

The Stories of Jesus Week 6

(June 12— June 19th)- God Time

The Parable of the Vineyard Owner

These scriptures are selected to help you gain a deeper understanding of who Jesus is. They are intentionally designed for you to engage in your time alone with God. You will find them complementary to the teachings on the weekend (gatherings) and to the LIFE Group materials.

Some tips:

Use a Bible that is easy to read. The ESV or The NLT are both good translations.

Use a prayer journal. After you read the passages jot down what “jumped out” at you while reading. Then take a few minutes to write a prayer response to what you have read.

There are only five days of reading provided so if you miss a day you have time to catch up. Do not get legalistic! If you miss a day or even a week...God still loves you!

Monday: Ephesians 4:31-32

Tuesday: Ephesians 4:15-16

Wednesday: James 1:19-21

Thursday: Romans 12:17-19

Friday: Psalm 1:1-6

Diving Deeper

The Stories of Jesus – The Pathway to Forgiveness Matthew 18:21-35

We often talk about forgiveness as a key element of our Christian walk. Peter raises this issue in Matthew 18:21 when he asks Jesus how many times must I keep forgiving my sinning brother? What Peter is really asking is whether there is a limit to how many times we should forgive. Peter says up to seven times. Seven is a number picked by Peter because it would make him look magnanimous in

comparison to the Pharisee standard. Under Pharisee teaching, a Jew was only required to forgive three offenses by the same person. Thereafter, a Jew could rightfully withhold forgiveness because his responsibility had been met. Peter had a selfish intent when he chose seven as it was designed to put him in good favor with Jesus.

Poor Peter, he never gets it right. Jesus says, "I did not say up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." What Jesus is really saying is that God's view of forgiveness is totally different from how mankind views forgiveness. Man puts limitations on the number of times one should forgive another. It is unwise to forgive someone who just keeps on sinning and sinning. Too much forgiveness tends to encourage further sinning.

In response to Peter, Jesus begins to explain how forgiveness works from God's perspective. He tells the parable of the king who wished to settle the accounts of his slaves. One slave who owed his master 10,000 talents begged him to forgive him and release him from the debt. The master decides to show compassion and wipes the slate clean. The slave is free to go without debt. The slave, however, does not act in the same way, and immediately finds one of his slaves who owed him 100 denarii. Did the slave absolve him from the debt? No, he demanded payment and when the slave begged for relief, he had him thrown in jail. The other slaves were furious and reported his actions to the master who summoned his slave and asked, "should you not of also shown mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I showed mercy on you." The master was angry and had him arrested, tortured and imprisoned, until he could repay the debt in full.

What does Jesus teach us through the Parable of the Unforgiving Slave?

1. Jesus is telling us that God's standard for His church is unlimited forgiveness.
2. We must fully comprehend how much Jesus loved us and through his mercy He forgave us of an immeasurable sin debt.
3. Before we can learn to forgive others, we must first learn to live each day with an appreciation of how much forgiveness we have already received from Jesus.
4. We must see things from God's perspective. Even though someone may owe us considerable debt, it will pale in comparison to the debt we owed Jesus. If He willingly forgives us, should we not also forgive our brothers and sisters.
5. There are consequences to our actions. When we refuse to extend forgiveness, we tend to ignore the consequences that come with a hardened heart. Further, many fail to see the relationship of forgiveness and consequences.

Jesus is teaching us in addition to forgiveness that if you cannot forgive then there will be consequences to pay and it becomes evident when we reflect on the slave who refused to show mercy and forgive in the same way that his master did. Forgiveness and consequences run parallel with one another. Together they accomplish an essential part of God's plan for believers.

6. None of us owe anyone anything in the area of forgiveness. We all owe Jesus everything, and He said forgive one another without limit to encourage the unity of the body. If we do this, we will grow in the grace of Jesus Christ and keep the body of Christ strong in faith and obedience.

Questions:

1. Do you find it difficult to forgive other believers in Christ?
2. How are we to deal with non-believers who have hurt us? Are we to forgive them in the same way as believers?
3. Knowing that forgiveness and consequences are linked together, how do you deal with the issue of consequences? Forgiveness is relational. Consequences are circumstantial. God does not always remove the consequences from our lives even after forgiveness. How do you deal with the consequences?
4. Genesis 50:20 is a powerful message to us as Christians when dealing with the consequences that we face in this world. Does it give you great comfort knowing that God can take what the world meant as evil and turn it into good? How does this scripture help you to understand forgiveness?