**JOURNEYING TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Session 2 of 4

# The unforgiving servant

### MEETING AIM

To explore the concept of forgiveness in Christian discipleship.

### BIBLE PASSAGE

Matthew 18:21-35

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in-person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your situation.

The parable of the unforgiving servant mirrors the ‘process’ of salvation. We are in a debt of sin, and can never repay that debt. Yet, Jesus comes and pays the price – our slate is wiped clean. What then do we do with that forgiveness and freedom? The actions of the servant in the parable highlight the requirement to forgive others. How much have the young people explored this issue? It leads us to look beyond ourselves and see how important this overflow of forgiveness is.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the young people to your group and share out any refreshments you have prepared. Chat about the young people’s week; celebrate their triumphs and share in their disasters. Ask the young people if they have ever been forgiven or let off, when they fully expected to be punished. If you have an appropriate story from your own life, share that with the group.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** ten coins per person, plus as many extra coins as you can gather; pens and paper

Give ten coins to each young person, making sure that you have a large number left over to loan to bankruptcy victims later in the game. Explain that every young person has a ‘starting debt’ of ten coins. They must try to repay their debt by winning games of rock-paper-scissors. Stakes can be as high as they wish, but make it clear that all debts must be repaid to you by the end of the game. Those who run out of money can come and get more from you, but this must be written down and added to their debt.

### BIBLE EXPLORATION – 10 mins

**You will need:** parable video and the means to play it; Bibles; ‘Yes’, ‘No’ and ‘Unsure’ labels; list of forgiveness situations

Before the session, search online for a video retelling of the unforgiving servant. You could use [this one](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ED3fzkS-bhA).

Use the video to introduce the parable and to create an opportunity for discussion and conversation around it. Then read Matthew 18:21-25 and ask:

* How do you think it felt to be in debt?
* Have you ever been in a situation in real life where you’ve run out of money?
* What makes a good steward of money?

Go on to read Matthew 18:26-27 and ask the group for any immediate reactions.

Label one end of the room ‘Yes’, the other end ‘No’ and the area in the middle ‘Unsure’. Prepare a list of forgiveness situations beforehand and ask the young people to move to the part of the room that represents their opinion for each situation. Tailor these questions to general, small issues that may affect your youth group. Before moving on to the next question, make sure you get the view of one young person from each opinion represented. Be flexible and allow relevant debate to flow.

Finally, read Matthew 18:28-35 and Galatians 5:13-14, and ask the group for any immediate reactions. You might also want to read the retold parable ‘Freddie and the false forgiveness’ from our ‘Ready to use parable’ series.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Continue your discussion of the Bible passage by chatting through the following questions:

* Which character in the parable do you most identify with? Why?
* Which part of the story made the biggest impact on you?
* What is Jesus really talking about when he is telling this story?
* What does this story tell you about God and your relationship with him?
* Now that you’ve heard this story, are you going to change anything in your life?

### CREATIVE RESPONSE – 10 mins

**You will need:** Bibles; art materials; paper

Read the Lord’s Prayer from Luke 11:1-4 and draw the young people’s attention to verse 4. Give them a moment to reflect on the need to forgive others as we have been forgiven. Invite the group to write out the verse on a sheet of paper and decorate that verse however they wish. They can use simple patterns or illustrations of what forgiveness looks like.

Encourage the young people to use this time to reflect on what they have explored today, and continue to process that. When you have finished, if they would like to, have a time of sharing of what the young people have done and thought about.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** a recording of ‘Amazing grace’ and the means to play it

Play ‘Amazing grace’ in the background. Ask the young people to focus on the grace and forgiveness received by the servant. Ask God to forgive us for the things that we’ve done wrong, but also to help us fully realise and accept his forgiveness. Secondly, ask God to help us be ready to forgive others and to share the forgiveness he offers with them, too.

Chat about how, if we want to receive forgiveness freely, we have to offer it freely, too. Use this time to make peace by asking forgiveness of, or offering forgiveness to, the other people in your youth group. If you can’t think of anything you need to be forgiven for, or to forgive, simply share the peace of Jesus with them by saying: “Peace be with you.”

This session was inspired by ideas from the NexGenPro archive, adapted by **ALEX TAYLOR**.