

Adult Study Guide for May 2, 2021
Series: *No More Bogus Jesus*; Message: *Forgiveness*

Goal: To find the courage to forgive others just like Jesus even when it hurts.

Key Verses: *For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.* – Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV)

1. Read Matthew 5:43-45. The common saying that Jesus quotes suggests that forgiveness is not always necessary, and we have permission to hate those who hate us. When someone doesn't act with love towards you, what is your natural response?
2. Read Matthew 6:12, 14-15. Some think that vertical forgiveness (between you and God) is all that matters. But Jesus shocks us with a profound new notion that horizontal forgiveness is just as important as vertical forgiveness. What happens to you when you hear Jesus saying that if we do not forgive others that our Father will not forgive our sins? What questions does that raise? In what way is the Lord's Prayer a dangerous prayer?
3. Review the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant in Matthew 18:21-35. Jesus tells a parable about a servant who owed an inconceivably large amount of money to his master, and the master forgives his debt. What does Jesus suggest should be our primary motivation for forgiving others? (see also Ephesians 4:32)
4. Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness is letting go of our desire to get revenge when we are hurt. (Romans 12:19) Reconciliation requires the participation of both parties. (Romans 12:18) Why is it important to know the difference between forgiveness and reconciliation? How does that help you to forgive, even when reconciliation may not work?
5. In what way is forgiveness irrational? Why do we like to keep score when someone hurts us? What might we gain if we take revenge? Read Matthew 18:21-22. Why is it necessary to keep forgiving? Does forgiveness have any limits?
6. Jesus modeled forgiveness during his crucifixion when he said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34) How does it help to know that many people would change their behavior if they had a wider vision of God's presence and purpose in the world? How can forgiveness bring healing?
7. Why is forgiveness so central to living out our faith as members of the kingdom of God? Is there someone in your life you have been unwilling to forgive? What steps will you take to forgive others today? (Colossians 3:13) How will it change you?