

PRAYER

Good Shepherd
Sermon-Based Study Guide

Matthew 18: 21-35 | February 8th, 2026

Prepared by Janae Barker

janae@gspc.org | (562) 493-2553 x109

I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue in our series about Prayer. As we continue through the Lord's Prayer this week, we will look closely at the part that says, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors". As we examine this phrase closely and other passages, we will see how Scripture reveals how forgiveness cannot only be received but must also be extended in .

II. Connecting with One Another

When was a time forgiveness was offered to you unexpectedly? How did that forgiveness shape the way you then forgave someone else?

On the flip side, has there been a time or a circumstance where forgiveness was not extended that you longed for? Or perhaps a time you withheld forgiveness? How did that make you feel?

III. Study the Text

Let's begin with the passage where the Lord's Prayer is found, read **Matthew 6: 9-15**.

- This petition is the only one that Jesus explains further. What does Jesus say in verses 14-15 about forgiveness? Have you thought of forgiveness this way often?

Scripture is littered with passages on forgiveness but one passage we will look at more closely this week is **Matthew 18: 21-35**. Peter begins by setting the scene of asking Jesus if 7 times is enough to forgive someone. Jewish law suggested 3 times was more than enough. **Matthew 18: 21-22**

- What does his question reveal about how humans naturally want to *measure* forgiveness?
- Jesus answers with "**seventy-seven times**" (or **seventy times seven**). What kind of forgiveness is Jesus rejecting by giving this answer?
- How does Jesus' response shift forgiveness from a *calculation* to a *way of life*?



Jesus responds to Peter with a parable **Matthew 18: 23-27**.

- Why do you think Jesus chose such an exaggerated amount (10,000 talents) to reveal forgiveness?
- The king forgives because he is moved with compassion, not because the servant makes a good plan. What does this teach us about the *basis* of God's forgiveness?

The second servant owes a real debt that could actually be repaid but we see the contrast between the two masters and their responses. Re-read **Matthew 18: 28-35**

- Compare the pleas of the two servants. Why does the forgiven servant react with violence rather than mercy?
- What does this passage suggest about how unforgiveness affects the *health of a community*?
- Jesus says forgiveness must be "**from the heart.**" What does this mean in light of the entire parable — action, posture, or feeling?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- Where do you most identify with the first servant — before forgiveness or after receiving it?
- What "smaller debts" are hardest for you to release, and why?
- How does this parable challenge the idea that forgiveness depends on apology or change?
- How would your prayer life change if you truly believed that every time you pray the Lord's Prayer, you are stepping into this parable?

V. Digging Deeper/Prayer

This week we will be challenged to pray shaped by Matthew 18 –

- Name your forgiven debt before God ("Lord, You know the debt I could never repay — my sins of thought, word, and deed. You forgave me freely, not because I deserved it, but because You are merciful.")
- Name the smaller debt honestly (without minimizing it ("Lord, ___ has sinned against me by ___. This debt is real. I do not pretend it didn't hurt."))
- Release judgment, not justice ("I release this debt into Your hands. I surrender my right to revenge, rehearsing the wrong, and final judgment. Deal with this person according to Your mercy and wisdom, not my anger.")
- Pray blessing, not because you feel it, but because Christ commands it ("Bless ___. Heal what is broken in them.")
- Finish with the petition "Forgive us our debts, **as** we forgive our debtors."

