

After I read the OT lesson about Joseph and his brothers, did it cross your mind, *“I could never have done what Joseph did”*? He forgave his brothers for the mess they made of his life. They sold him into slavery. Then he got tossed into prison for something he never did. He ended up being away from the only parent he had left for 17 years.

Why wouldn't he get even with his brothers? Perhaps, he learned something from his father, who also had an issue with his brother.

Years earlier Joseph's father, Jacob, had made a mess of his brother's life. Jacob stole Esau's birth rite and the inheritance reserved for the first-born son, when he tricked Isaac, his blind father, into giving it to him.

Years later, Jacob was about to cross paths with Esau for the first since that incident. Jacob was terrified. People usually hold grudges. Which made Esau's reaction to run and meet Jacob and ... throw his arms around him and hug him so shocking. Esau chose forgiving over holding a grudge and forgetting over seeking revenge.

Did Jacob share that story of forgiveness with his son Joseph as he was growing up? Did Joseph recall that story of forgiveness as he crossed paths with his brothers years later?

We can't answer those questions with certainty. But from Jesus' parable today, we can certainly find the answer to this question: **“Does Forgiveness Mean I Have to Forget?”**

Jesus knew forgiveness is both difficult and necessary. That's why he used one of his favorite teaching tools in today's lesson on being forgiven and then showing forgiveness.

Jesus had been discussing forgiveness with his disciples, when Peter pipes in, wondering how far he needs to take this forgiveness thing? How high does the forgiveness counter have to go? Going above and beyond what's expected, he suggests:

**“Up to 7 times?”** To Peter's shock Jesus says: **“Multiply your 7 by 11. 77 times.”**

Who keeps track of that many time? Exactly! When it comes to forgiveness, Jesus doesn't want us to count. He wants us to forgive.

To get his math equation for forgiveness across he uses a parable, a story from everyday life that teaches a spiritual lesson. Or, maybe you learned, a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.

This parable introduces us to a king who decides to collect some outstanding debts owed him by his servants. As the king's eyes scan the list of names his financial advisors gave him, his eyes notice the name of a man who owes him an enormous amount. The king demands that he make an appearance at the palace. Nervously, he steps into the king's presence.

The king orders the amount his servant owes him to be paid back in full, immediately ... all 10,000 bags of gold. As best as we can figure, one bag was worth what a laborer could earn in 20 years. That would make his debt in the \$25-30,00,000 range. The actual amount isn't important. What is important is that this man could never repay it. So the king orders that everything the man has ... his possessions, his property, even his wife and his children ... be sold to pay a portion of his debt.

On his knees, the servant begs the king for patience, time and mercy and promises to repay. And, with a heart of mercy, the king cancels the entire debt. All has been forgiven and forgotten. This servant, with an amount he had no chance of ever repaying is now debt-free and free to go. He and his wife and his children have a fresh start. Words couldn't possibly express his gratitude and appreciation!

As he leaves the king's presence, he happens to run into a fellow servant who owes him some money – 100 silver coins. Again, as best as we can figure

one silver coin was worth what a laborer could earn in one day. That would make his debt around 3 months of wages. Pocket change compared to his own debt.

Having just had his own significant debt forgiven by the king, you'd expect he'd do the same and cancel the insignificant debt of his fellow servant, to show his gratefulness. It's only natural, right?

Instead of paying it forward he violently grabs him by the throat and demands payment in full, immediately. Then something unusual, but familiar happens.

- This servant falls to his knees ... just like he had.
- This servant begs for patience, time and mercy ... just like he had.
- This servant promises to pay it all back ... just like he had.

This had to remind him of what happened moments earlier in the king's presence, wouldn't it? His own impossible debt forgiven, he'd have the opportunity to forgive the small amount owed him, right? If you were anticipating that, you'd be wrong.

Instead of showing mercy he orders the man thrown into prison until he could repay his small debt. How cold-hearted can a person be? Didn't he realize his own situation? His debt had been forgiven and forgotten. His behavior was such a shock to his fellow servants they had to tell the king.

When the king heard what happened, he immediately summoned this man back to the palace. No longer an **unmerciful** servant, the king calls him a **wicked** servant and turns him over to be tortured.

The parable's point is clear. The answer to Peter's question is obvious. The answer to our question is unmistakable: **"Yes! Forgiveness means forgetting ... every single time!"**

That servant with the impossible debt, that's you. That's me. We have an impossible debt of sin.

Trying to work it off, or promising to pay it back is ridiculous and useless on our part.

With a heart of mercy, our King, who is also our Savior cancels our entire debt. All has been forgiven and forgotten. We, who had no chance to ever repay our debt, are now debt-free and free to go. We have a fresh start. For times too numerous to count, he's forgiven and forgotten our sins which were too numerous to count.

Our debt was canceled when Jesus shouted, **"Tetelestai"** with his dying breath from the cross. We're more familiar with, **"It is finished."** **Tetelestai** means **"Paid in Full."** It's what a merchant stamps on the bill that has had the entire debt paid off. Our debt of sin has been **"Paid in Full."** God's Son said so when he covered the cost with his precious blood and priceless death.

How sweet to hear Jesus announce: **Your sins are forgiven and forgotten**" again and again ...

- when his words are spoken as water was poured on your head as a child,
- when his body and blood connected to wine and wafer touch your mouth,
- when a pastor's announcement of absolution reaches your ears here in church,
- when your Savior's promise touches your heart in the quietness of your home.

God has forgiven your sins and forgotten them, He remembers them no more. But what about the sins others commit against me? Forgive and forget them! *"But you don't know what my boss did to me, or what my husband said to me, or how unfair she was to me."* Forgive and forget them! *"What if those sins continue 77 times?"* Forgive and forget them! *"What about the deep hurt our memories can't seem to let go of?"* Forgive and forget them? Absolutely!

It may be one of the most difficult things you'll have to do and do and do again! How we forgive and forget the sins of others is a good indicator of how much we appreciate that our Savior has forgiven and forgotten our sins.