**GROWING TOGETHER:** FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Session 2 of 4

# The unforgiving servant

### MEETING AIM

To learn that God is hugely forgiving, and we need to practise forgiveness.

### 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.

This parable really packs a punch when children grasp the significance of the sums involved: Jesus’ original audience must have gasped! We may also wonder just how rich this king is if he can write off a debt equivalent to £3bn. This mind-boggling number offers the way into this session, because everything about God’s kingdom is mind-boggling, including the limitless extent of his forgiveness.

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### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Welcome the children as they arrive and share out any refreshments you have provided. Chat together about what has happened since you last met; share in the triumphs and difficulties of the children’s lives and share something appropriate from your own life.

### INTRO ACTIVITY – 10 mins

**You will need:** song words or YouTube recording of ‘Our God is a great big God’; play money

Sing ‘Our God is a great big God’ together. Then suggest that God is worth more than just one “great”: ask how many greats there should be and try to sing: “Our God is a great great great etc big God.”

When the number is too many to sing, talk about the biggest numbers that children know, and what they are called. Play with the money for a while, however the children would like to, seeing how much money you can all imagine!

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** large sheet of paper; marker pen

As the children: “If someone stole your chocolate, would you forgive them?” “If they stole it again, would you forgive them again?” “If they kept stealing it, how many times would you forgive them?” Jesus’ friend Peter wondered if there was a limit to forgiveness. He asked Jesus: “How many times do I have to forgive someone?” Write the question on the board and invite answers. Then tell this story:

First Jesus teased his friend with some numbers: “The answer’s not seven. It’s 77 (or 70 times seven).” Invite a volunteer to write the numbers up on the paper.

Then Jesus told his friends a story about two men who owed money. One owed 10,000 talents and the other owed 100 denarii. Write these two sums on the board with their modern equivalents (you could ask a volunteer to write these). Depending on your group, you could share the fact that one talent = 6,000 denarii and one denarius = about £50, then ask them to work out the answer: 10,000 talents = £3bn (nine noughts); 100 denarii = £5,000.

God’s kingdom is like this: there was once a king who was counting all his money and everything he was owed. One man owed him £3bn! He had nowhere near enough to pay back the king, even if he sold everything, including his wife and children. He begged: “Please be patient! Give me more time and I’ll pay you back!” The king felt sorry for the man and let him off every penny of the £3bn he owed.

As the man left the palace, he bumped into a servant who owed him some money, so he grabbed him and snarled: “Gimme that £5,000 you owe me!” The servant begged: “Please be patient! Give me more time and I’ll pay you back!” But the man threw the servant into prison until he could pay back every penny he owed.

The other servants were so upset that they reported the man to the king. What do you think the king did when he found out? Invite responses.

He threw the man into prison until he could pay back every penny of the £3bn he owed! Jesus finished his story with this warning: “God will treat you as harshly as this if you don’t truly forgive people!”

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

* Which part of the story do you like best?
* What questions would you like to ask God about this story?
* When is it easy to forgive someone?
* When is it hard to forgive someone?
* When do you think we need to be forgiven?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**You will need:** pens; sticky tape; scissors; strips of paper

Give everyone a strip of paper and each write ‘FORGIVING’ on it. Form the strip into a loop but give one end a half-twist before you stick the ends together: this makes a Möbius strip. Demonstrate that it has a never-ending edge: if children pinch the strip just above the F, then pull it through gently so that their pinched fingers slide along the edge, they will find that their fingers travel above the word ‘Forgiving’, then below it, then back to the beginning, without once letting go. As you experiment with the Möbius strips, talk about how we all mess up, but God is endlessly forgiving. Talk about how we can practise and keep on forgiving other people in the never-ending way that God forgives us.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

**You will need:** a bowl of warm soapy water; towels

Gather everyone around the bowl. Explain that the Bible sometimes describes God’s forgiveness as ‘making us clean’ or ‘washing our sins away’. Think about how often you wash your hands. Why do you keep washing them? Wash your hands as a sign of asking for God’s forgiveness, which he promises to give us however many millions and billions of times we need it.

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