

I Declare: Forgiveness

Week 5

Discussion Guide



Icebreaker

When you hear the word "forgiveness," what emotion comes to mind first: relief, frustration, confusion, resistance, or hope? Why?

Read

Take turns reading Matthew 18:21-35

Discuss

In Matthew 18:21, Peter asks Jesus if forgiving someone seven times is enough, likely thinking he was being generous in that amount. Peter is trying to figure out where to draw the limit for his mercy.

- **Where do you tend to draw the line with people in your own life? Is it after repeated mistakes, a lack of apology, emotional exhaustion, or something else?**
- **When forgiveness feels hardest for you, what's usually at stake? Your pride, your sense of justice, your safety, or your peace?**

Jesus responds to Peter with a parable that highlights the gap between mercy received and mercy given. One servant is forgiven a debt of roughly \$500 million, an amount so large it would be impossible for him to repay. Yet that same servant refuses to forgive another servant who owes him about \$16,000. Compared to what he had just been forgiven, it was a drop in the bucket. The parable exposes how easily we lose perspective when forgiveness becomes personal.

- **When you think about your own life, what are some "small debts" you've struggled to forgive even after receiving grace yourself?**
- **Why do you think it's easier to remember what others owe us than what we've been forgiven?**
- **How does remembering the ways you've been forgiven change how you view the offenses of others?**

Jesus sums up the point of the parable in v. 35. Jesus teaches that mercy in the Kingdom of God is meant to be limitless because it reflects the mercy we have received from Him. When we choose to limit our mercy toward others, we should not be surprised when our relationship with God feels strained. This parable does not teach that a person who believes in Jesus can lose their salvation by being unforgiving. Rather, it teaches that unforgiveness disrupts closeness, peace, and intimacy with God.

- **Which is harder for you personally: accepting forgiveness from God, or extending forgiveness to others? Why?**
- **What are some warning signs in your own life that bitterness or unforgiveness might be taking root?**

Application

Forgiveness is not only something we do, it is something we first receive. Before forgiveness ever becomes a command we live out, it is a gift we are invited to accept. Scripture is clear that forgiveness begins with God's mercy toward us, not our effort toward others.

- **What would it change about your life if your past no longer defined you?**
- **What would it look like if you accepted the forgiveness of God freely and fully? What makes it hard to accept?**
- **Who is someone God may be asking you to forgive, not because they deserve it, but because you've received it? Take one practical step toward extending this forgiveness.**

Prayer

Spend time in prayer thanking God for His mercy and asking Him to help you live out that same mercy to others.