

LARGE GROUP LESSON

BOTTOM LINE:

Forgive as you have been forgiven.

OBJECTIVE:

Kids will learn that when they are tempted to get angry or hold a grudge, they should remember that they have made mistakes too.

KEY PASSAGE:

Matthew 18:21-35, Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

INTRO:

Do you have any idea how much it costs to buy a car? How much do you think a car costs? How much for, say, a new family car? How much for a sports car? How much for a simply used car?

Let the kids give some answers, then show them some ads from the local paper or local car dealers - so they can see how much a car can cost!

Cars are expensive, aren't they? Even used cars can be pricey. How many of you here have money to walk onto a car lot today and buy a new car?

Most adults can't afford to pay cash for a car either, new or old. Adults have monthly bills to pay in addition to big expenses like cars. So what do we do? We go into debt. We apply for loans, where the bank gives us the money to buy the car and we pay that money back, plus extra money called interest. You end up paying a lot more than the sticker price for the car because interest can be expensive, but loans and debt allow us to buy things like cars we otherwise can't afford.

How much do you think it costs to buy a house? Is that more expensive than a car? Houses are way more expensive than cars, and almost everyone has to go into debt for a house. It can take 20-30 years to pay for a house, and if you make your payments every month, you'll eventually get there.

But what happens when you can't make the house payment? What happens when you can't make the monthly payments on the sweet Corvette? Do you think the bank that gave you the money is going to let you keep the car or the house? No! If you can't pay the debt, you will lose whatever it was you went into debt to buy.

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And good luck trying to get more debt to buy another one!

Jesus used the idea of debt as the basis for today’s parable. This is a story about money, but it’s about much more than that. It’s about learning to forgive as we have been forgiven.

READ MATTHEW 18:21-35

MAIN POINT:

There are three parts to this parable. In the first part, we see a man with a great deal of debt. Let’s say, just for fun, he bought a car, but he can’t pay back the man who gave him the money. Instead of taking the car or taking away the man’s freedom, the bank forgives his debt. He doesn’t have to make any more payments. He is home free!

In the second part, the man who just had a car loan forgiven goes to see a friend who borrowed a few dollars to buy a burrito at Taco Bell. The man can’t pay back the few dollars, so the first man calls the cops and has his friend thrown in jail.

The bank finds out about the burrito, and boy is this guy in trouble. They want the car back, and they want the man to pay a penalty. He and his whole family are tossed in jail. He could not find it in his heart to forgive a small debt, so he paid a steep price for his own.

Yes, this is a story about money, but it’s not really about money. It’s about our sin. God forgave us for ALL of our sins when Jesus died on the cross. If we want God to forgive us, we need to have a forgiving heart. We need to forgive other people, no matter how big or small their debts, as he forgave us.

DRIVE IT HOME:

Forgiveness is not easy. It’s certainly not as easy as saying that you’re sorry to someone. Sorry is easy by comparison. We know we’ve done wrong. We feel guilt for our actions, and we want the other person to know we are sorry we hurt them.

Things are a little different when you’re on the other side. When you’ve been hurt, you don’t want to forgive. You want that person to pay. Like the unforgiving servant, you want to grab the person who owes you by the shirt and shake them and say, “Where’s my burrito money?”

How can any of us get upset over such small debts? When we consider that Jesus died for every sin we have done or will do, how can we hold back forgiveness toward anyone? Maybe you’ll never trust that person again. Maybe the friendship is going to take time to heal. Maybe that other person will have to do something to make up for their actions. We still need to forgive with all our hearts!

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The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant is a powerful reminder of how much God forgives us. It cautions us not to withhold our forgiveness because as much as we think we’re owed, we owe God so much more than we could ever repay. If there’s someone you need to forgive this week, ask God to help you do it. Ask him for the courage to forgive. And thank him for all that he has forgiven in your heart!

CLOSE WITH A SIMPLE PRAYER:

Dear God,

Thank you for forgiving us. Help us to forgive others.

*In Jesus’ name,
Amen*