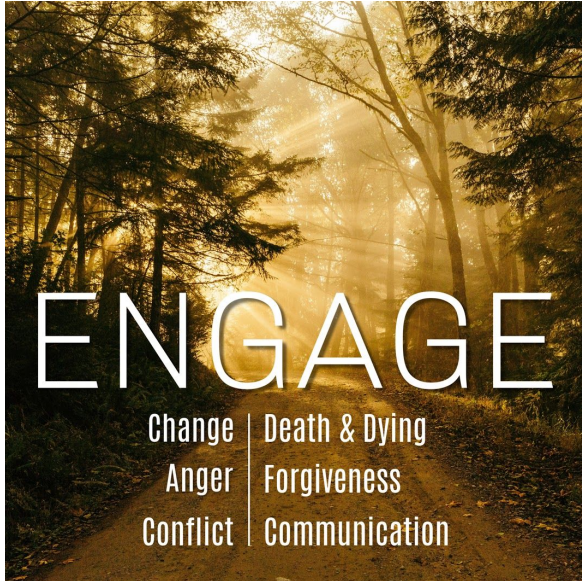


## ENGAGE: FORGIVENESS

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### Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came and said to him, ‘Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?’<sup>22</sup> Jesus said to him, ‘Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

23 ‘For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.<sup>24</sup> When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him,<sup>25</sup> and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made.<sup>26</sup> So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.”<sup>27</sup> And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and

forgave him the debt.<sup>28</sup> But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow-slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, “Pay what you owe.”<sup>29</sup> Then his fellow-slave fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.”<sup>30</sup> But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he should pay the debt.<sup>31</sup> When his fellow-slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place.<sup>32</sup> Then his lord summoned him and said to him, “You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me.<sup>33</sup> Should you not have had mercy on your fellow-slave, as I had mercy on you?”<sup>34</sup> And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he should pay his entire debt.<sup>35</sup> So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.’

### CONTEXT

*Forgiveness is not a matter of calculation and keeping score.* Jesus highlights the absurdity of quantifying forgiveness not just in his answer of “70 times 7” (a symbolically infinite number), but also in the parable that follows. The amount owed the king is an absurdly large amount (no one could pay it), and while the amount owed the first servant is not insignificant, it pales in comparison. But to quantify and compare is already to miss out on the power and purpose of forgiveness. Forgiveness is meant to be lived, struggled with, and attempted. It is not

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meant to be scored and tabulated, used and exploited. The originating question to Jesus is already an adventure in missing the point, and the parable is meant to shock us into a new perspective.

## QUOTES

“Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive”

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

## BIG IDEAS

1. You don't forgive by forgetting the past. You forgive by forging a new future.
2. Forgiveness is rarely fast, but it is always freeing.
3. Love that doesn't forgive is empty, and forgiveness that doesn't love is blind.

## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. What is forgiveness? How do you practice it personally, in your family, or in other situations?
3. Recall a time when you received forgiveness from someone. What was that like? What did you learn?
4. What do you find challenging or problematic about forgiveness?
5. Is there someone or something in your life that needs forgiveness? Take some time to reflect and prayerfully talk to God about it.