

TakeFive

The Unforgiving Debtor

Biblical insights for the week of **October 22–26, 2018**

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Monday — Colossians 3:13

How many times would you forgive someone who has hurt you? Once? Twice? Even three times? Peter probably felt that seven was a generous number of times to forgive someone. But Jesus is not interested in our legalistic formulas or in some superficial behavioral compliance. He is after our hearts. By His answer to Peter, Jesus is inviting us to a life where forgiveness is always available. For Jesus, it is never an issue of the number of transgressions, but an attitude of a heart transformed by His love. We love because He first loved us. We forgive because He first forgave us.

Tuesday — Psalm 86:5

In this parable, the servant owed his king a huge debt that would never be able to be repaid. How anxious the servant must have felt waiting for the great day of reckoning, knowing that he was guilty and deserved to be punished. Yet, in an incredible act of mercy, the king not only withholds any punishment, he cancels the whole debt and sets the servant free. This is a wonderful picture of what God has done for us. Through Christ, God has canceled the debt we owe, set us free from death, and given us new life. Are you living today like someone who has been, and who will always be, forgiven?

Wednesday — Matthew 6:12

As soon as the first servant has been released, he finds the second servant who owes him a small debt and violently demands repayment, showing no mercy. How could the first servant forget so quickly the incredible mercy he had just been given? Sometimes we're just like the first servant, but as Christians, unforgiveness is not an option. When we harbor bitterness, anger, or resentment in our hearts, we block ourselves from fully receiving the freedom and peace God offers us. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you forgive someone you know who — whether they acknowledge it or not — needs forgiveness.

Thursday — Ephesians 4:32

We all have influence. Just as the first servant has power over the second servant, each of us has influence over someone. Employers have power over their employees. Parents have influence over their children. Teachers and coaches have authority over their students and players. Peers often sway one another's minds and actions. There are no value-neutral interactions. Every day we impact every person we connect with — either positively or negatively — through our actions, words, attitudes, tone, or even body language. We can build up, or we can tear down. How will you use your influence today?

Friday — John 5:12

God cares deeply about how we relate to others, especially those over whom we have influence and authority. When we abuse or misuse our influence only to elevate or benefit ourselves, we are sinning not just against the other person, but against God. The parable ends with the king punishing the 'wicked' servant for his lack of mercy on his fellow servant. This is a warning for us to heed. Jesus has given us a model for how we are called to love one another. When we choose to serve others, sacrifice for their well-being, or forgive their shortcomings, we will grow in living and loving like Jesus.