

**TITLE AND NUMBER:** 150. Forgiveness

**REFERENCE AND KEY VERSE(S):** Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, 'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?'

Jesus answered, 'I tell you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.'



**LOOKING FURTHER:** Matthew 6:9-14; Matthew 18:21-35

### What does this Bible passage tell us?

When Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive his brother, he suggests a small number, asking whether seven times is enough. Jesus' reply is a large number, seventy-seven times, to show that there is no limit on how many times Peter should forgive.

In the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. If we are hoping that God will always forgive us, we have to be prepared to treat others the same and not limit the number of times we forgive them. Forgiveness - not revenge or hate - is the only way to move on.

However, forgiveness is never easy. If someone has badly hurt us or our loved ones, how can we forgive them? We can do this remembering that God forgives us whatever we have done. But what if the person who has hurt us is not sorry? Then we have to seek God's strength and grace to help us to forgive that person. If we do not forgive them, they will not care and we are the ones who will continue to suffer. If we do forgive them, a load will be lifted from our shoulders and, in time with God's help, we will be able to move on. How do I know this? Because I have heard amazing stories of those who have been victims of terrible crimes and have forgiven those who have hurt them and their loved ones. Forgiveness brought them peace.

It is, of course, impossible to know how we would act if this happened to us. However, we need to pray that God will always give us the strength and courage to forgive, however hard it is.

### Reflections:

- Ask God for strength to help you forgive even when it is really difficult, and to accept forgiveness when someone forgives you.
- Have you heard of the *Sycamore Tree* course on victim awareness and restorative justice? This includes work on forgiveness and the course is offered in most prisons. If you have not done the course, ask your Chaplain whether it is available in your prison.
- There is a book called 'Why Forgive?' which can be given to people in prison free of charge. If you do not have a copy, why not ask your Chaplain if one can be made available for you.

Write or draw something you read in this Bible Study that stood out to you.



Do you have any questions about this week's Bible Study?



How does this week's message apply to your life?



What can we learn about God from this week's passage?



What would you like to ask God this week?



Has God responded to your prayers this week in the way you had hoped for? It's okay to talk to God about this.

