

THE KINGDOM LIFE — Part 4
“Forgive as You Have Been Forgiven”
Matthew 18:21–35

Introduction: Today Jesus takes us into one of the most difficult places in the Christian life: *What do kingdom people do when somebody hurts them?* In Matthew 18, Peter came to Jesus and asked how often he should forgive a brother who sins against him. Jesus told him a story of a man who was forgiven an enormous debt to illustrate our big idea: Forgiveness is essential to kingdom life and healthy relationships.

I. The calculation of forgiveness (vv. 21–22)

A. The count — “How often?” *Peter’s problem was not the number; it was that he was keeping score.*

B. Jesus offers this correction — “Seventy times seven.” *In fallen humanity, vengeance multiplies; in the kingdom, mercy multiplies.*

C. Stop counting. — *Jesus is in essence saying stop counting. (Gen. 4:24)*

D. The contrast — *Jesus is not saying repeated sin doesn’t matter.* Forgiveness does not eliminate the need to confront sin. (*Mt. 18:15*)

Jesus says: *Kingdom people don’t live with their hands around somebody else’s throat demanding, “Pay me what you owe.”*

II. The cancellation of the debt (v. 23)

A. The colossal debt — *Jesus chose the numbers He uses to show us something about our spiritual condition before God.* An impossible debt before a holy God. *Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53; Rom 6:23*

B. The complete inability — *Jesus is not describing a man a little behind on his credit card,* “He could not pay.” *Mt 18:25*

C. The compassionate King — The servant asked for patience; the king gave him pardon. *Mt 18:27*

D. The canceled account — Received mercy becomes reflected mercy. (*Eph 4:32; Col 3:13*)

David Jeremiah: *God’s mercy toward us becomes the pattern of mercy we extend to others*

III. The contradiction of unforgiveness (vv. 28–30)

A. The considerable debt — One hundred denarii was not nothing. The hurt may be real, but God’s mercy is greater.

B. The comparable plea — This servant’s words are almost exactly the same words the first servant had just used before the king. *He remembered what was owed but forgot what was forgiven.*

C. The cruel response — We cannot celebrate grace and cultivate grudges.

Billy Graham: *An unforgiving spirit eventually fills the heart with bitterness and anger rather than changing the person who caused the injury.*

D. The careful clarification — Forgiveness is not denial, automatic reconciliation, restored trust, or permission for continued harm. Jesus Himself put confrontation immediately before this teaching. *Mt 18:15*

Forgiveness is not necessarily forgetting. Sometimes the mind remembers. But the heart no longer uses the memory as a weapon.

IV. The consequence of an unforgiving heart (vv. 31–35)

A. The concern of the community — *Unforgiveness rarely affects only two people.* Bitterness spreads beyond the original offense. *Heb 12:15*

B. This stops with me. — By God’s grace, the cycle of resentment can end. *Kingdom people break cycles of resentment by the power of grace*

C. The confrontation by the king — We show mercy because the King has shown mercy to us. *Eph 4:32*

D. The cost of callousness — *Struggling to forgive is not the same as refusing to forgive.* A hardened refusal to forgive is spiritually serious. *Mt 18:35*

E. The condition of the heart — *You can say the words— and still keep the knife sharpened.* Entrust the offense and the demand for vengeance to God. *Rom 12:19*

Conclusion — *The cross changes the account (1 Pe 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21; Col 2)*
We must chose whether we will live by the ledger or by grace.

The ledger says: “You owe me.”

Grace says: “Look what I have been forgiven.”

Personal Response: Whose name came to mind today? What step of obedience is God calling you to take?

Remember: Forgiven people—by the grace of God—become forgiving people.

That is practical discipleship And that is the Kingdom Life.