

Prayer Discussion Guide

Week 4—Jan 29th

Confession & Forgiveness—Matthew 18: 21-35

Matthew 18:21-35 (read the complete passage in your Bible)

²¹ Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' ²² Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times. ²³ 'For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵ and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶ So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, "Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything." ³² Then his lord summoned him and said to him, "You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³ Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?" ³⁴ And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt. ³⁵ So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.'

Response Questions

1. Matt. 6:12 (NRSV) says: *And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.* We live in a self-centered society where forgiveness is not the norm. How does the servant's failure to offer forgiveness as he received sound like what happens in day to day life?
2. Name a time when you were forgiven. How did you feel when you received forgiveness?
3. Name a time when you extended forgiveness. How did you feel?
4. Who are you NOT forgiving in your heart? How does this effect your day to day life? How does this impact your relationship with Christ?

Challenges for Groups

¹⁴ *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you;* ¹⁵ *but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. (Matt. 6: 14-15)* This passage should not make us think that we will be punished and not receive eternal life for our reluctance to forgive. However, it is saying that forgiveness is vital to maintaining our relationship with God. Ultimately, God is concerned with restoring our relationship with God and with one another.

1. Some people have caused us harm in a way that makes it difficult to forgive them. What steps can you take forgive that person(s) in your heart, even if you don't confront them face to face?
2. Discuss what it means to have healthy boundaries in your relationships. Where have you seen evidence of unhealthy boundaries?
3. How can we practice forgiveness while maintaining healthy boundaries? How can your group help you with this?

Practice this week—Prayer of Confession

Loving Lord, I confess that the circle of love is repeatedly broken because of my sin and exclusion. I have been reluctant to set aside my hurt, anger, and disappointment. Heal me, Lord, with Your tender touch so that I will be cleansed of all my unclean thoughts, schemes of revenge, and desires for vindictive retribution. Open my eyes to the power of love that is shown to me by the unselfish sacrifice of Your Son, Jesus Christ, who died for my sins and seeks to reconcile me to You. Amen.

Adapted from #491 UMC Book of Worship