Preschool–Grade 6

The Unforgiving Servant

Sunday School Lesson for Kindergarten to 2nd Grade, 45 minutes

Main point: Forgive others, because God has forgiven us so much.
Bible passage: Matthew 18:21–35. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." *Matthew 18:22 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible, two paper bags, a few heavy books, one cotton ball, 5 paper strips, a marker, tape, crayons, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: put the heavy books in one bag and the cotton ball in the other. Write the memory verse on the 5 paper strips (see part 4). Put bookmarks in your Bible at Matthew 18:22 and Matthew 18:33.

1. Opening game: Heavy Bag, Light Bag (5 minutes)

Set the two bags on a table. Let each child lift one bag, then the other. Ask: *Which one is heavy? Which one is light?* Let them peek inside: books in one, one little cotton ball in the other. Say: "Today Jesus tells a story about two servants. One owed a giant, heavy debt. The other owed a little, light one. Let's find out what happened."

2. Bible story: The Unforgiving Servant (10 minutes)

Hold up your Bible open to Matthew 18, so the kids can see the story comes from God's Word. Say: "Jesus Himself told this story. Listen to what He said." Tell it in your own words:

One day **Peter** came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Say: "**How oft** means how many times. Peter wanted to know: do I have to forgive seven times?" Jesus said, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until **seventy times seven**" (18:22). Say: "Jesus meant, don't keep count. Keep on forgiving!" Then Jesus told a story.

There was a **king** who wanted to check what his **servants** owed him (18:23). One servant owed him **ten thousand talents** (18:24). Say: "A talent was a huge amount of money. Ten thousand talents was a giant debt, more than he could ever pay back." The servant had no way to pay (18:25). So the king said that the servant, and his family, and all he had must be sold to pay (18:25).

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The story continues: The servant **fell down** before the king and said, "Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (18:26). Say: "That means, 'Please wait for me, and I will pay you everything.'" The king **was moved with compassion**. Say: "Compassion means he cared about the servant and wanted to help him." The king let him go, and he **forgave him the debt**, all of it (18:27)!

But that same servant went out and found a **fellowservant**, another servant, who owed him **an hundred pence** (18:28). Say: "A penny was one day's pay for a worker (Matthew 20:2). So he owed about a hundred days of work. That's a little debt next to ten thousand talents!" The servant grabbed him and said, "Pay me that thou owest" (18:28). His fellowservant fell down at his feet and said the very same words: "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all" (18:29). But the servant **would not**. He put his fellowservant into **prison** until he paid the debt (18:30).

The other servants were very sorry, and they told the king everything (18:31). The king called the servant and said, "O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me" (18:32). **Read Matthew 18:33 from your Bible:** "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" Say: "The king had forgiven him so much. He should have forgiven his friend a little!"

Jesus ended with serious words: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (18:35). Say: "**Trespasses** are the wrong things people do to us. Jesus said that if we will not forgive others from our hearts, God will do the same to us. God wants us to forgive for real."

3. Questions to ask (5 minutes)

1. How many times did Peter ask about forgiving? *(Seven times, Matthew 18:21)*
2. What did Jesus say? *("Until seventy times seven," 18:22)*
3. How much did the servant owe the king? *(Ten thousand talents, a giant debt, 18:24)*
4. What did the king do when the servant asked him to wait? *(He was moved with compassion and forgave him the debt, 18:27)*
5. What did the servant do to his fellowservant who owed a little? *(He would not wait; he put him in prison, 18:30)*

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4. Memory verse: Count to Seventy Times Seven (5 minutes)

Write the verse on the 5 strips: *Jesus saith unto him, / I say not unto thee, / Until seven times: / but, Until seventy / times seven. Matthew 18:22.* Tape them in order on the wall. Explain the old words: **saith** means said, **thee** means you, **until seven times** means only seven times, and **seventy times seven** means keep on forgiving, without counting. Read the verse together. Then everyone counts to seven on their fingers and shouts, "Not seven, but seventy times seven!" Take one strip away and read again. Keep taking one strip away until the kids can say the whole verse by themselves.

5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "The king forgave his servant a giant debt. God wants to forgive us something even bigger: our sin. We have all done wrong things. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means none of us is as good as God. But God loves you very much. Jesus is God who came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose again from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)! The Bible tells us how to obey the gospel, the good news about Jesus: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means we are sorry for our sin and we turn away from it. We are **baptized**, buried all the way under the water, in Jesus' name, so our sins are washed away (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). **Remission** means God takes our sins away. And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, His own Spirit, and we speak in other tongues, words God gives us, just like the believers did in the Bible (Acts 2:4)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: when someone says "I'm sorry," forgive them from your heart. And when you do something wrong, say "I'm sorry" too.

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6. Activity (10–15 minutes)

Choose one: the **unforgiving servant word search** (vbshq.com/puzzles/unforgiving-servant-word-search), crossword, maze or worksheet, the craft (vbshq.com/crafts/unforgiving-servant-craft), or **Make a Heart.** Read each one out loud. If it is a time to forgive, the kids make a heart with their hands: 1) Your friend bumps you and says, "I'm sorry." 2) Your brother breaks your crayon and says sorry. 3) A boy at church takes your seat, and later he says sorry. 4) Your friend forgets to share, and the next day she shares with you. Ask after each: *What can you say?* ("I forgive you!") Say: "God forgave us so much. We can forgive too."

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. Thank You that You forgive our sins when we obey Your Word. Help us forgive other people from our hearts, again and again. In Jesus' name, amen."

Teacher note: this lesson tells Matthew 18:21–33 and reads 18:35 plainly. It leaves out the tormentors in 18:34, and it says the servant "grabbed" his fellowservant for "laid hands on him, and took him by the throat" (18:28). Forgiving never means keeping a secret when someone hurts you: if a child tells you someone is hurting them, get help from your pastor and the right people.

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