

(Food for thought: Gospel Matthew
18: 21-25.)

“The challenge of forgiveness”



Jesus spent his public life proclaiming God's truth as it applies to human activity and relationships - proclaiming this truth publicly and courageously, and in the face of constant threat and opposition.

There is no more important lesson for us to learn as followers of Jesus than that of giving and accepting forgiveness - lovingly, totally, unconditionally. If we haven't learned that, we really haven't begun to learn the meaning of being Christian.

Letting go of anger, forgiving and being reconciled is the hallmark of the

Christian. Jesus made a point of this over and over again in his discourses and parables. In response to Peter's question: "Lord, how often must I forgive, seven times?" Jesus answered: "No, seventy-times seven times!" Today's parable indicates clearly that our unlimited forgiveness towards others must be motivated by God's unlimited mercy toward us. That's why He instructed us to pray: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."

This is a tough phrase to digest when every instinct in our nature cries out for vengeance at the sight of hatred and injustice.

There can be no compromise when it comes to the message of Christ. If we buy into it only half-heartedly, we will ultimately lose it. If we pick and choose who we will forgive - and how often - we

end up betraying the entire message of the Gospel. If we are faithful only when it is easy to be, we run the risk of denying Him under pressure. With Jesus, it's all or nothing - His invitation to follow Him is one that requires both courage and generosity. It requires the ability to accept forgiveness, and to give absolution.



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