which was never).

Our debt

Then Jesus made a statement that should cause each one of us seriously to examine our own hearts: “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” [Pause.]

Think about it. If you know Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour, you are like the first servant, who has been forgiven an impossible debt by the King—God. You could *never* pay the debt you owe God for your sin. Two hundred thousand years in hell would not pay the debt we owe, but Jesus paid the infinite debt for those He has chosen.

Now suppose that someone has really offended you—done something you feel you could never forgive. In that case, aren’t you like that first servant, who forgot about the kind forgiveness of his king? In not forgiving your “fellow servant,” are you not forgetting your unpayable debt that Jesus forgave and suffered for you? Can’t you forgive the tiny or significant debt owed to you in comparison to the enormous debt you owe God? [In one hand show the page with five squares and with the other, point to the three reams of paper.] We must forgive others. “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” Following the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus said, “For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14, 15). Our relationship with our Father is damaged when we don’t forgive others. This unchristian act, if it continues, might be the evidence that a person is actually unsaved—unforgiven.

Our forgiveness

One of the most important things a person, especially a Christian, needs to learn and practice is forgiveness. What, again, is forgiveness? It is releasing another from being the object of one’s grudge or resentment. There will always be offenses. We need to follow Jesus’ commands regarding forgiveness. After all, as Jesus just said, not to forgive is serious business. He taught us in our last lesson how to handle conflicts. Let’s review:

1. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone.”
2. “If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”
3. ”But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”
4. “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church.”
5. “And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”

Just how to forgive is a perplexing practical question for nearly everyone. Here are some false ideas that people have:

1. “If forgive, I’ll have to forget.”
2. “It’s impossible to forgive in this case.”
3. “I don’t feel like forgiving; therefore, I won’t.”
4. “If the other person is unwilling to deal with this, I can’t forgive.”
5. “Forgiveness means I’ll have to act as if nothing ever happened.”
6. “I have to forgive right away.”****

How can we forgive four hundred ninety times? Here is a bit of advice, insufficient for a full understanding, but, hopefully, helpful:

The king canceled the debt. We, too, can cancel the debt against us—can forgive—by giving up thoughts of revenge or of holding grudges. It may take some time, but when this happens, we can observe that God is working in the heart. [Refer to #2, 3, and 6 above.]

“Forgiveness means we actively choose to let go of the offense, but it doesn’t mean we invalidate it [act as if it never happened]. It happened. It’s history. It’s real. Forgiveness says, ‘I know what you’ve done, and it really hurt. But in full view of this reality, I choose to forgive you. I do this because of the example and power of Christ, and because I want our relationship to be healed’ (Rosberg, p. 247). [Refer to #1 and 5 above.] In a sense, forgiveness makes one able to act as if nothing happened.

“When you release the wrongdoer from the wrong, you cut a malignant tumor out of your inner life. You set a prisoner free, but you discover that the real prisoner was yourself” (Lewis Smedes in *Forgive and Forget*, quoted by Rosberg, p. 248). [Refer to #3 and 4 above.] Each one of us is responsible to forgive at least 490 times but not responsible, if all is done that can be done, for reconciliation.

Reconciliation is best, but realize that you can release (forgive) the other person[s] even if they will not reconcile. [Refer to #4 above.]

Seek to keep your own heart right before God. We must first honestly ask ourselves, “Am I wrong here?” In the time of offenses, bring the matter to God in prayer; ask Him to work in your own heart to give you grace to forgive or to ask forgiveness. “Have salt in yourselves” (Mark 9:50).

“Let us “forgive our brother[s] and/or sister[s] from our hearts” (Matthew 18:35).

*Some Bible scholars think Jesus said, “Seventy-seven times” (see ESV) because of the position of three Greek letters. However, most of the commentators I consulted believe the number should be “seventy times seven” (see KJV).

**The amount was \$2,969.87 for the value of one talent in 2018. I derived this figure from commentator Marvin Vincent’s statement that 10,000 talents would have been worth \$12,000,000 in 1887, when he wrote his *Word Studies* (<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/18-24.htm>). “According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics consumer price index . . . \$12,000,000 in 1880 is equivalent in purchasing power to \$296,987,058.82 in 2018” (<http://www.in2013dollars.com/1880-dollars-in-2018?amount=12000000>). \$296,987,058.82 divided by 10,000 talents equals \$2,969.87 for one talent.

***Based on a 300-day working year, here is the math by which we come to this figure: 300 days x 200,000

years = 60,000,000 days ÷ 40,000 days/page = 1500 pages.

****Most of this material on forgiveness is from *Dr. Rosberg's Do-It-Yourself Relationship Mender* by Dr. Gary Rosberg, Tyndale House Publishers: Wheaton, IL, 1995.

Lessons from This Lesson:

- Jesus is God:
He says His Father in heaven will punish those who do not forgive (Matthew 18:35).
- Deal with offences—ones you cause and those against you—in a proper way.
- Be willing to forgive an infinite number of times. Consider how much more your Heavenly Father has forgiven you in comparison to the present offense against you.

Activities:

- Play dough: crown; king; servant kneeling; coins or other money
- Sing “Forgive, Forgive” found below.
- Practice learning how to ask forgiveness for one’s own offenses. “I was wrong to _____ (e.g., mess up your toys; hit you; say ‘No’; talk in church; scribble on your paper; not be nice to you). Will you forgive me?” Two vital elements in this practice should be to state the offense and actually to ask forgiveness. A short “I’m sorry” is usually insincere and doesn’t prompt a response.
- Discuss going to confront a person who has offended and following the procedure given by Jesus above. Include the idea to be aware that the other person will likely feel free to point out offenses or flaws of the person doing the confronting; thus, that person should prepare to respond with a Christ-like spirit.
- Have younger children sort paper play money.
- Review questions: (Game: Give a student a play-money bill for each question answered correctly.)
 1. What was Peter’s question? [“How often do I need to forgive someone? Seven times?”]
 2. What was Jesus short answer? [“Not seven times but seventy times seven times.”]
 3. Why did the king call in the first servant? [To settle accounts—to get paid back.]
 4. What did the first servant owe the king? [200,000 years’ worth of wages; \$296,987,058.82.]
 5. What would happen to the servant if he did not pay the king? [He would go to jail; his wife and children and goods would be sold.]
 6. What kind thing did the king do? [Forgave the debt.]
 7. How much did the fellow servant owe the first servant? [One hundred days’ wages.]
 8. What did the first servant do to the fellow servant? [Put him in jail.]
 9. What did the king do to the unjust first servant? [Put him in jail.]
 10. Fill in the blanks to the moral of this story: “So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not _____ your brother _____.” [Forgive; from your heart.]

Handwork: (from <http://childrensbiblelessons.blogspot.com/search?q=matthew+18>)

- On a 9” x 12” piece of yellow construction paper, draw a line from one side to the other side of the paper 2” from the top (landscape orientation). Do the same 2” from the bottom of the paper.

Draw a line down the middle of the paper without crossing the two lines already drawn. (See photo.) Write “The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant” and “Matthew 12:21-35” in the top box.

In the box on the left side of the paper, draw a king standing up saying, “You are forgiven.” (Stick figures will do.) In the same box, draw the



servant falling at the king's feet and saying, "Please be patient with me."

In the box on the right, draw the servant standing up, saying, "Throw him in prison!" In the same box, draw the fellow servant falling at the servant's feet, saying, "Please be patient with me."

In the bottom box write, "If we want God to forgive us, then we must forgive others."

Memory Verse:

- Matthew 18:35—" . . . [F]orgive your brother from your heart."

to forgive

one talent

100 denarii

mercy

Review

- If a hand, foot, or eye causes one to sin, it would be better to remove the offending body part in this life, leaving one maimed, rather than go to hell forever with that offending body part.
- The offended person is protected by guardian angels.
- Jesus cares for the offended (or lost) person as a shepherd seeks for a lost sheep.
- Deal with offenses so that reconciliation, if possible, will take place.
- Prayer in all these situations is effective.
- Offended believers must still retain their “saltiness”—godly qualities—that will be a testimony to the world of the work of God within them.

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8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.	21.
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470.	471.	472.	473.	474.	475.	476.
477.	478.	479.	480.	481.	482.	483.
484.	485.	486.	487.	488.	489.	490.

This is how many times (at least) we are to forgive others (70 times 7 = 490 times).

**Then came Peter to him,
and said, Lord, how oft shall
my brother sin against me,
and I forgive him? till seven times?
Jesus said to him, I say not to you,
Until seven times: but,
Until seventy times seven.**

Matthew 18:21-22



<https://www.rainbowtoken.com/until-seventy-times-seven-matthew-18-21-22.html>



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- 1) "If forgive, I'll have to forget."**
- 2) "It's impossible to forgive in this case."**
- 3) "I don't feel like forgiving; therefore, I can't."**
- 4) "If the other person is unwilling to deal with this, I can't forgive."**
- 5) "Forgiveness means I'll have to act as if nothing ever happened."**
- 6) "I have to forgive right away."**

28.65b

"Forgive, Forgive"

Marilyn Alexander

Tune: "Behold, Behold"

Mrs. Newell Schaper

The musical score is written on a single staff in treble clef, with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat) and a common time signature (C). The melody is simple and repetitive, with a slow, steady pace. The lyrics are written below the staff, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across measures. The score is divided into six systems, each starting with a measure number (4, 8, 10, 12, 15). The lyrics are as follows:

"For - give, for - give." Je - sus said to for - give at least four -
hun - dred nine - ty times. "For - give, for - give." Je - sus said to for - give at least four
hun - dred nine - ty times. A king for - gave a ser - vant who owed two
hun - dred thou - sand years' of debt.* The ser - vant would not for - give a man who
owed one hun - dred days' of debt. "We must al - ways, al - ways, al - ways for - give." That's
what Je - sus taught.

*These figures are taken from an article at <https://chimesnewspaper.com/13189/opinions/parable-two-debtors/>.

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