

Read: Matthew 18:21-35

Forgive them

Matthew 18:21,22

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Josh didn't know whether to be mad or embarrassed. He totally dropped the ball during a playground kickball game at recess time. He saw a group of guys start laughing. Josh wished the teacher wasn't around so he could punch them in the face.

Meanwhile on the other side of the playground was Jenna, who didn't know whether to be mad or embarrassed. Her best friend started hanging around all the girls on the cheerleading squad and was ignoring her. They got into an argument, and she made fun of what Jenna was wearing. “Go ahead and sprain your ankle for all I care,” Jenna thought, “then you can't cheer anymore.”

But what if five minutes later Jenna's friend came up and told her that she was sorry? And the group of boys saw how upset Josh was and said, “Our bad, Josh. You'll catch it next time.”

What if that was you? You might say you forgive them, but you still are irritated, right? It isn't easy to forgive and let go of your hurt and anger.

Yet that's what God asks us to do.

When Jesus tells today's story, he asks us to think about all the times we yelled when we were angry, when we ignored people, when we cheated on our homework, when we made fun of others. He tells us to remember that when we tell God we are sorry that he absolutely says, “I forgive you.” He doesn't look at us and think we are still jerks. He looks at us and loves us. He doesn't give us the silent treatment. He invites us to pray to him and he loves to listen.

Because every single one of our sins have been forgiven, he tells us that we get to take the grace we've been given and pass it along to others too. That we get to say we forgive them—and mean it.

God knows this is hard—whether the first time or the seventy-seventh time. That's why he fills you with strength to forgive by reminding us that Jesus understands. When Jesus was spit on, made fun of, and then nailed to a cross, he said, “Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing,” (Luke 23:34). Obviously the people knew they were hurting Jesus, that was the

whole point of crucifixion. But they didn't realize they were watching God's innocent Son take the punishment for all sins.

But you do, don't you?

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- Is it easy for you to say you're sorry?
- If someone says to you, "I'm sorry," what will you say back to them?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Recall the last time you had to ask for forgiveness?
- Why does being forgiven feel so good?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Is apologizing to someone a sign of humiliation or a sign of courage? Give your reasons.?
- Contemplate someone whom you need to forgive. Ask God to help change your heart.

Closing Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you for forgiving me over and over and over again. You are amazing! Help me to forgive others just like you forgive me. Give me the strength to love others the way you love me. Amen.