

WHY FORGIVE? (PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT)

Matthew 18:21–35 **Colossians 3:13**

BIBLICAL PASSAGE

MEMORY VERSE

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. **Colossians 3:13**

Forgiveness is a word that the world has never really understood. Christians often struggle with it, too. The sin nature kicks in. All we're really interested in is in seeing that the party who has hurt us somehow gets paid back.

Read Matthew 18:21–35. If God were keeping score of all the ways we have hurt Him, He probably would have wiped the entire human race from the earth a long time ago. But as God, He is the author of forgiveness—some otherworldly force that does not take people's sins into account, but instead, cancels their debt.

Forgiveness provides a healing effect. It takes both the responsibility and the reason for hostility away from the one victimized and the one committing the offense. It opens doors to understanding and love. It diffuses anger

and bitterness, which can lead to further offenses. Forgiveness can stop hatred dead in its tracks. Forgiveness is not of this world, but of the Kingdom of God.

If teenagers have grown up in an environment of unforgiveness, forgiveness may be more difficult for them to understand and practice. Teenagers need to hear their parents say, "I'm sorry," offering one another forgiveness. They need to see our actions of forgiveness extended toward them, knowing that we are not going to raise up old offenses, but let go of them, laying them to rest. Teenagers need parents to convey that forgiveness releases them from guilt as the offender and from bitterness as the one offended.

FAMILY DEVOTION TIME

Connect . . .

Family members take turns sharing experiences where forgiveness was offered and a relationship restored.

Explore . . .

A family member reads Matthew 18:21–35. The family discusses: **What is forgiveness most like (think in accounting terms)? Why is forgiveness not the norm for the world we live in? What usually stands in the way of forgiveness? What was the price of God's forgiveness for us?**

Transform . . .

The family writes a covenant/resolution together, stating how they will implement and practice forgiveness in the family, and why it is so important. Each family member signs the covenant.

Pray together that your family will agree to practice forgiveness, understanding that forgiveness leads to healing and restoration of relationships.