

Uncaged: Living in the Freedom of Grace

Generous Forgiveness (April 18th, 2021)

PREPARATION

- Familiarize yourself with this Study Guide.
- You can watch the sermon online [HERE](#).
- Spend some time in prayer before your group gathers.
- You **always** have the option to use some or all the questions and/or prepare your own questions.

Welcome: *Icebreaker – If you could change one thing about this world, what would it be?*

Study Tip: The parable of the forgiving king and the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35 is unique to the book of Matthew. Before we jump into the parable, let's take some time to put it into context! Matthew 18 echoes many of the sentiments we studied last week in Luke 17:1-10 (causing little ones to stumble, woe to the ones who cause temptation, and church forgiveness). The strongest comparison occurs when Jesus repeats the outlandish claim that forgiveness must be distributed “seventy-seven” or “seventy times seven” times. This statement of unlimited forgiveness uses the exact wording in the Greek Septuagint translation of Genesis 4:24 in which Lamech brags about the “seventy-sevenfold” escalation of wicked actions from Cain. Furthermore, the question about limits on forgiveness was not foreign to Jewish debate. Rabbis have pulled from passages like Job 33:29 and Amos 1:3-2:6 to suggest that only [3 times of forgiveness](#) (*Talmud* see 86b:10-11) for the same sin [was reasonable](#) (*Mishna* see 8:9). The question facing the disciples at this point would have been on what basis is Jesus demanding such and escalation and unlimited amount of forgiveness? Enter Matthew 18:23-35! Here are some *financial tips* that may help you navigate this parable and put you in the shoes of the first disciples listening:

- The Greek word for 10,000 can also mean “myriad”. Thus, 10,000 talents is meant to be interpreted hyperbolically to emphasize an impossible debt to repay. Historian Josephus recounts only 600 talents collected by Herod as tax revenue in 4 B.C. spanning his ENTIRE empire for one year.
- A talent was a measure used to value precious metals by weight. 1 talent (NIV translates “bag of gold”) is approximately 20 years wages. 1 denarii = 1 day's wages. Therefore, 1 talent would hover close to 6 or 7,000 denarii. At the time, being sold as a servant would earn anywhere from 500 – 2000 denarii.
- Talking about forgiveness in terms of debt is not commonly used in the gospels. The disciples would have known about the Lord's prayer (Matt. 6:12-15) and another teaching about being forgiven much (Luke 7:40-43)

What's Going on This Week

This week, Pastor Danny led us into the second week of our new series titled *Uncaged: Living in the Freedom of Grace*. Pastor Danny brought our attention to *Matthew 18:21-35* in order to point out how the gospel has granted us an “unlimited forgiveness budget” to spend generously in the kingdom of God. As you read the parable and the supporting scriptures below, pay attention to the immense forgiveness of the king and spend time unpacking on the various reasons why you believe the servant acted in the way that he did. As you seek to apply these scriptures in your life, meditate on the implications that either lead to a kingdom in which forgiveness flows abundantly or a kingdom in which everyone gets what they deserve.

“If you're still counting how many times you've forgiven someone, you're not forgiving at all. You're simply postponing revenge.” – N.T. Wright

GROUP MEETING (60 – 90 minutes)

******* (NEW) Opening Time of Worship******* (10 – 15 minutes)

Take a moment with your group and prepare your hearts as you enter into the presence of God for this meeting.

Option 1: Worship Music	Option 2: Scripture	Option 3: Meditation
Have someone share their favorite worship song. Find it online, play it, and sing along! Have them explain why the lyrics mean so much to them!	<i>Exodus 34:5-7</i> offers a description of the Lord's steadfast love, forgiveness, and justice. Which characteristic of the Lord stands out to you the most?	Take some time to meditate on God's forgiveness for us! Allow the Lord to reveal the specific areas of your life that need to be addressed today!

Objective #1: Explore the ways you resonate with the servant in the parable (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Matthew 18:21-35 – Pastor Danny mentions that as Christians, we are all servants of the King! One element that was mentioned in the sermon was the remarkable “debt repayment strategy” offered to this servant. Moreover, Pastor Danny zooms in on some potential reasons that explain why the servant continues to act harshly. He cites (1) the fear of not truly being forgiven, (2) the habit of responding in an unforgiving manner, (3) the anger and lack of mercy toward the situation, or (4) the desire to maintain power over those who owe you. **As you reflect on this parable, what are some of the thoughts and feelings that come to your mind when you think about how much your king has forgiven you? In light of the forgiveness that the gospel affords to us, what are some reasons that you may still be finding it hard to forgive today?** **Prayer Tip:** Write down any specific obstacles to forgiveness that are mentioned in the conversation.

Other Forgiveness Teachings: Matthew 5:7; Luke 6:36; Romans 6:15-23; James 2:13; 1 John 4:11

Objective #2: Cast a personal vision of your world full of generous forgiveness (15 – 25 minutes)

Primary Texts: Matthew 18:32-35; Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 2:1-11, 14:10-13; James 4:11-12 – Pastor Danny concludes his sermon by asking whether or not we would rather live in a world where everyone gets what they deserve or in a world of generous forgiveness. **How do these passages on judgment challenge you when you think about living in a world in which you get what you deserve? What steps of obedience do you need to take in order to begin living in this world of generous forgiveness?** **Prayer Tip:** Keep track of each member's vision and determine how the Holy Spirit may be moving in them in order to head in their desired direction!

******* (NEW) Closing Time of Prayer******* (20 – 25 minutes)

In light of this week's discussion, here are some different ways that your group can pray!

- Pray for any obstacles that might be in the way of your group and the world of generous forgiveness
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal specific steps we need to take toward the world of generous forgiveness
- Pray for any individual prayer request that comes up in your group
- Pray for the entire group and how they might be able to contribute to future group meetings.
- Pray for an interaction with someone who you can invite into your next group meeting!

Come and learn how to pray for your 3Crosses family at the [House of Prayer](#) (4/25 at 6:30 p.m.)

THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

-Stay up to date with Coronavirus Ministry Opportunities: Help us out by pointing the people in your Community Group to [3Crosses.org/coronavirus](https://3crosses.org/coronavirus) . If you or anyone in your group is looking to serve food in our pantry, access spiritual care, or seek financial assistance, you can find all you need at [3Crosses.org/neighborhood](https://3crosses.org/neighborhood)

-Read Ahead: *Jonah 4:1-11* – There is a common saying that refusing to forgive is like taking poison and hoping someone else dies from it. There's truth to that statement: Bitterness is the poison of unforgiveness. When we cannot release someone from their debt, this poison creeps into your life and starts to take you down. As we look at the story of the bitterness brewing in Jonah as he refuses to forgive the Ninevites, we will tackle this question for ourselves: How do I get rid of the bitterness that is hurting me?

-Suggested Resources: Want to dive deeper into this week's topic? Here are some recommended resources

- [Total Forgiveness by R.T. Kendall](#)
- [Matthew for Everyone \(Part 2\) by N.T. Wright](#)
- [The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament](#)
- [News Story on the Power of Forgiveness](#)

-Community Groups 2021: For more information about joining a group, leading a group, or general inquiries, contact AJ at avanegas@3crosses.org