

## Forgiveness

### Introduction

Is it wrong to hold a grudge? To refuse forgiveness to someone who's wronged you? Do we have to keep on giving another chance to people who continually cause us sorrow and hurt? Must we continue to forgive under all circumstances?

The theme of forgiveness runs throughout the Bible. Only Christianity gives us a picture of God's all-encompassing love and His desire for complete restoration of His creation. In this study, we will look at forgiveness from both God's and man's points of view and see why we must always be ready to forgive.

### Our Study

Jesus once told his listeners a story about a king who wanted to settle his accounts with his servants.

#### **The Scripture: Matthew 18:24-34**

*A man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to [the king]. 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.*

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

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

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

*"But he...had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt....The other servants...told their master everything that had happened.*

*"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said. '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?'" In anger his master turned him over to the jailers until he could pay back all he owed."*

1. How much money did the man owe the king? \_\_\_\_\_

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In terms of today's money, the servant's debt was several million dollars.

2. What was the master's response to the servant's pleading? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What did the servant do after the king had canceled his debt? \_\_\_\_\_

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4. How much did the second servant owe him? \_\_\_\_\_

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Jesus used an amount that would be considered insignificant in that society. The second servant's debt was equivalent to only a few dollars.

5. What did the first servant do to the second? \_\_\_\_\_

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6. When the master learned what the first servant had done, what did he call him? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. What did he say to him? \_\_\_\_\_

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8. What did he do to him? \_\_\_\_\_

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At that point, we can imagine Jesus' listeners nodding their heads in agreement with what the king did. That greedy, ungrateful, no good... He got just what he deserved. Then imagine their reaction when Jesus made His next statement.

**The Scripture: Matthew 18:35**

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

9. In your own words, tell what Jesus said when He finished telling the story. \_\_\_\_\_

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Although Jesus seemed to be telling a story about money, He was really talking about forgiveness. Most of us don't like to think about forgiveness. Perhaps you're even wondering why we need forgiveness in the first place. Let's see what the Bible says.

**The Scripture: Romans 3:23**

*"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

10. Who have sinned? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Personal Question:** Does that include you?

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**The Scripture: Romans 6:23**

*"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

11. What is the wages of sin? \_\_\_\_\_

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Until we are saved and forgiven, we have a death sentence hanging over our heads. In terms of Jesus' parable, our sin constitutes a heavy debt that we carry around with us until we either die or are forgiven. Like the servant in the story, we have no way of repaying that debt. Nothing we can ever do on our own will erase the gigantic debt we owe to the Lord.

Knowing this about us, God extended His mercy in an incredible way.

**The Scripture: Galatians 4:4**

*"When the time had fully come, God sent his Son....to redeem those under the law."*

12. How did God pay our debt? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

13. What did Jesus do? \_\_\_\_\_  
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To redeem means to buy back. Although we all belonged to God originally, by Adam and Eve's disobedience and our own, we, in fact, sold ourselves to Satan. Once we were his prisoners, we could not free ourselves. But God had mercy on us and bought us back by sending His only son to die for us. When we believe that Jesus is God's Son and that He died and rose again, our sins are forgiven just as though they had never occurred. God asks that we in turn forgive others. Here is how Jesus expressed it to His disciples.

**The Scripture: Matthew 6:14, 15**

*"If you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."*

14. What happens when we forgive others for sinning against us? \_\_\_\_\_  
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15. What happens when we do not forgive? \_\_\_\_\_  
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**The Scripture: Matthew 6:12**

*"Forgive us our debts [sins], as we also have forgiven our debtors [those who sin against us]."*

16. How does Jesus tell us to pray? \_\_\_\_\_  
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Nothing can take away the forgiveness God has already extended to us. When we became Christians, the slate was wiped clean. But if we wish God's forgiveness to continue, we must forgive others. God's forgiveness to us is in exact proportion to that which we extend to others.

**Discussion Question:** Does this idea frighten you?

Is this the whole story then? As long as we forgive others, can we live in God's complete forgiveness? Won't we ever sin again? Let's see what Scripture says about that.

**The Scripture: 1 John 1:8**

*"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."*

17. How can we deceive ourselves?

What do we do then: How can we live in God's ongoing forgiveness?

**The Scripture: 1 John 1:9**

*"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."*

18. What must we do about our sins? \_\_\_\_\_

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19. What happens when we confess our sins? \_\_\_\_\_

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What wonderful news. Not only does God forgive us our past sins, He provides a way for us to remain in that forgiveness.

Perhaps you have always tried to practice forgiveness. But what do you do about people who hurt you over and over again? Does God say you must continue to forgive? Is there ever an end to the number of times you must forgive someone? Peter once asked the Lord this question.

**The Scripture: Matthew 18: 21, 22**

*"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?' Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.'"*

20. What was Peter's question? \_\_\_\_\_

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21. What was Jesus' answer? \_\_\_\_\_

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Some versions of the Bible translate Jesus' answer as "seventy times seven," which symbolized an indefinite number.

If we want to be true followers of our Lord, we must never stop forgiving no matter how often someone sins against us.

Why is forgiveness so important? Modern medicine and psychiatry have shown us that lack of forgiveness, which is always accompanied by anger and resentment, is a leading cause of many psychological and physical ailments, including hypertension, ulcerative colitis, and toxic goiter. The truth is that God created our bodies and minds for forgiveness. When we refuse to forgive, we do terrible things to ourselves.

**The Scripture: Deuteronomy 32:35 in The Amplified Bible**

*"Vengeance is Mine and recompense."*

22. To whom does vengeance belong? \_\_\_\_\_

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God has reserved the exclusive right to administer both justice and punishment. Only a righteous judge knows all the facts and the reasons why and so is in a position to judge fairly. He has relieved us of the awesome responsibility of ever having to bear a grudge or take revenge and the cost of doing so.

**Personal Question:** Is there someone you need to forgive today?

## The Answers

1. Ten thousand talents.
2. He took pity on him, canceled the debt, and let him go.
3. Looked up another servant who owed him money.
4. A hundred denari.
5. Had him thrown into prison.
6. "You wicked servant."
7. "I canceled your debt because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"
8. Had him thrown into jail.
9. Individual answers.
10. All.
11. Death.
12. By sending Jesus.
13. He redeemed us.
14. Our heavenly Father will forgive us.
15. He does not forgive us.
16. That he forgive us as we have forgiven others.
17. By claiming to be without sin.
18. Confess them.
19. God forgives us and purifies us from all unrighteousness.
20. "How many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me?"
21. To forgive him seventy-seven times.
22. God.

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