



Jesus Calls Us to Forgive

(based on Matthew 18:21-35)

Peter asked Jesus, “How many times should I forgive someone?” Peter wanted to know if he should forgive someone seven times. Jesus replied, “Not just seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Jesus told Peter a story to help him think about the answer to his question:

Once a servant owed a king some money.

It wasn't a small amount of money (*hold hands slightly apart*).

It wasn't a medium amount of money (*move hands farther apart*).

It was an ENORMOUS sum of money (*hold your arms out as wide as you can*).

The king asked the servant to give back all the money he owed, but the servant had no money.

The man fell to his knees. “Please, sir!” he begged the king. “Give me a few days. I'll pay everything back, I promise.”

The king felt sorry for the man. He knew the servant couldn't pay back the enormous sum of money, so he let him go free.

“You don't owe me anything,” he told the servant.

As the servant was leaving the palace, he saw a man who owed him some money.

It wasn't an enormous sum of money (*hold your arms out as wide as you can*).

It wasn't a medium amount of money (*move hands closer*).

It was a tiny amount of money (*hold your thumb and forefinger slightly apart*).

The servant marched over to the man. “You owe me some money!” he yelled. “Pay up now!”

The man fell to his knees. “Please, sir!” he begged. “Give me a few days. I'll pay everything back, I promise.”

But the first servant refused to listen. Instead, he sent the man to jail.

When the other servants in the palace heard about the man being thrown into jail, they were very upset. They told the king what had happened. The king was furious. He called the first servant back in to see him.

“You owed me an enormous amount of money (*hold your arms out as wide as you can*),” the king exclaimed. “When you begged for more time, I felt sorry for you. I even said you did not have to pay back a single penny. Don't you think you should show the same kindness to your fellow servant, who owed you only a tiny amount of money?”

Then the king had the first servant thrown into jail until he could pay back what he owed.



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your children—imagine and wonder.
- Spend a few minutes identifying situations where forgiveness might be needed.
- Help your children cut out a heart-shaped piece of paper. Let them draw something on the paper that makes them happy. Cut the paper into a few pieces to make a broken heart (like puzzle pieces). Heal the heart by putting it back together. Trade hearts with someone else to see if you can heal their heart.



Responding to God's Grace

- Help your children improvise asking for forgiveness, and also improvise how to respond when someone asks them for forgiveness.
- Provide a chalkboard and chalk, dry-erase board and markers, or paper and pencil. Make a small design on the surface and use an eraser to make the surface clean again. Notice how this is like forgiveness.
- Read *Desmond and the Very Mean Word* by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Douglas Carlton Abrams. Be inspired by the power of forgiveness.
- Help very young children count to seven. Older children can count to 70, or even 490, which is a very big number! We are to forgive so many times that we lose count.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- Provide a piece of paper and watercolor paint. Let your children paint a picture of something a person could do that would bring a need for forgiveness. Let the picture dry. Then soak the paper in a pan of water, letting the paint dissolve from the paper. Talk about how this is like forgiveness.
- Learn and sing “We Are Forgiven,” hymn 447 in the *Glory to God* hymnal.
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Thank you, God, for helping me learn how to forgive others. Amen.