The Struggle to Forgive
Matthew 18:21-35

Jesus called for radical forgiveness of offenders. Peter wanted to be a serious, committed follower of Jesus. But Jesus's ideals and directives regularly required more of Peter than he believed he could do. So, he sought to establish a limit on just how high the bar of forgiveness could reasonably be placed. Jesus multiplied Peter's sevenfold into seventy-sevenfold forgiveness—a number meant to break the habit of counting offenses. Our forgiveness must have no limits.

Jesus' parable illustrates why such an expectation is not unreasonable. The parable moves us from being the offended to the offender. Instead, the offended is God. Having our entire sin debt forgiven by God, we are the servant whose debt of 10,000 talents was erased—60 million day's wages for a typical servant. That's how large and unpayable our sin debt was to God.

The actions of that servant who demands repayment and punishment against a fellow servant for a debt of 100 denarii appear hypocritical, calloused, and absurd. God knows the offenses we suffer can be costly, painful, and difficult to forgive. But in comparison, the difference between the pain He experienced due to our sin and the price He paid to forgive us is as great as the difference between a debt that would take you 4 months to settle and one that would take you nearly 200,000 years to repay.

Forgiveness is deliberately deciding you will no longer hold a person in debt for something valuable they cost you—whether a damaged name, a betrayed trust, or a broken promise. You won't make them pay by giving them a cold shoulder or by slander or by some other method of withholding Christian love.

Remember, our sins are innumerable and costly, but God's grace in Christ washed away each one when we accepted Jesus. So, in response we decide to forgive and forgive again.

And here's the bonus: each time we forgive, we imitate Him.