Series Road Map: Story Teller - The Unforgiving Servant

Series Overview: Jesus loved using stories to teach important life lessons. He frequently told parables that would highlight spiritual truths and allow the listeners to learn lessons for themselves. In this series, we will be looking at three amazing parables and what Jesus has to teach us through them.

Week Overview: This week, we look at the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. My prayer is that this week will provide a healthy balance of encouragement and conviction in the area of forgiveness and inspire students to be quick to extend forgiveness to others because of the forgiveness we have been shown by God.

Outline:

Grab the Room (Intro): personal story

Tension (what’s the struggle): Everyone likes the idea of forgiveness, but hates actually doing it

Text: Matthew 18:21-35

THP: Give What You’ve Been Given

Supporting Points

- What response should the servant have had?

- Why people struggle to internalize God’s grace

1. Underestimating our sin

2. Underestimating God’s grace

Application (call to action):

Who do you need to forgive?

Script:

*Intro*

(Personal intro)… Have you guys ever been given something amazing and you just couldn’t wait to give it to others?

(Share a personal story about getting something you were pumped about, and eager to share with others.)

For those of you that know me and Courtney well, you know that our all-time favorite drink is La Croix. I couldn’t tell you exactly the first time I tried it, but I do remember a lot of people recommending it until eventually, when someone offered me one, I tried it… and LOVED it. I started telling everyone I knew and whenever I would find a new flavor I was eager for others to try it. Courtney and I are quick to give from our own personal supply if it means that others can experience the beautiful flavors that we love (especially LimonCello).

Isn’t it funny how you are quick to give to others the awesome things that you have been given. I think we are quick to do this because we want others to experience what we have experienced! That leads me to our THP today, which I promise will make even more sense after we go through the story for today…

**THP: Give What You Have Been Given.**

I want you guys to keep that THP in mind as we jump into our Second Week of story tellers…

*Scripture*

Like I mentioned last week, Jesus LOVED using stories to teach important truth! But before we dive into any of the parables in this series, we’ve got to pause and take a look at the context. The context is what leads up to Jesus telling the story and it helps us understand why Jesus told the story and what it means. So, let’s look at the situation that leads up to the story… Jesus is taking a moment to share about what you should do if a fellow Christian is doing something wrong. Basically, if a fellow Christian is caught sinning, what should we do about it? He goes through this multi-step process of what it looks like to do everything you can to help the person see that what they are doing is wrong, and help them get back on the right path…

So, after he is done explaining all of this, Peter (one of his disciples) approaches him with a question about forgiveness. Check it out…

**21**Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” **22**Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. (Matt. 18:21-22)

This is actually a good question from Peter, and one that we all probably wonder from time to time. Jesus just finished talking about what to do if a fellow believer is sinner, so Peter decides to clarify how many times can someone make the same mistake over and over again and we still forgive them, and when it is a lost cause. There’s gotta be a limit, right?? Jesus shocks the crowd he’s talking to by saying, not seven times but seventy-seven times. This is actually another way of saying 70 times 7 times! Now, let me clarify, Jesus isn’t saying to keep track and once the person has made the same mistake for the 490th time you don’t have to forgive him anymore. No. Jesus is saying you should ALWAYS forgive them! But his answer doesn’t stop there. He’s told them WHAT to do (forgive always), but then he begins to tell a story that will clarify WHY they should always forgive. So that’s the context where we enter this story… why we should ALWAYS pursue forgiveness. Then Jesus jumps into a story about a man who is desperate for the forgiveness of a man who he owes a lot of money… like A LOT! Check this out...

(use images in background to make this part more engaging)

<https://www.freebibleimages.org/illustrations/unforgiving-servant/> (pictures we could potentially use)

**23**Jesus said, “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+18%3A21-35&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23748a)]**24**When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+18%3A21-35&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23749b)] **25**And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. **26**So the servant[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+18%3A21-35&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23751c)] fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ **27**And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. **28**But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+18%3A21-35&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23753d)] and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ **29**So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ **30**He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. **31**When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. **32**Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33**And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ **34**And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers,[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matt.+18%3A21-35&version=ESV#fen-ESV-23759e)] until he should pay all his debt. **35**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (Matt. 18:23-25)

So there is an EXTREMELY wealthy king who owns tons of land, houses, cattle, servants, you name it. And because he has so much he is quick to lend out to his servants who are in need, understanding that they will pay him back eventually. One servant takes this WAY too far, and when the king decides it is time that he is paid back the money he lent out, we find out that this servant owes him 10,000 talents. Now, we don’t use talents nowadays, so it’s hard for us to understand just how much money this is when we first read the story. What’s important to understand is that their currency was based on the amount of time worked. So, for example, 1 denarii was one full day worth of work. So, 100 denarii is 100 days worth of work, does that make sense? So, this servant owes 10,000 TALENTS… Now, that may already sound like a lot of money, but get this… 1 talent was 20 YEARS worth or labor. Yes, you heard that right! 20 years!! So, if you do the quick math, this servant owes 200,000 YEARS worth of labor! What?? How is that even possible?? That is literally impossible to be paid back!

What we need to understand is that Jesus did this on purpose. Let’s remember, He is making this story up, and every character represents somebody. So, with the understanding of how much this servant actually owed, it becomes pretty obvious who the servant represents. It’s us. Each and every one of us. Because of our sin, we owe God something that is absolutely impossible to pay back. Each and every one of us is just like this servant standing before the king when we stand before God. Completely helpless and dependent on his mercy. We can’t pay Him back ourselves. But you know what’s amazing, just like the king in the story erases the debt of his servant, God offers us unconditional forgiveness through His son Jesus Christ! He has paid our unpayable debt for us! This is amazing right??

But what happens next in the story? After being forgiven a debt so massive that the servant could have worked every single day for the rest of his life and not even paid off a fraction of his debt, he goes to a fellow servant, grabs him by the neck and demands to be paid back what this other servant owes him. How crazy is that?? Doesn’t it make you so angry?? This guy was shown so much grace and mercy, but refused to show it to others!! But you see, this is the EXACT lesson Jesus is trying to teach his listeners (and us!) through this story! Jesus is calling us to **give what we have been given**! Remember? I mentioned earlier that this is our THP, so let me say it again… **give what you have been given**!

By telling this story, Jesus is answering the “Why?” behind his call to always forgiven? Jesus isn’t just saying to FORGIVE ALWAYS, he is explaining through this story how crazy it would be, as a Christian, if you did not forgive! What he has made crystal clear through this story is that if you consider yourself a Christian… if you have experienced that grace and forgiveness… if your unpayable debt has been completely forgiven by God… then the only right response is to show that same grace to other people. We are called to **give what we have been given**. Otherwise, we are hypocrites. We’re just like the servant who accepted this absolutely crazy forgiveness from the king but refused to show even a little grace to a fellow servant. If we don’t forgive others, that’s us!

*Application*

Now, I know that this is a lot easier said than done. To be totally honest, this isn’t a very popular message. So many movies, tv shows, and books, are about getting revenge. We are told constantly that some things are just completely unforgivable, that certain friends need to just be cut-off and some people need to be cancelled. But Jesus says something completely different. Jesus makes it clear that because God is patience and quick to forgive with us, we should show the same grace to others.

As difficult as it is, this totally makes sense right? I mean, why do we get so angry in the part of the story when the man is threatening and strangling his fellow servant? It doesn’t feel right! It’s completely unfair! And that is because we know, deep down, that when we are shown kindness, the only proper response is to show kindness back. We know that when we are given something good, it should motivate us to give the same gift to others. Think about it… how should the servant who was forgiven have responded? I think he should have gone skipping out of the palace and when he saw the fellow servant owed him money, he should have gone running up to him excited to tell him the news! Maybe he would have said, “You won’t believe what just happened! I owed the king 10,000 talents, and he has completely forgiven everything! Can you believe that?? And you know what that means? You don’t owe me anything either!!” Guys, we were wired by God himself to **give what we have been given**! We should be excited if we ever have the opportunity to extend grace to someone else in the same what God extended grace to us! That is our WHY! That’s the only thing we REALLY need in order to show grace to others! We need to know and believe that we have been shown grace by God!

For some of you, you struggle to forgive because you haven’t let the truth that God has forgiven you really sink-in. This could happen for two reasons...

1. *You underestimate your sin.*

This is something we don’t talk about enough. Guys, it’s important to understand just how short of God’s standard we fall. Every single one of us is broken. We make mistakes every single day. We hurt the people we love most. We are arrogant, selfish, mean, impatient, dishonest, short-tempered. The list goes on and on. And for those of you who are like, “You’re not talking about me, right??” Congratulations… that’s pride. I joke around, but guys this is essential. How in the world could we possibly begin to understand the depths of God’s grace if we don’t think we need saving. We live in a country and a culture that is all about self sufficiency. We think we can handle everything on our own, and that everything we have we earned! Guys, we are in DESPERATE need of God. Our sin has dug us into hole we can’t possibly get out of. We are just like the servant who owed 10,000 talents begging before the king. Our only hope is that the king would be gracious. But there’s good news, God IS gracious.

2. *You underestimate God’s grace.*

So some of you underestimate your sin, while others underestimate God’s grace. Some of you watching right now have heard about God’s grace, and you believe it in your head, but it hasn’t sunk down into your heart. If you were being honest, you don’t REALLY believe that you are ACTUALLY forgiven. That God ACTUALLY loves you and wants you. He tolerates you… but he doesn’t love you. You still have to earn you. You have to make up for all those mistakes. And when you mess up again, He’s just looking down on you with disappointment. NO! When Jesus said, “It is finished” he meant it! He paid your debt. You are forgiven! You are in right standing with God. Remember the story from last week?? God is like the father, running out to greet you, eager to celebrate you and lavish His love on you if you would just let him!

Guys, when the reality of God’s grace sinks into our hearts and we REALLY believe it. Forgiveness comes naturally. Instead of seeing it as a burden, we begin seeing it as one of the greatest opportunities to be like Jesus. We become eager to show others the same grace we have been shown by God Himself. We are eager to **give what we have been given**!

Let me end with a challenge. Some of you are harboring unforgiveness. Someone hurt you, and you just can’t let it go. But guys, God calls us to forgive ALWAYS. Draw on the power of the grace God has shown you in order to show grace to others. Who is that person for you? Who do you need to forgive?

Now this will look different for different people and in different situations. I’ll be honest, some of you are struggling in friendships because of something petty, and you need to lead the way and reconcile. Christians should look different in friendships. We should be quick to reconcile and forgive. Others, you have some really deep hurt. Abuse. Divorce. Lying. Disappointment. The list goes on and on. Some of you need to hear that forgiveness does not always mean being friends with someone. For some of you, your relationship with the person that hurt you should look different, or maybe even end. But that does not mean you can’t forgive them. You can remove the grudge and negative thoughts/feelings you have towards them. You can forgive them in your heart without having a close relationship with you. If you are a little confused on what kind of situation you are in, I would encourage you to talk to your life group leaders. They can provide some wisdom and guidance on what forgiveness can look like in your situation.

I’ll ask one more time before we close… Who do you need to forgive? Who do you need to show the grace of God to? Who do you need to **give what you have been given**?

Application: Set-up a time to take a minute of silence in each life group and have each person write down one name (someone who they need to forgive) and answer one question: “What is keeping me from forgiving this person.” Transition from this moment directly into conversations.

**GET STORY** (not the responsibility of the person teaching… just a reminder for me)