

## What Does it Mean to be a Disciple of Jesus Christ?

### A Disciple Forgives Others

by Annette Gulick 10/1/2001

#### Lesson Five

**Lesson Objective:** That students understand their obligation to forgive other and learn what real forgiveness looks like.

**Bible Passage:** Mt. 18: 21-35

**Bible Truth:** Peter learned that he should forgive others from the heart and without limit.

#### Before You Begin:

- ◆ two balls
- ◆ 5 copies of “A disciple forgives others: dramatic reading”—on the back of each one write in large letters the name of the character who will read their part from that sheet (i.e. Jesus, Peter, etc.)

#### Opening:

Divide the students into two equal teams [if there is an unequal number ask one of the students to leave his or her team and be a referee.] Have the students stand in two lines with each student facing the back of their teammate in front of them. Give each team a ball and instruct them to pass the ball to the person behind them like this: the first person in line passes the ball through their legs to the person behind them who then passes it over their head, and so on, under, over, under, over. When the ball reaches the end of the line that person runs to the front of the line and begins the process again by passing the ball through their legs. The first team to have the person who was originally in the front of the line return to the front wins.

- *What would have happened if someone had refused to let go of the ball? [Their team would lose.]*

*There are times in life when it is better to let go than to hold on. Today we are going to learn about one of those times.*

## Interactive Learning

Go around the circle and have every student share their name and their "pet peeve." Then get several responses to the following questions:

- *Are most of these things actual sins or just things that get on our nerves?*
- *How do you respond when one of your friends does something that bugs you?*
- *What about when someone in your family bothers you?*

*Although researchers still don't know how to prevent cancer, they have isolated one of its leading causes: constant irritation. Smoking causes lung cancer because the nicotine and tar in cigarettes irritate the lungs. A bad sunburn irritates the skin cells and so increases the chance of skin cancer. Emotional irritation can cause the equivalent of emotional cancer. Thinking of our pet peeves reminds us what emotional irritation feels like. But the worst kind of emotional irritation, the thing that destroys people like an emotional cancer, is not forgiving those who hurt us. Today we continue our study of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ by learning what Jesus taught Peter about forgiveness.*

## Bible Application

Listen to several student responses to the following question:

- *How many times do you think you have to forgive people when they hurt you?*

Choose 5 students to participate in the dramatic reading. Give each of them a copy of the reading and assign them their role according to whose name is written on the back of their paper. Have "Jesus" and "Peter" stand together on one side of the room while the "king" and "debtors" stand together on the other side. Ask the participants to hold their papers so the other students can see the name written on the back of their paper. After the reading discuss it guided by the following questions:

- *How many times does Jesus say we have to forgive our brothers and sisters? (If they respond 70 x 7 or 77, ask what that means: without limit.)*

*Jesus' answer shows how ridiculous it is to count how many times we've forgiven someone. In first Corinthians 13:5 Paul tells us, "love keeps no record of wrongs."*

- *If we are not supposed to keep count of how many times we've forgiven someone, what does that teach us about God's forgiveness for us? (He doesn't keep count either; he will forgive us as many times as we ask him in true repentance.)*

*Since we often have to ask forgiveness from God for the same thing over and over, it is very comforting to know that he isn't keeping count, he isn't thinking "I've already forgiven him or her for that twenty-three times this week." Instead "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." (1st Jn. 1:9)*

- *Why do you think the 1st servant had no mercy on the 2nd servant? (There is no one "right" answer to this question, so listen to various ideas, then suggest, if it hasn't already been said, that he even though he was thankful for what the king had done for him, he hadn't really been changed as a result of that experience.)*
- *What does this parable teach us about why we have to forgive others? (because God has forgiven us so much)*
- *What does Jesus warn will happen if we don't forgive our brothers? (God won't forgive us.)*

*Just like the servant did nothing to deserve being forgiven of his debt, we know that "it is by grace that we have been saved, through faith not by works." (Eph. 2:8) So how can we understand this and other passages that make it seem like our salvation depends on something we do? It is important to understand the difference between what saves us (called justification) and what happens to us after we are saved (called sanctification.) Just like the wicked servant could never have paid the debt he owed, the only thing that can pay the huge debt that we owe God because of our sins is the perfect sacrifice of Jesus' life that he gave on the cross for us. But once we have been "born again" we are "new creations", who think and live differently than before. One of the signs of this "new life" is that our relationships, especially with other Christians, are different. We know how much God has forgiven us, so we forgive others.*

## Commitment

Write on the board "to forgive means", "to forgive does not mean." Have the students break into pairs and decide how to finish these sentences. When you see they have finished come together as a group again and ask about half of the pairs to share their answers to: "to forgive means..." When they have finished explain:

*Forgiveness can be defined very simply. To forgive means to let go. (Write on board.) You let go of your anger, resentment, and hate, and you let go of your*

***right to make another person pay for what he or she has done to you. This is what God does with Christians. He is angry with people because of their sin and he has the right to punish them. But when someone trusts in Christ those sins were paid for on the cross, so God stops being angry with him or her and He gives up his right to punish them. And this is what we need to do with those who sin against us.***

**Then ask the other groups to share their answer to: "to forgive does not mean...." When they have finished, write the following answers on the board: "to forget", "to excuse", "to ignore", and "to extend unconditional trust in the future".**

***To forgive does not mean to forget because although God can "forgive and forget," our memories can recall what happened even after we have forgiven someone. But if we have forgiven them, when we remember what happened it will be without bitterness.***

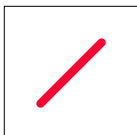
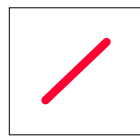
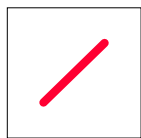
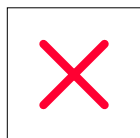
***To forgive does not mean to excuse, because if you can excuse what they did (for example, "she didn't want to hurt me, but she needed to tell me the truth) then they don't need to be forgiven.***

***To forgive does not mean to ignore. If you ignore pain and hurt, you will continue to suffer from it. You have to face the pain to be able to heal emotionally.***

***To forgive does not mean to trust that person unconditionally in the future. Jesus says we should be "wise as serpents and gentle as doves." It requires wisdom to know how much trust to give to someone after they have hurt you, but withholding trust or intimacy does not mean that you haven't really forgiven them.***

***But knowing about forgiveness isn't enough. We have to do it and it's not easy. It requires effort: emotional effort, intellectual effort, and an effort of the will. We are going to learn three steps that will allow us, with God's help, to really forgive others.***

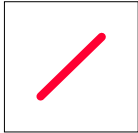
**Do the three hand motions. Have the class do them with you. Then say the name with each motion. And finally have the class say the names and do the motions with you. Ask for volunteers to demonstrate the motions and names on their own. Then write the names of the board as you explain them.**



***1) Feel the pain--this is the emotional work of letting yourself experience the feelings you had about what happened. What hurts us isn't as much what happens as how it makes us feel. For example***

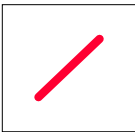
***if your little brother teasingly calls you a "loser" because you tripped going up stairs, you probably aren't deeply hurt. But you feel much differently if you find out that a classmate you really look up to has called you a "loser."***

***Before you can forgive someone, you have to know what you are forgiving them for. You may have to stop denying that they hurt you in order to feel the sadness and anger appropriate to the situation. Crying and talking about how you feel are important in this process. But as important as it is face the reality of your pain, you can't stop there. Remember the goal is to forgive and heal.***



***2) Analyze the situation--This is the intellectual work of getting a better understanding of what happened. Because of our intense emotions we often have a distorted perspective of what actually happened. We may think that someone said something or treated us in a way he or she didn't. Often we need to understand what really happened. For example, a child thinks that his or her parents prefer their brother or sister to them when in reality the parents understand that the two children are very different people and have different needs. So the child only sees the privileges he doesn't have instead of those he does.***

***A very important part of analyzing the situation is realizing that, like the person who hurt me, I also am a sinful person who hurts other people and needs forgiveness. Again, this is not to excuse or make light of what they did. But it means mentally putting myself in the place of the servant from the parable--remembering the huge debt of sin that God has forgiven me for, and so knowing that I need to be able to forgive others.***



***3) Release the anger--The first two steps are preparing my heart and mind to be able to forgive. The actual forgiveness is an act of the will. You decide that you are going to, as I said before, let go of your anger. You are no longer going to feel like they owe you something. You give up your desire for revenge, for making them suffer the way they made you suffer. And you replace that desire with hoping that things go well for them. These attitudes then show themselves in actions, praying for them and showing them friendliness and love. The shift from viewing the person who has hurt you with bitterness and anger to truly wishing them well is so difficult that we need God's help to be able to do it. But if we don't go through this process to forgive them, we are the ones who suffer.***

## Closing

***Because these three steps are important to real forgiveness and because working through them takes time, we are not going to close the lesson by asking you to forgive someone who has hurt you. Instead we are going to give you time to go***

***before God and be in his presence. It may be that you want to let him bring to your mind people that you need to forgive. It may be that you are very aware of someone you need to forgive but you need God's help to feel the pain of what they did to you, or to analyze the situation, or to release the anger, or all three. God knows what you need. And he wants to help you.***

**Ask the students to kneel and tell them they will have three minutes to pray and to listen silently to God. When the three minutes have passed, close in prayer, asking God's help to forgive those who hurt us.**

### A Disciple Forgives Others: Dramatic Reading

**Peter:** Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be your name (pause) Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (pause) Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors... (pause) Uh, oh. Um, Jesus, listen, I have a question. The Pharisees say that I have to forgive my brother three times, and after that it's his problem. As my master, I need to know how many times *you* say that I have to forgive my brother. Let me guess, up to seven times?

**Jesus:** No, Peter. Neither you nor the Jewish teachers of the law are even close. I say seventy times seven.

**Peter:** (Gasps) That's more than once a day for a year!

**Jesus:** No Peter, it means you don't keep count; you just keep forgiving. Let me explain the way things work in God's kingdom: One day a king decided to settle his accounts with his servants. In the process he was brought a man who owed him thousands of talents, more money than one man could ever pay off in a lifetime.

**King:** Woe to the man who cannot pay his debt to the king. Guards. Although it won't begin to cover what he owes me, sell him, his wife, his children, and everything he owns as an example of what happens to those who cannot pay their debts.

**1st Debtor:** (wailing) Oh king, please be patient with me. I promise I will pay back everything. Please, please, have mercy on me.

**Jesus:** The king felt pity for the man and decided to release him and totally cancel the debt, as though it had never been owed. But when the servant went out from the throne room he came across one of the other servants, to whom he had loaned a day's wage. He grabbed him and began to choke him so he couldn't get away.

**1st Debtor:** (angrily) Why you rotten, good-for-nothing, lazy thief. You better pay me back every cent that you owe me right now.

**2nd Debtor:** (choking) Please be patient with me. I promise I will pay back everything. Please, please have mercy on me.

**1st Debtor:** I've already given you plenty of time. Guards! Throw this man in prison right now until he can pay me back.

**Jesus:** When the other servants heard what had happened they were outraged and went and told the king. As you can imagine the king was not pleased and immediately sent for the servant he had pardoned.

**King:** How dare you! You wicked, hard-hearted wretch! I cancelled your immense debt because you begged me to. Shouldn't you then have had mercy on your fellow servant like I had mercy on you? If you prefer justice to mercy then justice you shall have. Throw him in jail and torture him until he pays back every last cent that he owes me.

**Jesus:** You see this is how God will treat you unless you forgive your brother from your heart.

## ***A Disciple's Contract and Reading Guide for Mark***

***This outline is to help you read through the book of Mark. Read one or more segments each day and you will have read the entire book in eight weeks. This handout covers the last eight chapters of Mark for the final four weeks of our study.***

Mark Chapter and Verse	What I learned about Jesus
<input type="checkbox"/> 1     9: 2-13	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2     9: 14-32	
<input type="checkbox"/> 3     9: 33-50	
<input type="checkbox"/> 4     10: 1-12	
<input type="checkbox"/> 5     10: 13-31	
<input type="checkbox"/> 6     10: 32-45	
<input type="checkbox"/> 7     10: 46- 52	
<input type="checkbox"/> 8     11: 1-11	
<input type="checkbox"/> 9     11: 12-26	
<input type="checkbox"/> 10    11: 27-33	
<input type="checkbox"/> 11    12: 1-12	
<input type="checkbox"/> 12    12: 13-27	
<input type="checkbox"/> 13    12: 28-34	
<input type="checkbox"/> 14    12: 35-44	
<input type="checkbox"/> 15    13: 1-13	
<input type="checkbox"/> 16    13: 14-37	
<input type="checkbox"/> 17    14: 1-11	
<input type="checkbox"/> 18    14: 12-26	
<input type="checkbox"/> 19    14: 27-42	
<input type="checkbox"/> 20    14: 43-52	
<input type="checkbox"/> 21    14: 53-65	
<input type="checkbox"/> 22    14: 66-72	
<input type="checkbox"/> 23    15: 1-15	
<input type="checkbox"/> 24    15: 16-32	
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<input type="checkbox"/> 26    15: 42-47	
<input type="checkbox"/> 27    16: 1-8	
<input type="checkbox"/> 28    16: 9-20	

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### CONTRACT

*I believe that reading about the life of Jesus is an important part of being His disciple. I hereby agree to read through the entire book of Mark during the next eight weeks. I also commit to faithfully attend all class sessions on "What Does it Mean to be a Disciple?" unless I am dead, dying, or out-of-town. I trust that God will bless me with the joy and peace that comes from his presence as I try to get to know him better.*



a. gulick

Peter 5

Signed

Date