

# **Christian Atheist: “I Believe in God but I Cannot Forgive...”**

## **Matthew 18:15-17, 23-35 7/24/22**

### **Discussion Guide**

#### **Prepare**

Share a song that you love that recounts the greatness of the forgiveness of God. Why is it special to you?

#### **Today's Text**

*<sup>15</sup> "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. <sup>16</sup> But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' <sup>17</sup> If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*

*<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold<sup>1</sup> was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.*

*<sup>26</sup> "At this the servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' <sup>27</sup> The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.*

*<sup>28</sup> "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.*

*<sup>29</sup> "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.'*

*<sup>30</sup> "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.*

*<sup>32</sup> "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*

*<sup>35</sup> "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."* Matthew 18:15-17, 23-35

1. Share your struggles with forgiveness. Have you ever had to forgive a significant, life-impacting offense? If, so can you talk about what happened and how you were able to forgive the person? Are you past the hurt or are there remnants of the wound that still affect your life?

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2. Is God being too hard and unrealistic with victims of traumatic events, commanding them to forgive their assailant? Does it seem unfair that the victim needs to let the victimizer “off the hook?” Is that how it feels? And is the offender really being “left off the hook?”
3. Share a time when you forgave someone a significant offense or hurt and what it felt like after wards.
4. Share a time when you refused to forgive someone and the affects it had on your life.
5. Which is easier for you: forgive others, forgive yourself, or ask for forgiveness?
6. Have you experienced forgiveness? Have you experienced the forgiveness of God? Does being forgiven by others and forgiven by God, make it easier for you to forgive?
7. What’s hang-ups do people have about forgiveness? What misunderstandings do they have about it? For example:
  - Reconciliation: If we forgive does that mean we have to reconcile with the person? By refusing to reconcile does that mean we haven’t really forgiven the person?
  - Trust: Does forgiveness mean we have to trust the person automatically?
  - Justice: If I forgive does that mean I cannot pursue justice? By pursuing justice, aren’t we making the person pay for their sin?
8. What wounds you easily? What area of your heart or life is tender to the touch, if hit upon you can be easily wounded or hurt? When hurt in this area, are you able to forgive?
9. Share how forgiveness has benefited your life. Is it really true that forgiveness doesn’t let the perpetrator off the hook, it lets you off the hook?
10. Of the three steps of forgiveness, which is hardest for you: take pity, cancel the debt, and set them free?
11. Read Matthew 18:15-17. What missteps do people make in following Jesus’ steps toward forgiveness? What are the results of these missteps?
12. Is there someone you need to forgive in your life? Can we pray over that relationship? Is there a wound that still hasn’t healed? Can we pray over you?
13. Is there anything left out in this discussion that you’d like to talk about?