

Gospel Project
Vol. 8, Session 2 (11 June 2017)
The Unmerciful Servant

This Week's Main Passages:

Matthew 18:21-35

This Week's Lesson:

My, what a deep, life-impacting lesson this is!

1. How much forgiveness is required of a Christian? Read Matt 18:21-22 / Peter's question seems to be prompted by the discussion in verses 15 through 17, which are almost universally, but inappropriately in my opinion, called the "church discipline" passage. Those verses discuss the restoration of fellowship *between two individuals*, with the church becoming involved only as a last resort. The verses teach that the person who has been *wronged* bears a responsibility to seek restoration of fellowship with the perpetrator. This generally involves a significantly greater effort than merely "forgiving unconditionally," as is sometimes taught, because it means working to draw the perpetrator to a change of heart! God's forgiveness is not unconditional—if it were, no one would ever go to Hell—and neither is ours. God goes to great lengths to draw us to a point of *receiving* His forgiveness, and Matt 18:15-17 tells us we should go to similar lengths with those who have wronged us. Is it any wonder Peter was concerned about how often he should be responsible for this?
2. As Christians, we have received forgiveness: Read Matt 18:23-27 / This pictures our receiving—after asking for—the Master's forgiveness. Significantly, in the parable, forgiveness was not granted "unilaterally," but at the request of the debtor. One-way forgiveness does not restore fellowship. In this case, however, even the asked-for (and willingly granted!) forgiveness didn't restore fellowship, because the debtor's heart was not changed (see next bullet).
3. As Christians, we must extend forgiveness: Read Matt 18:28-35 / Verse 35 is sobering! One of God's "conditions" for forgiving us is that we have forgiveness in our hearts for others. When we truly understand what God has granted us—and what it cost Him—we should have a heart burden to draw those who've wronged us to a point of desiring our forgiveness.

Review from last week

- The Word of God and the Hardened Heart (Mark 4:1-4, 14-15)
- The Word of God and the Shallow Heart (Mark 4:5-6, 16-17)
- The Word of God and the Distracted Heart (Mark 4:7, 18-19)

- The Word of God and the Fruitful Heart (Mark 4:8-9, 20)

What we're skipping since last week

Throughout this quarter we're departing from a chronological study and bouncing semi-topically around Jesus' ministry. The first six weeks cover six of Jesus' parables; the next seven weeks cover some of His miracles.