

WORDS OF JESUS

SERMON SERIES

DISCUSSION GUIDE

The Power Of Forgiveness

SPEAKER: Russell Joyce

DATE: May 17, 2026

TEXT(S): Matthew 18:23-35, with
Exodus 34:6-7 and Philemon 1:17-19

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: This resource is designed to help you, and your group, step through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message.

Our goal is to help you and your group better understand and apply B4's teaching.

MESSAGE SUMMARY + DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Jesus' parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18 confronts our instinct to hold others hostage to their failures while minimizing our own need for mercy. Touching on the story of Corrie ten Boom, the teaching shows that forgiveness is not natural to us. It only flows from the cross of Christ, the ultimate demonstration of God's love and forgiveness. Jesus calls us to refuse to condemn others and to release them from being permanently defined by their worst moments by offering forgiveness. In doing so, we neither excuse sin nor remove its consequences. Jesus remains the one who cleanses and heals. His loving sacrifice shatters the prison of bitterness, guilt, outrage, and revenge, inviting all people to receive and grant forgiveness.

LEAN IN: These are icebreakers and warm-ups, mostly to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5 minutes.

1. Why do you think forgiveness feels so difficult for most people?
2. What's the difference between forgiving someone and pretending nothing happened?
3. Why do you think outrage and "cancel culture" are so compelling in modern society?
4. What kinds of offenses are the hardest to forgive, and why?
5. When you hear the word "forgiveness," what emotions or experiences immediately come to mind?

LOOK DOWN: These are questions about the Bible passage(s) from the teaching. Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. In Jesus' parable, why does the order matter, that the master forgives first before asking the servant to forgive?
2. What is Jesus communicating through the enormous contrast between "ten thousand bags of gold" and "one hundred silver coins"?
3. Why do you think Jesus uses prison imagery to describe unforgiveness?
4. What stands out to you about the servant's behavior after receiving mercy?

5. In what ways does the Cross hold together both justice and mercy?

LOOK OUT: *These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today.*

Spend about 10 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. How do social media and public outrage shape the way people think about forgiveness today?
2. Why might forgiveness seem offensive or weak in a culture focused on self-protection and personal happiness?
3. What happens to a society when people are permanently defined by their worst mistakes?
4. How does the Gospel challenge both “cheap grace” and harsh condemnation?
5. In what ways does modern culture encourage us to see ourselves as victims before sinners?

LOOK IN: *These questions help you consider how to engage the teaching for yourself.*

Spend about 15-20 minutes discussing your choice of two or three questions:

1. Is there someone you’ve kept emotionally imprisoned through bitterness or resentment?
2. In what ways might you have minimized your own need for forgiveness while magnifying someone else’s failures?
3. Are there relationships in your life that require forgiveness but also wise boundaries?
4. Where do you need to receive Jesus’ forgiveness more deeply before you can extend it to others?

LIVE IT OUT: *These prayer practices can help you integrate this message into day-to-day life.*

Choose one prompt and discuss how you will embrace it this week (5 minutes):

1. **Daily Cross-Centered Confession:** Spend five minutes each day confessing both your sins and your resentments to Jesus. Ask Him to reveal where bitterness, pride, or self-righteousness have taken root, and thank Him specifically for the mercy you’ve received at the cross to shape your heart in love.
2. **Pray Blessing Over a Difficult Person:** Each day, pray intentionally for one person who has wounded, disappointed, or angered you. Don’t deny the hurt; instead, ask Jesus to restore their humanity in your eyes and to lovingly free your heart from the prison of unforgiveness.

You can find B4’s [Series Resources here](#).

