

# Sermon Starter – Unlimited Forgiveness

*Matthew 18:21-35*

Jesus told Peter to forgive someone seventy-seven times, emphasizing forgiveness from the heart. Peter's question revealed a calculating mindset, and Jesus' response is to expand Peter's arithmetic of forgiveness that points toward unlimited forgiveness in light of God's incalculable mercy.

He compared the kingdom of God to a king whose slave owed him millions. When the slave begged for mercy, the king forgave the slave's entire debt. Yet, the slave in turn imprisoned another slave for not repaying a small debt. The king reinstated the first slave's debt for not responding mercifully.

As in many places throughout the gospels, forgiveness is a term that can be used in regard to both debts and sin. Rabbis often told parables featuring a king and disobedient servants or children. The king would be a typical stand-in for God. Jesus uses the word king once to introduce the parable, but thereafter uses Lord, the same Greek term used for Jesus throughout the Gospels.

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