

Week 23  
February 22, 2009

**Mercy, Mercy**  
**The Unmerciful Servant**  
*Matthew 18:21-35*

1. READ Matthew 18:21-35.
2. READ Keith's manuscript for this week, if it helps.
3. Discuss how Tim's message amplifies Keith's or differs.
4. Trying not to fall prey to gossip or slander, carefully describe a relationship in which forgiveness has been required over and over again. Has this been hard or easy? Why?
5. Is there a point where the refusal to forgive is justified? Explain.
6. A man is forgiven an enormous debt, but then puts the squeeze on another man who owes so little. How can the first man be so small-minded? Do people really do this?

7. Jesus is clearly reminding us that God forgives all of our sins; how then can we refuse to forgive others? What stops us? Why are we so prone to dam up God's mercy and let it putrefy into bitterness?
  
8. Some might suggest that the people who have the hardest time forgiving others are those who have a hard time forgiving themselves. Others say that people with an elevated view of themselves tend to be unmerciful to others. What do you think?
  
9. Jesus says here and elsewhere that if we don't give mercy, we don't get mercy. How can this be? Does it make God's love and mercy sound conditional?
  
10. Have you ever had an experience when the will to forgive has been stymied by a slow healing process or by a lack of trust in one who has done you harm? Discuss how healing and trust affect the forgiveness process.
  
11. Arrive at a good definition of forgiveness together.

12. Why is bitterness such a seductive trap for us? Why does it stunt our growth and poison our souls?

For the hardcore group:

*Keith suggests that God wants us to do more than merely forgive individual offenses. He treats forgiveness like a ballpoint pen that covers the specks and spots of harms and offenses. Then he suggests that God wants to build in us the capacity to paint the whole world in a lavish coat of grace, to the point where we are neither surprised nor offended by every wrong suffered. We are realistic and merciful about flawed and failing humanity, and generous about stoking every potential and redeeming every possibility. Are you a gracious person who “paints the world” this way, or is this a whole new way of seeing and interpreting our broken world? Why? How? Have fun with this one!*

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