

Stories with Intent: The Parables of Jesus

The Unmerciful Servant – Matthew 18:21–35

Big Idea: Mercy received must become mercy given.

1. Warm-Up

When you hear the word *forgiveness*, what emotion tends to come first for you—relief, resistance, confusion, fear, or something else? Why do you think that is?

2. Observing the Text

- 1 What question does Peter ask in verses 21–22, and what does Jesus' answer reveal about forgiveness?
- 2 In verses 23–27, what actions does the king take toward the first servant, and what stands out to you?
- 3 In verses 28–30, how does the forgiven servant treat his fellow servant?

3. Understanding the Meaning

- 1 Why does Jesus exaggerate the size of the first debt compared to the second?
- 2 The king is moved with compassion (v. 27). What does this reveal about God's character?
- 3 Why is forgiving others so closely tied to experiencing God's forgiveness?

4. Applying the Message

- 1 How does remembering God's mercy toward you shape how you respond to those who have wronged you?
- 2 Which is hardest to separate from forgiveness: consequences, full restoration, or boundaries? Why?
- 3 Have you ever forgiven but found the emotional 'bell' still ringing? What helps you trust God with that process?

5. Living It Out

Is there a person or situation where God may be inviting you to move from mercy received to mercy given? What would a faithful next step look like this week?

Closing Prayer: Ask God for a deeper awareness of His mercy, the courage to forgive from the heart, and wisdom to forgive with truth and healthy boundaries.