

The Unforgiving Servant

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Scene Summary

The unforgiving servant presents the story of a man who was forgiven a big debt but was unwilling to forgive a poor man for a small debt. Scenes include: Peter asks Jesus how many times he must forgive a man. Jesus answers by telling a story...a king looks over his accounts...he questions a man who owes a large sum of money...he forgives the debt...the man later meets a servant who owes him a small sum...he treats the servant roughly and sends him to jail...the king learns of the incident...he sends the man to jail because of his unforgiving attitude.

Scripture

(Mat 18:21-35 NIV) Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" {22} Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times. {23} "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. {24} As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. {25} Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt. {26} "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' {27} The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. {28} "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. {29} "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' {30} "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. {31} When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. {32} "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. {33} Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' {34} In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. {35} "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

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Players

- **Narrator** – The play’s “catechist” or teacher should be a good reader with a clear voice.
- **Jesus** – God’s One and Only Son.
- **Peter** – A small but important role, more disciples can be added as needed.
- **King** – A person that is outgoing, bold and energetic.
- **King’s Servant 1, 2** – Important roles that carry the kernel of the story.
- **King’s guard** – A person that commands respect and authority.

Special Props

- Normal items from the prop box such as cloaks, veils, robes and headdresses.
- Crown for the King.
- Spear or sword for the King’s guard.

Script – The Unforgiving Servant

Narrator: One day Jesus was teaching His disciples about God’s ways.

Peter: Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?

Jesus: Not just seven times Peter. You must forgive him seventy times seven. I will tell you a story to show what I mean.

Narrator: One day a king decided to find out how much money was owed to him. He looked at the list of names and how much each of them owed.

King: [to the guard] This man owes me nearly 10 million dollars. Bring him in!
[Servant 1 comes in]

King: You have owed this money to me for a long time. Now I want you to pay me what you owe me.

Servant 1: I am very sorry your majesty, but my business is not doing very well. I can not pay you now.

King: So your business is not doing well and you cannot pay me? Very well! Guard! Take this man and sell him as a slave. Sell his wife, his sons and his daughters. Sell everything that he has.

Servant 1: [on his knees] Please, your majesty. Give me another chance. I will work harder, and my sons will work to repay the debt. Please give me time, and I will pay what I owe you. Please show kindness to me and to my family.

King: [to himself] Poor man. If I sell him as a slave, his life will be very hard and he will not be able to live with his family.

King: I forgive your debt. I will cross out all that you owe.

Servant 1: Oh, how wonderful! Thank you! [exits the room]

Servant 1: [to himself] How kind the King was. He could have sold my family and I as slaves, but he crossed out all that I owe him. I do not have to pay back the money at all. [Servant 2 walks by...] There is that servant that owes money to me!

Servant 1: [to Servant 2] Finally I have caught you! Why haven’t you paid me what you owe me? You owe me 16 dollars! It has been a long time! I want my money, and I want it now!

Servant 2: Please sir. I am a poor man. My business is not doing very well. I can not pay you now. Please give me a little more time and I will pay you. Please show kindness.

Servant 1: Kindness? I will show kindness when I get that money. You want time? I will give you plenty of time to think about how you can get my money, while you sit in jail.

Servant 2: Please, give me more time.

Narrator: But the man would not listen and had him thrown into jail. Some of the king's guards were watching.

King's guard: I know both of these men. The king must be told what has happened.

King: [to the guard] Bring in that servant.

King: [angry] You wicked servant! I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?

King: [to the guard] Turn him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

Jesus: My heavenly Father willing forgives you. He wants you to truly forgive others.

The End

Supplemental Information

In the days when Jesus lived in Palestine, there was no paper money. Coins were made of gold, silver and copper (or bronze or brass). Since Palestine was ruled by the Romans, the official money was Roman. But some towns or areas also made their own money. Usually these coins were on the Greek standard, instead of the Roman. There was also some Jewish money. In those days, it was used chiefly to pay the yearly Temple tax. Many coins from those days have been found. On the silver denarius, the head of Tiberius Caesar is on one side, and his mother holding a branch and scepter is on the reverse. On the coin of Herod the Great, in the center of one side is a wreath, and a tripod (three legged stool or table) is on the other side. A bronze coin of Pontius Pilate, what looks like a backward question mark is a wand used by those who practiced magic. The bronze coin of Herod Archelaus holds a bunch of grapes. A bronze coin of Herod Agrippa, the reverse side has three "ears" or stalks of barley. A silver coin of Antioch has the head of the Emperor Augustus.

Reflection Questions

1. What hard question did Peter ask Jesus?
2. Do you think Jesus really meant that Peter should keep track of how many times he would forgive a man? Why? Or why not!
3. What is the king talking about?
4. Why does the king want to see this man?
5. Why is the king angry? What does he decide to do?
6. How do you think the man feels? What is he thinking about?
7. What is the king thinking now? What does he decide to do?
8. How do you think the man feels now!
9. Why is the man so angry at the poor servant!
10. How do you think the servant feels?
11. Do you think the man should send the servant to jail? Why? Or why not?
12. What are the servant's friends talking about? What do they decide to do?
13. Why is the king so angry?
14. Do you think he should send the man to jail? Why? Or why not?
15. Why do you think Jesus told this story?