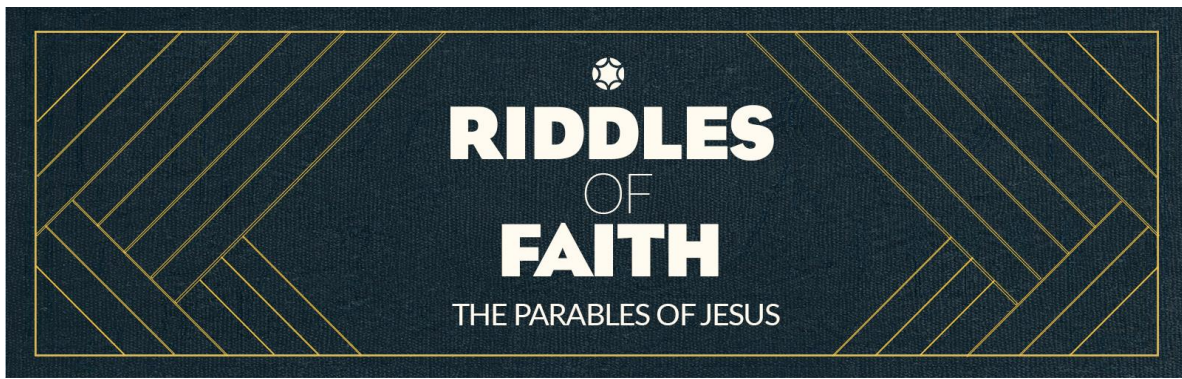




Group Guide

Week Four // Boomerangs and Blessings

Scripture Focus

Matthew 18:21–35

Big Idea

God has shown us mercy beyond anything we could ever repay. Jesus calls us to allow the mercy we have received to change the way we respond to those who hurt or wrong us.

Read Together

Read Matthew 18:21–35 aloud. As you read, notice the contrast between the mercy the servant receives and the way he treats someone who owes him a much smaller debt.

Setting the Scene

Jesus tells this parable in response to a question from Peter: “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Peter likely believes he is suggesting an unusually generous approach to forgiveness. Jesus responds, “not seven times, but seventy-seven times,” and then tells a story to show what life in God's kingdom looks like.

The story centers around debt, which provides a powerful picture of forgiveness. When someone wrongs us, it can feel as though something is owed: an apology, repayment, justice, or an opportunity to make things right. Jesus does not pretend that the debt is unreal. Instead, his parable asks what happens when people who have received extraordinary mercy from God encounter the very real debts of others.

Digging Deeper

Jesus begins with a king who decides to settle accounts with his servants. One servant owes him ten thousand talents, which is an enormous amount of money that he could never realistically repay. Facing the consequences of his debt, the servant falls before the king and pleads for patience, promising to pay everything back. But the king does something far greater than the servant asks. He takes pity on him, cancels the entire debt, and lets him go.

The servant walks away having received a completely new beginning. Yet almost immediately, he finds a fellow servant who owes him one hundred denarii. This debt is much smaller than the one he has just been forgiven, but instead of showing the mercy he received, he grabs the man, demands repayment, and has him thrown into prison. When the king hears what happened, he calls the servant back and asks the question at the heart of the parable: "Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"

Jesus is showing us that forgiveness begins by remembering how much we have already been forgiven. God's grace is not something we simply receive and keep for ourselves. It should reshape the way we respond to the failures, offenses, and debts of others.

Group Discussion

Getting Started

- What stood out most to you from the sermon?
- When you hear the word forgiveness, what makes it seem easy or difficult?

Digging Into Scripture

- Why do you think Jesus makes the difference between the two debts so dramatic?
- What does the king's question in verse 33 reveal about the connection between receiving mercy and giving mercy?

Personal Reflection

- Why can it sometimes be easier to receive forgiveness than to extend it?

- When someone hurts us, what are some of the things we can feel they “owe” us?

Looking Forward

- Is there a hurt, resentment, or offense you have been carrying that God may be inviting you to release?
- What might extending mercy look like in that situation while still maintaining appropriate wisdom and boundaries?

Individual Application

This week, take some time to reflect on both sides of Jesus' story: the mercy you have received and the mercy you are called to give.

Ask yourself:

- Where have I experienced God's forgiveness and mercy?
- Is there someone whose offense I continue to hold onto?
- What am I still expecting that person to “pay back”?

Forgiveness can be a process, particularly when the hurt is deep. Begin by bringing the person and the situation honestly before God. Ask him to help you release resentment and become more willing to extend the same mercy you have received.

Consider memorizing:

Ephesians 4:32

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”

Closing Prayer

God, thank you for the mercy and forgiveness you have shown us. Forgive us when we receive your mercy but withhold it from others. Bring healing to the places where we have been hurt, free us from bitterness and resentment, and give us the strength to forgive. In Jesus' name, amen.