

# SOLVING STRUGGLES

## In Interpersonal Relationships

### “Learning to Live, Love and Listen to Each Other”

#### **Ingredient #4: FORGIVENESS – Matthew 18:21-35**

Our Heavenly Father, we come into Your presence with a freedom that is ours because of the forgiveness that we’ve experienced through the gift of Your Son. We pray that as we deal with the practical aspects of forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, that we would gain something from this, both in regard to our personal responsibilities to each other and above all our responsibility to You. We pray that You would use the scriptures to edify, to exhort, and to encourage. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.

Talking about interpersonal relationships we are using a story of Jesus in each study to illustrate an ingredient of interpersonal relationships.

The first ingredient that we looked at together was a Relationship with God and how it is foundational to good interpersonal relationships. Once a person has a good vertical relationship, it helps in the horizontal relationships. We looked at the parable of the judge who had neither respect for God nor man.

In our second study we talked about the ingredient of Unconditional Love. We used the parable of the prodigal son to show that God never needed reconciliation but the son was the one who needed that reconciliation to come into relationship. God's unconditional love never changed.

In our last study we talked about the ingredient called Compassion. This is the ability to put ourselves in somebody else's world and to live there with compassion, a desire to be constructively involved to alleviate their pain. We used the parable of the Good Samaritan.

As this man goes down the road, he finds someone splattered along the roadway and he immediately had compassion. He had a desire to alleviate the pain and he became constructively involved in doing that.

We have 37 things that you should be doing for others that are listed on the list of verses. I would challenge you during this series of studies that you sit down with a Bible and you ask yourself the question, "Are these ingredients a part and parcel of my life? Are these things true of me?"

Then look at the diagram with different characteristics. The upper left hand corner is Correct Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting. When a person has good interpersonal relationships, they are at the top of the page.

When they have poor interpersonal relationships, they're at the bottom of the page with Correct Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting. It is right to realize that we are

competent. It is right to know we are talented and gifted, that we are stewards, that we have love, that we have compassion.

It is Correct Negative Thinking/Feeling/Acting for us to realize that we are sinners and that we were designed to be servants. Humility is a blessing in the eyes of God. That long list of things, both Incorrect Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting and Incorrect Negative Thinking/Feeling/Acting.

What we do in our studies is we try to take the characters out of the story and place them on the sheet.

The parable that comes to our consideration is Matthew 18:21-35. We have outlined Matthew 18:21-35 with three points. We are going to see the principle of forgiveness in verses 21 and 22, the picture of forgiveness in verses 23-34, and the practice of forgiveness in verse 35.

Ron Lee Davis wrote a little book called *A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World* and listen to what he says:

(A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World by Ron Lee Davis)

The prophet Hosea was married to a prostitute. It isn't hard to imagine the abuse and ridicule that must have been heaped upon Hosea as in obedience to God, he preached the gospel of repentance and forgiveness to the people of Israel. Picture Hosea preaching and a heckler stands up and mocks him: "Hosea! Do you know what your wife is doing while you're here preaching to us "sinners"? Do you know who she was with last night?"

What would Hosea reply? I suspect he would silence the

heckler with words like these: “When you see her, would you tell her that I love her?” That’s unconditional love.

Notice what Hosea writes: “The Lord said to me, ‘Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods.’”

And that is what Hosea did—not because he naturally felt a warm affection for the woman who was unfaithful to him. He loved her by an obedient act of the will. He took the brokenness of his own painful marriage to an unfaithful wife, and turned it into a powerful analogy of God’s love for you and me.

(source unknown)

Now the key phrase in that is not that you have a desire to forgive. Forgiveness has nothing to do with warm fuzzies and desires. Forgiveness is totally contrary to your nature and is an act of your will.

It is known as pulling your belt buckle up another notch, sucking it in and doing it. That’s basically what it is. Forgiveness is just like physical fitness. You are physically fit because you are disciplined. You have got to decide to do it and that it is the right thing to do. Do it for the sake of the interpersonal relationship.

Some people have the idea that forgiveness will only be granted when it is deserved and forgiveness will only be granted when “I feel like it.” Most of those people go to their graves with unforgiveness.

We are talking about something that demonstrates the quality

of manhood and womanhood like nothing else when we deal in the whole realm of forgiveness.

Having looked at Relationship with God, at Unconditional Love, and at Compassion, we are looking at the hardest one of them all. Forgiveness is the most difficult thing in interpersonal relationships.

A classic book on forgiveness is by Lewis Smedes. It is called *Forgive and Forget or Healing for the Hurts That We Don't Deserve*. He says this:

(Forgive and Forget: Healing for the Hurts That We Don't Deserve by Lewis B. Smedes)

Forgiveness has creative power to move us away from a past moment of pain, to unshackle us from our endless chain of reactions, and to create a new situation in which both the wrongdoer and the wronged can begin a new way.

Forgiveness offers a chance at reconciliation; it is an opportunity for a life together instead of death together. Forgiveness is a miracle of the will that moves away the heavy hindrance to fellowship, a miracle that will be fulfilled when the two estranged people come together in as fair a new relationship as possible at the time and under these circumstances.

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When we really love people with respect, we let them be accountable for what they do to us. And then we face the crisis of forgiving.

p. 144

Forgiving seems almost unnatural. Our sense of fairness tells us people should pay for the wrong they do. But forgiving is love's power to break nature's rule.

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If you hurt me I retaliate in kind, I may think that I have given you only what you deserve, no more. But you will feel it as a hurt that is too great for you to accept. Your passion for fairness will force you to retaliate against me, harder this time. Then it will be my turn. And will it ever stop?

An eye for an eye becomes a leg for a leg and, eventually, a life for a life. No matter what our weapons are—words, clubs, arrows, gun, bombs, nuclear missiles—revenge locks us into an escalation of violence. Gandhi was right: if we all live by “an eye for an eye” the whole world will be blind. The only way out is forgiveness.

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Francis Schaeffer is now with the Lord but was a tremendous twenty century philosopher. He wrote some phenomenal books and in *The Mark of a Christian* he said:

“What then does love mean?”

He says basically the only way that it can be made visible is very simple. When you have offended somebody, when you have hurt someone, go to that person and say, “I’m sorry,” that’s first.

He says:

(The Mark of a Christian by Francis A. Schaeffer)

It may sound simplistic to start with saying we are sorry and asking for forgiveness, but it is not. This is the way of renewed fellowship...

(source unknown)

Here's a scriptural illustration of the tragedy of an unforgiving heart.

Most people only know David by the fact that he wielded a sling shot and nailed Goliath in the battlefield and he sacked out with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his military officers in the middle of his mid-life crisis. That is about all anybody knows about David.

There are horrendous happenings in David's life that we don't really get a hold of until we study the whole biography. The one story about David that really is gripping, to show you the consequences of this, David had a son by the name of Absalom. Absalom was his fourth born. He was a handsome guy and he was very popular.

Amnon, his first born, got involved in an incestuous relationship with his half-sister, Tamar, who was the full-blooded sister of Absalom. Because of that incestuous relationship, Absalom realized that David was not going to do anything to Amnon for what he did. Absalom took it upon himself to murder Amnon, the first born son.

Absalom fled and went to grandma's house in Geshur. He stayed

there for three years and David didn't do anything to seek reconciliation with him.

Now Joab, his military officer, got fed up with that and he worked out some things for Absalom to come back to Jerusalem. Absalom came back to Jerusalem to his condominium, stayed there for two years and David never once called on him—five years.

Do you know what Absalom did? Absalom organized a rebellion and he literally took the kingdom away from his father through a rebellion. When David is way out in the north fleeing from his son and the armed forces, David gets a group of his men around him and in battle Absalom is killed.

When we see David in 2 Samuel 18 he's saying, "Absalom, Absalom, how I would have died for thee."

Then why in the world didn't you forgive him? That's the tragic story of a lot of lives. We wake up just a little too late.

It's interesting that while David is making his trip away from Jerusalem up north to flee from Absalom, that Shimei, the little creep from Benjamin, comes out and throws a bunch of rocks at him and curses David. He says, "You are a man of wrong, you deserve this."

Abishai, his officer, says, "Let me lop off his head." David then says, "No, don't do that." When David is coming back to the kingdom after Absalom has been murdered, Shimei says, "Please forgive me." David instantaneously says, "Sure, nobody's

blood is going to be shed today.”

Why is it that we can be so quick to forgive people outside of our families but we can't forgive the people who are the closest to us—husbands, wives, kids, mothers, dads, grandparents? It's like we've got two sets of laws. If someone nails us outside, we can forgive them. But when they get inside our family, we have this seething, mass of bitterness, jealousy, resentment and hatred in close family interpersonal relationships.

David didn't have any trouble at all forgiving Shimei for that but when it came inside the family and in these close relationships, there is another rule. We just can't bring ourselves to forgive in those kinds of situations.

What happens in interpersonal relationships to create the need for forgiveness? Well you have a cycle. First of all you have an offense. Something happened to create a strained relationship. Secondly, after the offense, you have resentment.

The longer you wait between the offense and the forgiveness, the greater the resentment. It's like this one couple hadn't been talking to each other for twelve years and finally they got a divorce and they couldn't remember what the initial offense was about.

That is the way it is in life. What happens to resentment? The third part of the cycle becomes hatred. Offense, resentment, then hatred.

When we don't deal with hatred, what happens? We have a

grudge. We would really like to get that guy any way we could and whatever happens to him is good enough for him. It serves him right.”

Then the actual desire for revenge is the fifth part of the cycle. You have a cycle here that destroys interpersonal relationships. You have an offense, you have a resentment, you have hatred, you have a grudge, and you have a desire for revenge.

Before we go further, let's define forgiveness because everybody has their own definition.

First of all, there is conditional forgiveness. “I'll forgive you but don't you do it again.” Now that is conditional. That's telling you, “I'm forgiving you this time but don't you do it again.”

Then the second one is partial forgiveness. “I'll forgive you but don't expect me to forget it.” This is where we dole it out, “I'm always going to remember it and the next time we have a fight I'm going to become historical and remind you about it.”

Then the third one is the one of the female species and this is called delayed forgiveness. “I will forgive you but give me some space and some time. I've got to get over the hurt.” That is the most difficult part. Men are peace-loving creatures. They want it to be alright right now. They want to deal with the situation and get it over with. It just eats at their gut, they have got egg on their face, they know they blew it, they want it right. Women have a tendency say, “I feel so bad, I need some time.”

The offense has time to build into resentment as long as you give

time to this thing. Scripture says, “Don’t let the sun go down on your wrath.” As soon as you sleep on something it grows ten times bigger than it was before you went to sleep. You’ve thought of 46 other things that relate to it to justify how you are dealing with the situation. The longer you let time be involved in the process, the more difficult forgiveness becomes. That’s why you keep short accounts for your own sanity and wellbeing.

Here are a couple of verses:

### Hebrews 12:14-15

Pursue after peace with all men, and after the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by it many be defiled;

As long as that thing is seething, there is a root of bitterness that is being built up inside and by it a lot of people are going to be shocked and defiled by the fact that you were unwilling to deal with that when it was a much smaller problem.

Abraham, when he overheard someone denouncing the Civil War enemies, was reported to have said, “Insane as it may seem, I hold no malice toward none of them. I have neither the time nor the energy in this life to hold that kind of resentment. I just can’t spend all my creative energies hanging on to those kinds of resentments.” (source unknown)

We have talked about **CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS**, we talked about **DELAYED FORGIVENESS** now let’s talk about

## BIBLICAL FORGIVENESS.

When the Greek and Hebrew word for forgiveness is used in the Bible, this is the meaning of those words. The meaning is of the Greek word for forgiveness is “let the pot drop.” You have this huge pot that you are carrying around and it has all of your resentments and all of your unforgiveness. Somebody comes along and says, “Please forgive.” What are you supposed to do?

Let go of the pot and let the pot drop. In other words, get rid of all of that baggage and extra stuff that you have, that you are carrying around. It’s creating all of this horrible, horrible havoc in your life. So please, let the pot drop. Let it go. Get rid of it. Get it out of your life.

The other meaning of the word means “leave.” It means “to let go.” It’s the word “to send forth.” It means “to send it away.” Get it “apart from me.”

Now with those definitions, let’s go to a parable on interpersonal relationships to see a little story that Jesus tells that shows us what we are supposed to do in interpersonal relationships when it comes to forgiveness.

Peter is one of our favorites of the disciples. It’s because he had such a big mouth and he was always saying things before he thought.

Peter had two problems in interpersonal relationships. He had a problem with love and he had a problem with forgiveness. Those are the two things that the Lord really hits on in his life. As we

dig into the passage, Peter is introduced to us.

In verse 21, when we are talking about the principle of forgiveness, can't you see some tremendous ramifications of this statement?

**v. 21 Then Peter, having come, said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I shall forgive him? As many as seven times?"**

"Then Peter, having come, said to Him, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I shall forgive him? As many as seven times?'"

What is a foregone conclusion to a statement like that? Where would you put Peter on your picture in the guide?

He says two things:

"How often shall I forgive him? and

"As many as seven times?"

What words would you use to characterize Peter's interpersonal relationships in the picture? Where do you think he fits? Self-righteous? He's Peter the perfect. He is coming with the question about forgiving others but he does not come to say how many times do I need forgiveness from somebody else?

He is the one who is doling out all of the forgiveness and we will never learn what forgiveness is until we start accepting the

blame and know that we need to be forgiven too.

It's not just all of these having to forgive others. He does come off prideful. He does come off a cut above everybody else with a question like that.

“How many times shall I forgive my brother?” Do you think there were some strained interpersonal relationships among the twelve? I bet if we got in the inside there things that weren't written about that went on with those twelve guys. They were fighting in the upper room about who was going to be Secretary of State in the kingdom and nobody was willing to wash feet that last night.

For three solid years they had been with the Lord. When you got a tax collector and a couple of zealots on your hands who make a vow that their one thing in life is to kill a tax collector, you immediately have some things set up for some pretty horrendous conflicts. Plus you have three full-blooded sets among those twelve. That's six others and put James and John in there—sons of thunder—with short fuses.

That's the kind of interpersonal relationships that have gone on among them. The question is obvious. There has been some need for forgiveness and some attitude change in all of this. Before you can ever forgive, you have to stop blaming others and recognize joint participation. That is a critical point and some people are not humble enough to do that.

You have to quit blaming and acknowledge joint participation. When you do that, then you are at least prepared for the initial

phases of forgiveness. The reason we don't have forgiveness that is necessary to create interpersonal relationships is that we think we're perfect. We're just too proud to admit that we are no Cadillac ourselves, that we have some problems and that we can accept part of the blame.

Let's talk about seven times. Peter thought that if he said as many as seven times that he had climbed the pinnacle of forgiveness, he expected to hear "Blessed art thou Simon Bar-Jonah, flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto to you."

Do you know what the going rate was in those days? You forgive a guy once, you forgive a guy twice, but you nail his hide to the wall on the third one. So what does he do? He takes the going rate of two, multiplies it by three and adds one and expects to get a blessing from the Lord in saying, "I'm perfect. Seven times is absolutely incredible." So what does Jesus say to him.

**v. 22 Jesus says to him, "I'm not saying to you as many as seven times but as many as seventy times seven."**

"Jesus says to him, 'I'm not saying to you as many as seven times but as many as seventy times seven.'"

You might say "490—I can nail them on 491." No, that is not it. The principle is forgiveness beyond computation. We ought to be those who forgive beyond personal computation. Arithmetic has nothing to do with forgiveness in interpersonal relationships.

Here are a couple of verses.

## Psalm 119:165

Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them.

## Acts 24:16

Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

Bishop Ryle said it well:

“We are to bear much, to put up with much rather than quarrel, overlook much, submit to much rather than have strife.”  
(source unknown)

Here’s Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount:

## Matthew 5:23-24

Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar and you remember your brother has anything against you, leave your gift before the altar and go your way and be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Before you can worship, you must forgive.

## Colossians 3:13

Forgive as freely as the Lord has forgiven you.

## Ephesians 4:32

Be as ready to forgive others as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.

Lewis B. says:

(Forgive & Forget by Lewis B. Smedes)

When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul; you cut away the wrong that was done to you so that you can see your enemy through the magic eyes that can heal your soul. Detach that person from the hurt and let it go, the way a child opens his hands and lets a trapped butterfly go free.

Then invite that person back into your mind, fresh, as if a piece of history between you has been rewritten, its grip on your memory broken. Reverse the seemingly irreversible flow of pain within you.

p. 27

So we need to forgive the unrepentant for our own sake. We need to forgive people who do not care if only so that we do not drown in our misery.

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Forgiveness beyond computation. Let's look at the picture in the parable.

**v. 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man, a king, who desired to settle accounts with**

**his servants.**

“Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man, a king, who desired to settle accounts with his servants.”

He is going to illustrate the principle of “times seven” in this particular parable. Here is a king and he begins recognizing his accounts and here comes one that he has.

**v. 24 When he began to compute the accounts one was brought to him who owed him twelve million dollars.**

“When he began to compute the accounts one was brought to him who owed him twelve million dollars.”

That is more than the budget of the country in which he lived. This guy owes him twelve million dollars. It’s an overwhelming debt. It’s nothing that he could ever pay. It is totally impossible.

**v. 25 And not having that by which to pay the debt, his master ordered him to be sold and his wife and his children and all that he had, and payment to be made.**

“And not having that by which to pay the debt, his master ordered him to be sold and his wife and his children and all that he had, and payment to be made.”

Now that is justifiable action. They can lay hold of everything including persons and property to secure payment—at least partial payment for the debt. This king is doing Correct Positive

Thinking/Feeling/Acting. He is doing the right thing in view of what has been said and has happened.

**v. 26 Then the servant fell on his knees and was touching the ground with his forehead (before him saying, ‘Be patient with me and I will pay back all to you.’**

“Then the servant fell on his knees and was touching the ground with his forehead (before him saying, “Be patient with me and I will pay back all to you.””

Here is a person who’s promising all but performing nothing. Some of you might be involved with people like that in business.

Now where does this servant fit in our picture? He has to be down in Incorrect Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting because he is still self-sufficient. He still thinks that he can handle it.

Remember in the parable of the prodigal son when the prodigal son was in the pig pen? He had lost all of his money and the economic crunch had already come. What does he decide? Pride hasn’t broken him yet. He has just had a bad turn so he is going to go slop the hogs to make enough money to live and then it is going to get better. He hasn’t come to that place of brokenness yet to think about his dad.

And this guy is not being realistic. What he needs desperately is a cancelling of his debt because he can’t pay it. There is absolutely no way that this guy will ever be able to take care of the debt that he has accumulated.

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**v. 27 And being moved with compassion, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.**

“And being moved with compassion”

We have had that little phrase in three parables:

1. In the parable of the prodigal son

The father was moved with compassion and he ran and got his arms around that kid.

2. In the parable of the good Samaritan.

The Samaritan goes down the road and this guy is splattered all over the road. What does it say? “He was moved with compassion.” He felt for this individual.

Anybody that has compassion is in the upper left hand corner in interpersonal relationships. That’s the twentieth word. The king has compassion and what happens?

“the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.”

That is Correct Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting. He releases him. He says, “As far as I’m concerned I am canceling all of your debt and you have nothing that you owe me. You are going to be able to start over brand new. You don’t owe anybody a cent. You have been forgiven.”

That's exactly what God does when you become a Christian.

### John 3:16

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believed in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

The only way you can have everlasting life is to have the debt of your sin paid for. Christ dying on Calvary's Cross assumes the total responsibility for the debt of your sin. Now that is fantastic!

### John 8:32

And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Colossians 2:13 paints a beautiful picture:

### Colossians 2:13

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all of your trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of the ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way and nailed it to His cross.

That is somebody taking the debt and wiping it completely clean. He could have used another Greek word here and that word would have been "paid in full."

That wouldn't be much comfort. Underneath the "paid in full" you could read all the sinful things we've done.

What the picture is here is of God reaching down with a great big wet cloth and He washes the whole slate new and clean.

### Isaiah 1:18

Come now let us reason together...though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow...

The minute a person comes to know Jesus Christ, the slate is washed completely clean. The debt is totally paid. The Bible describes that He casts it behind His back, casts it into the depths of the sea. He remembers our sins and iniquities no more. He assumes the full responsibility of our debt.

There is a beautiful story in the New Testament. It is in one of the smallest books—the book of Philemon.

Philemon was a wealthy businessman in the Lycus Valley. He was in Ephesus one day and he heard this Bible teacher by the name of Paul. He became a Christian and went back home that night and to his wife Apphia, his son Archippus, and a slave by the name of Onesimus.

Every time Onesimus fell out of bed it seemed like he was falling into Sunday School and he hated every minute of it. So one day he decided to steal everything that he could get and head for Rome. Onesimus stole as much as he could from Philemon and

took off for Rome where there were 60 million slaves. Onesimus could dissolve into civilization without ever having to be held accountable.

He got picked up on a drug charge and put into prison. As a sovereign God's hand has its purpose, in the next cell was the apostle Paul. Paul lead Philemon to the Lord back in Ephesus when he was free. Onesimus became a Christian and as he is going back to Philemon, to reconciliation, Paul writes the letter. Listen to what Paul says:

### Philemon 18, 19

If he has wronged you or owes you anything, put that on my account; I, Paul, have written it with my own hand, I will repay it.

Have you ever sung that hymn, “Jesus paid it all, all to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow”?

Some people sing that “Jesus paid 90%, 10% I owe, sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it light pink.”

That is the feeling that some people have. They cannot believe that God washed it all clean and assumed the full responsibility for all the debt.

Isaiah 53:6 prophesied it:

### Isaiah 53:6

All we like sheep have gone astray. We've turned everyone to his own way and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

God took the full debt. Twelve million dollars of our sins and canceled all of them and before the throne of God we are as righteous as Jesus Christ.

F.B. Meyer said:

I will remember your sins and iniquities no more, as the score is forgotten when blotted from a slate. So shall sin be as if obliterated from the memory of God.

(source unknown)

It's letting go. It's saying goodbye and its risking trust. These are the sequential steps that must be taken to forgive but God does that and that is the picture in that parable.

**v. 28 But that servant having gone out found one of his fellow servants who owed him twenty dollars and he seized him and tried to strangle him, saying, 'Settle up if you are owing anything.'**

“But”—when you see the word “but” in the text you know something is coming. You have a contrast.

“that servant”—Who? The guy who has just been forgiven twelve million dollars, gone out and was really thrilled. Is that what it says?

“having gone out found one of his fellow servants who owed him

twenty dollars and he seized him and tried to strangle him, saying, “Settle up if you are owing anything.””

He catches this guy who owes him twenty bucks and he seizes him and he squeezes him. He says, “Man, you owe me. Settle up right now. I want my twenty bucks.”

What do you get, just even as a clue, from that little phrase “twenty dollars”?

You see the difference between twelve million dollars and twenty dollars. That’s what you get and that’s what you need to get. It’s the difference between this horrendous debt and this little tiny thing that he owes him.

What a contrast here in this picture. When forgiveness denies that there is anger or acts as if it has never happened. Smiles as though it never hurt and fakes it as though it is all forgotten. Don’t offer it, don’t trust it and don’t depend on it. It’s not forgiveness. It is a magical fantasy.

Here he tries to get from the servant what he thinks he deserves. He is Incorrect Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting. He belongs down in the lower left hand corner.

**v. 29 Then his fellow servant fell down begging him saying, ‘Be patient with me and I will pay you.’**

“Then his fellow servant fell down begging him saying, “Be patient with me and I will pay you.””

Same song, second verse, a little bit louder and a whole lot worse.

**v. 30 However he was not willing, but having gone off, he threw him into prison until he should pay back that which he was owing.**

“However he was not willing, but having gone off, he threw him into prison until he should pay back that which he was owing.”

### Romans 12:17-21

Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things that are honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him, if he thirsts, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Notice what this does to the fellow servants.

**v. 31 When his fellow servants saw the things which had taken place, they were greatly distressed and they went and made clear to their master all the things which took place.**

“When his fellow servants saw the things which had taken place, they were greatly distressed and they went and made clear to their master all the things which took place.”

They started talking about it. They're distressed, they're discouraged, they're disappointed. It gives way to depression because there is this kind of interpersonal seething going on.

**v. 32 Then his master, having called him, is saying to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'**

“Then his master, having called him, is saying to him, “You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.”

**v. 33 Ought not you to have shown mercy to your fellow servant just as I also was merciful to you?”**

“Ought”—responsibility—“not you to have shown mercy to your fellow servant just as I also was merciful to you?””

Correct Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting will be merciful in the face of mercy received. What should have happened here is that he should have forgiven the twenty bucks because of the twelve million debt that he had been freed from.

Do you want to apply that to your personal life? If you are a Christian and you know the Lord as Savior, you are saying that you have been forgiven a horrendous debt. God has forgiven all of our sins, washed them beneath the blood of the Lamb. We thank God for the freedom that we have in Christ.

The debt's been paid. What's our responsibility to each other?.

We're to have an attitude of forgiveness because what we are forgiving in that is a twenty dollar debt in view of the twelve million dollar debt of our sins has already been forgiven by the death of Jesus Christ on the Cross for our sin.

**v. 34 And having been aroused to anger, his master handed him over to the jailers until he should pay all that he owed him.**

“And having been aroused to anger, his master handed him over to the jailers until he should pay all that he owed him.”

The master treats this wicked servant in the same way that he treated the guy who owed him twenty dollars. It is divine disapproval and he is again exercising Correct Positive Thinking/Feeling/Acting.

The Judgement:

**v. 35 So also my Father in heaven will do to you, if you do not forgive each other his own brother from your hearts.”**

“So also my Father in heaven will do to you, if you do not forgive each other his own brother from your hearts.”

We pray that in the Lord's Prayer:

“Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

One of the characteristics of a real genuine believer is the ability to forgive. Probably one of the most graphic illustrations of forgiveness in scripture is in the life of Joseph.

In Genesis 50, after Joseph has been sold into Egypt when he is seventeen, he has provided for his brothers for seventeen years—from thirty to forty-seven years of age. Then his dad dies and the boys say this after the death of their father:

### Genesis 50:15ff

When Joseph's brethren saw that their father was dead they said, "Joseph will perhaps hate us and will certainly requite us all to evil which we did unto him." And they sent a messenger unto Joseph saying, "Thy father did command before he died saying, 'So shall you say unto Joseph, forgive, I pray thee now the trespass of thy brethren and their sin for they did unto the evil and now we pray forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father.'" And Joseph wept when they spoke unto him and his brethren also went and fell down before his face and they said, "Behold, we are your servants." And Joseph said unto them, "Fear not, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you thought evil against me but God meant it unto good to bring to pass as it is this day to save many people alive. Now therefore, fear ye not, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

He never let what happened to him be anything that he would try to take out on them, but manifested the beautiful spirit of forgiveness. That spirit of forgiveness should be a characteristic of our lives.

Barnhouse says:

Forgiveness without forgetting is like vultures feeding on a dead carcass...”

(source unknown)

Augsburger says:

If you do a long slow burn, you hurt no one but yourself. The man who broods over a wrong poisons his own soul.

Repayment—impossible; revenge—impotent; resentment—impractical. All right, but what about peaceful coexistence? I won't hate him, hit him or hurt him. He's not worth it; I'll ignore him. Live and let live, but friendship, forget it. Now wait, face it honestly. You can't afford the dubious luxury of an unforgiving heart.

(source unknown)

As we close here are some of the things that stand in the way of forgiveness—the four R's. These are the things that keep us from doing what we have been commanded in this parable to do

1. There is the R of RIGHTS. “I have my rights and he had no business doing that unto me.”
2. The R of RESENTMENT. “I just can't stand him, he acts so smart.”
3. The R of REVENGE. “I am unwilling to forgive until revenge has been secured.”

4. The R of RECKONING. This is the bookkeeper's word. "I keep a ledger of wrongs that have been done and I'm unwilling to forgive them and to let them go."

Paul Adolph in his book, *Release from Tension*, says:

(Release from Tension by Paul Adolph)

The result of living in unforgiveness is like holding a tightly stopped bottle under Niagara Falls while we wonder why never a drop of water enters it, despite the overabundance of water. The stopper must be removed in order that the bottle may be filled with water.

(source unknown)

Patti Roberts says toward the end of her book about the problems she had with her husband through their divorce:

(Ashes to Gold by Patti Roberts)

The farther I get from the divorce the more I am able to see that there are no "good" or "bad guys," only wounded people in need of forgiveness and healing.

p. 159

Give us the power to take the power to take the stones we wish to hurl at those who frighten or disagree with us or injure us, and instead build an altar with them. Give us the courage to mount that altar and say, "Here I am—make me into Your image. Let me decrease in fame and power as You increase in

glory and might.” Hasten the time that we should be transformed into the bride.  
pp. 170-71

One thing with a lot of terminally ill patients is that one of the top priorities at the time of physical death is forgiveness in interpersonal relationships.

We see that scripturally too. Paul, in the last letter he writes in 2 Timothy 4, says, “Bring John Mark with you for he is profitable to me in the ministry.”

John Mark went on the first missionary journey and he threw in the towel at Pamphylia and went back to Jerusalem. Paul said on the second journey, “There’s no way that he’s going on the second trip.” We don’t see him until the end of the story and then it’s, “Bring John Mark.”

Peter had the same problem with Paul. Paul stood up and just wailed on Peter in a public banquet over the fact that he went over and sat with some more legalistic brethren and left the Gentiles.

In the last letter that Peter ever writes, he says, “Read Paul’s writings.” They’re difficult sometimes to understand but at least there was reconciliation between the two.

Remember what Jesus did when He hung on the cross? They just got through pulling the cross up into the vertical position with the spikes of the nail pulling on His hands, the crown of thorns on His head, blood running down His cheeks, and the

nails in His feet. What's the first thing He does? The first words He whispers are, "Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing."

Stephen, as he was being stoned to death in Acts 7, says, "Father, lay not this sin to their charge. Forgive them for what they are doing."

May God help us to have a fresh, new vision of the potential for good interpersonal relationships because:

1. We have a relationship with God.
2. There is unconditional love flowing out of our lives for each other.
3. We've got compassion where we want to alleviate pain.
4. We've learned to forgive.

The minute you let go of those things and you experience forgiveness, it will be like being drowned in the Spirit. You will feel the flood of the water of life washing that trash away and you will be the lightest, most exuberant, free person in the world when you just follow a simple principle of forgiveness.

Twelve million debt—20 dollars. We should forgive the little in view of the great forgiveness we've experienced.

Father, we thank You for Your Word. Every time we talk about this there are people's faces that come before us and places

where we have done things wrong where we've refused to accept the blame. Help us, Father, to be mature enough to at least admit the problems in interpersonal relationships are a joint venture and that we must accept our part of the blame to create an environment where true forgiveness can be experienced. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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# STRUGGLES

## In Interpersonal Relationships

### “Learning to Live, Love and Listen to Each Other”

#### Ingredient #4: FORGIVENESS – Matthew 18:21-35

#### NOTES

##### **I. The Principle of Forgiveness – Matt. 18:21-22**

v. 21 Then Peter, having come, said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I shall forgive him? As many as seven times?”

v. 22 Jesus is saying to him, “I am not saying to you as many as seven times but as many as seventy times seven.

##### **II. The Picture of Forgiveness – Matt. 18:23-34**

v. 23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man, a king, who desired to settle accounts with his servants.

v. 24 And when he began to compute the accounts, one was brought to him who owed him twelve million dollars.

v. 25 And not having that by which to pay the debt, his master ordered him to be sold and his wife and his children and all that he had, and payment to be made.

v. 26 Then the servant fell on his knees and was touching the ground with his forehead before him, saying, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay back all to you.’

v. 27 And being moved with compassion, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.

v. 28 But that servant having gone out found one of his fellow servants who owed him twenty dollars; and he seized him and tried to strangle him, saying, ‘Settle up if you are owing anything.’

v. 29 Then his fellow servant fell down begging him, saying, ‘Be patient with me and I will pay you.’

v. 30 However he was not willing, but having gone off, he threw him into prison until he should pay back that which he was owing.

v. 31 When his fellow servants saw the things which had taken place, they were greatly distressed; and they went and made clear to their master all the things which took place.

v. 32 Then his master, having called him, is saying to him, 'You wicked servant, I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

v. 33 Ought not you to have shown mercy to your fellow servant, just as I also was merciful to you?'

v. 34 And having been aroused to anger, his master handed him over to the jailers until he should pay all that he owed him.

### **III. The Practice of Forgiveness – Matt. 18:35**

v. 35 So also my Father in heaven will do to you, if you do not forgive each one his brother from your hearts.”

## LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

Lesson #1: There is the R of RIGHTS. “I have my rights and he had no business doing that unto me.”

Lesson #2: The R of RESENTMENT. “I just can’t stand him, he acts so smart.”

Lesson #3: The R of REVENGE. “I am unwilling to forgive until revenge has been secured.”

Lesson #4: The R of RECKONING. This is the bookkeeper's word. "I keep a ledger of wrongs that have been done and I'm unwilling to forgive them and to let them go."

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