

PARABLE ON FORGIVENESS

Scripture:
Matthew 18:21-35

Materials Needed:
Small calculator, small coin purse,
large garbage bag filled with old
newspaper, visual of Peter talking with
Jesus

Memory Verse: Matthew

Objectives: As a result of this lesson, I want my students

To Know: When Peter asked how many times he should forgive another, Jesus answered 70 x 7 and explained this with a story which taught that since one had been forgiven so much, they should always forgive others rather than suffer the consequences of unforgiveness.

To Realize: If one is struggling with forgiving another, he should realize that in light of how much God is willing to forgive him, he should always forgive others rather than suffer the consequences of unforgiveness.

To Respond: by forgiving from the heart anyone who has wronged him.

Setting up the Story:

I want to figure something out this morning. I brought a calculator so we can work out this problem. I want us to figure out together how many times a day you think a grader sins (does/says/thinks something wrong). Let's say this boy is woken up in the morning. (Draw a stick figure on the board.) His mom says, "It's time to get up." But he wanted to sleep longer. What might he say or think?

(Grumble/disrespect) OK. That's one sin. (Write out the sin on the board) Then he goes to breakfast and his favorite cereal isn't there. What might happen then? (Write on the board) Then it's time to get in the car and his sister is taking a long time. So he calls her a name and doesn't even try to help her.

(Write on the board so that you have a "list" of all the sins.) By the end of the day, how many sins do you think this boy will have done? (Take a consensus answer.)

How many days are in a year? So let's figure out how many sins a year this boy probably does. (You can have a student figure it out on the calculator.)

Now if this boy were in the ____ grade, how many times would he have sinned? (Have student calculate and write the number on the board.)

Do you think most people keep a list of all the wrong things they have done or thought? (No!)

But most people do keep a list in their minds. Not of what they do wrong, but of what other people do wrong to them. Raise your hand if you can think of a time when someone did something wrong to you, or hurt your feelings or was unkind to you this last week. (You might wish to give an example here.) When someone does something wrong to us, what do we normally want to do? (get angry, get them back, don't talk to them, wish something would happen to them.)

Telling the story:

- I. Peter Asks Question
 - A. "How many times?"
 - B. "Up to seven times?"

- II. Jesus' Answer: 70x7

- III. Parable of the Debts
 - A. Man Owes Money
 - B. Man is Owed Money

As you tell the story:

Even Peter in the Bible had this problem. He probably had been hurt by things his brother had said to him. Roman soldiers had probably done wrong things that he didn't like. Maybe even tax collectors had cheated him of the money he had earned.

Jesus had taught Peter that when others did wrong to him he should forgive. Who can tell me what "forgive" means? (make sure your students understand it doesn't mean 'to forget' but to not hold a grudge, or want that person to 'get it'; to stop blaming.) Peter knew that forgiving was the right thing to do, but he had a question for Jesus. (Point to Bible passage) "Lord, how many times must I forgive, up to seven times?" If someone hit you, and they said, "Please forgive me" and you said, "Okay." And then they hit you again, and said, "Please forgive me" again, how many times should you keep saying, "OK, I forgive you?" (Get an answer.)

What did Jesus say? (Have a student read the answer and another student use the calculator to figure it out.) Why should we forgive someone that many times?! That's exactly what Peter was wondering, so Jesus told a parable to explain why:

Have three students come to the front. Explain that two of these owe money. This man owes this man this much money. (Pull out the huge

- IV. Jesus Warns Those who Don't Forgive
A. Not forgiven
B. Tormented

garbage bag stuffed with paper. Have a "\$825,000,000" sign on the bag) Read the part of the parable and have the student act it out and beg for mercy. Then say, "After this man was forgiven of his debt, he went out to find someone who owed him money. Ha! Here's someone!" Show small coin purse to illustrate how much money the second man owed. (Have a \$2500 sign on the bag.) Read the rest of the parable.

Ask- "WHY should the man have forgiven the person who owed him money?" (Because he was forgiven of so much bigger a debt.) Have student actors sit down as you conclude.

Concluding the Story:

Jesus wasn't really talking to Peter about money in this story. (Take off the \$ sign and put the word 'sins' on it.) He was talking about what we said at the beginning of the lesson- the many wrong things we have said or thought or done. Those sins are against God. How many times has God forgiven us? (More than all that is in this bag.) This little bag of money is like 'sins' too. but it's like the sins other people have done to us. Should we forgive others when they do wrong to us? How many times should we forgive according to Jesus? (490=as many times as necessary) Do you know why? (Let students respond) Because we have been forgiven so much! When we forgive someone instead of holding that anger at them on the inside, we are being an example that Jesus is really in us. We are carrying the torch in front of them, because they will know that Jesus is making a difference.

There is one more reason we should forgive too-- People who don't forgive feel terrible on the inside. They get bitter and can be angry all the time, or explode at people. The hurt gets bigger and bigger. The man in the story was turned over to tormentors; when we don't forgive, it stays inside and we are the ones who get hurt.