

HOW MANY TIMES?!!

Matthew 18:21-35

Have you ever felt sorry for poor Peter?

It seems like he's always being criticized for something!

What's sad about it is he's usually on the right track

—ahead of the rest. Yet, Peter usually comes up short.

As we see him in this story, Peter's feeling good about himself. As usual, he has the right idea.

Jesus is talking to followers about growing opposition (13:53-18:35) => 16-18— implications for followers

He's going to be crucified, & *they're* going to be attacked

Attack becomes intense— *brothers turn on each other*

Mt 18: **how to deal with people who mistreat us**

Our attitude toward attackers 21-35

While actions of offenders will be dealt with, people attacked are still responsible for *their* attitudes.

We forgive offenders, no matter how they hurt us

At this point Peter—*like us*—interrupts story.

Jesus calls for more forgiving attitude than we're willing to show. BUT—**how far do we take this attitude?**

Question 18:21 “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to 7 times?”

His idea is generous. He has the right idea.

Jewish custom: forgive 2X, but 3rd time—*let him have it!*

Like attitude today: 3 strikes, you're out! [Donkey story]

Peter's willing to go 2nd mile—beyond most of us—

He'd forgive **7 times!**

Answer 22 “I tell you, not 7 times, but **77 times.**”

His followers should forgive people who offend us

-NOT 7 X -BUT 77 X or, **70 times 7**

-We used to try to *count* offenses => #71? Or, #72?

-Now we can make a data base to keep track #338!

2 problems with that interpretation:

1. *It misses point!* => If we keep list, we haven't forgiven!

2. => **Illustration 18:23-34**

Merciful king forgives servant 18:23-27 “Kingdom of heaven is like king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began settlement, a man who owed him 10,000 bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵Since he wasn't able to pay, the master ordered that he, his wife, children & all he had be sold to repay the debt. ²⁶“At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘I will pay back everything.’ ²⁷Servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt & let him go”

Estimates begin at \$80 million; as high as \$2 billion

=> **more than servant could ever repay!**

King forgives *because HE's merciful!*

Forgiven servant refuses to forgive 18:28-30 *"When that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him 100 silver coins. He grabbed him & began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. ²⁹His fellow servant fell to his knees & begged him, 'Be patient with me, & I'll pay it back.' ³⁰But he refused. Instead, he went off & had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt."*

1st servant has fellow servant who owes him small amt.,
about 1/600,000 of what his debt had been.

If 1st debt = \$80 million, 2nd would owe about \$130.

He's not willing to forgive one who owes him.

Merciful king expects a forgiving response 18:31-34 *"When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged & went & told their master everything that had happened. ³²Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed"*

When merciful king hears what servant has done, he's furious; takes action against him.

He turns him over to jailors who torment him until he pays back all his debt. =>

PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN FORGIVEN MUCH OUGHT TO FORGIVE OTHERS ALSO

How much has God forgiven US? How many times?!

=> How much should we forgive?

Warning 18:35 Jesus turns to followers with warning:

"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."

WHY SHOULD WE FORGIVE OTHER PEOPLE?

Probably many people we *ought* to forgive!

If we can forgive pagan neighbors... (as Jesus taught!)

If we can "love our enemies"... (as Jesus taught!)

We should be able to forgive our husband or wife!

Or, other people who've hurt us! **WHY?**

It's NEVER because they deserve it!

We may forgive for spiritual reason 32-33 *"I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"*

We forgive others

because God has forgiven us!

We may forgive for a selfish reason 34-35 *"In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*

We forgive others for our own good

To avoid "jailers" = "torturers" – in story, use is literal

Mt. 8:29 –same root–

Demons want to know if Jesus came to **torture** them

2 Pe 2:8–Lot's **tormented** by wickedness around him.

When we refuse to forgive people who offend us,

God turns us over to "torturers."

We're upset Not hungry Can't sleep Feel bad

Sad Illness ... & often can't figure out why.

Happiness Is a Choice: Meier & Minirth tell of college student–suffered 3 yrs of depression

He felt bad, couldn't sleep, wasn't hungry

Finally he went for help. Counselor asked if he was angry with someone. Acknowledged teacher 3 yrs before accused him of cheating.

He'd **NEVER** forgive that teacher; she didn't deserve it!

Counselor responded: *"You're really punishing her, aren't you! You've suffered 3 yrs to get vengeance.*

Is it worth it? Do you think she even remembers you?"

After claiming Christ's forgiveness, he forgave her;

In few wks, he got over depression;

conquered "torturer".

We forgive those who offend us, NOT for *their* sake!

for **OUR OWN** sake; to escape the "torturers."

We can choose to forgive others for a **SPIRITUAL** reason:

Because of God's mercy–because *HE's* forgiven us.

Or, we can choose to forgive others for **SELFISH** reason:

escape torturers lest refusal to forgive "eats us alive

WHO DOES GOD WANT US TO FORGIVE?

If God has forgiven *US* so much, how can *WE* refuse to forgive people who hurt *US*?!!