

## **PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT**

### **As we Gather**

Throughout His ministry, Jesus emphasised the nature of relationships in His Kingdom. The history of His listeners, and also the harshness of life under the rule of Rome, reflected relationships which were in direct contrast to His teachings.

### **Reading Scripture      MATTHEW 18 : 21 – 35**

**[see also Matthew 5:23 & 43-44; 6:12 & 14 and 6:27-31; 18:15 also Mark 11:25 and 17:3-4]**

### **Thinking together**

Relationships cannot be mended and strengthened when those involved remain protagonists - each one concerned with their rights and being right (pride and desire for retribution).

Rabbis taught that one should forgive the repentant individual three times; so when Peter asked his question (Matthew 18:21) he was seeing a situation only from his side - in which he was the wronged one - in which he could be generous.

**What is the principle behind Jesus' reply? Discuss (Matthew 18:22ff)**

**Why is this principle a vital part of church discipline? Discuss (Matthew 18:15-20)**

For the Christ-follower humility and honesty which do not result in forgiveness (vv28-30), lead to the consequence of a spirit of un-forgiveness. Such a spirit results in

- Circumstances becoming 'binding' / imprisoning, as relationships falter and become a perpetual problem, affecting an ever widening circle of individuals (v31)

**Have you known of / experienced such a situation? Discuss**

- Obstruction of the channels of communication and sanctification between God and His people (I Corinthians 13:4-5)

**Why is it important for the individual and the church that these channels remain open?**

**Discuss (Philippians 1:9-11)**

- Development of physical, emotional and mental illness. There is nothing more imprisoning and tormenting than an unforgiving heart (v34)

**Discuss some of the illnesses that can occur**

In this parable (and the preceding teaching), Jesus emphasised brotherly / Christian love. We reveal the true condition of our hearts by the way we treat other people, particularly those whom we feel have wronged us.

## **In Closing**

Barclay states 'Nothing anybody does to us can compare with what we have done to God, and nothing we have to forgive can compare with what we have been forgiven.'

**How do you feel about this statement?**

## **PRAYER YOU MIGHT LIKE TO READ**

God of freedom, deliver us from our captivity to pride,  
so that we may be ready to love as You have loved us,  
and to forgive as we have been forgiven.

## **SOURCES CONSULTED IN PREPARING THESE NOTES**

Barclay, William: The Daily Study Bible, revised edition, The Gospel of Matthew, volume 2

Wiersbe, Warren W.: The Bible Expository Commentary, volume 2

Life Application Bible (NIV)

Spirit Filled Life Bible (New King James)