

Peter Asked Jesus about Forgiveness
(Matthew 18:21-22)

Introduction:

1. Our lesson is based on a question that Peter asked Jesus about forgiveness.
2. It seems that there is a considerable amount of interest on this subject.
3. Several questions have recently been asked about "forgiveness."
4. As we study this important subject, let us first examine . . .

Discussion:

I. PETER'S QUESTION (Matthew 18:21)

- A. Peter asked Jesus if he was required to forgive his brother up to 7 times.
- B. Several passages may help us understand why Peter would ask such a question.
 1. Peter had heard the Lord's teaching on forgiveness.
 - a. (Matthew 6:12) In His model prayer Jesus taught His followers to forgive when asking God for forgiveness.
 - b. He continued in vs.14-15 by showing how God's forgiveness is dependent upon our willingness to forgive.
 - c. In Luke 17:3-4 Jesus touched on the extent to which His followers are to forgive each other ["7" was an arbitrary number].
 - d. The apostles responded in vs.5 by asking the Lord to increase their faith.
 - e. (Matthew 18:15-17) Jesus gave His guidelines for dealing with personal offenses.
 2. It seems from his question in vs.21 that Peter wanted some clarification about how many times he was required to forgive someone who sinned against him.

II. JESUS ANSWERED PETER'S QUESTION

- A. The Lord's initial response is in vs.22 -- not 7 times, but 70 times 7.
 1. If a person keeps a record of how many times he has forgiven someone else, has he ever really practiced forgiveness?
 2. "Forgiveness" involves "letting go."
- B. Jesus continued in vs.23-35 by presenting a parable to illustrate the lesson He wants us to learn.
 1. There are 3 main characters: a king and 2 servants [servant #1 & servant #2].
 - a. Servant #1 owed the king 10,000 talents, a debt he could not pay.
 - b. Servant #2 owed 100 pence to servant #1, an insignificant debt.
 2. (vs.23) The king took account of his servants.
 3. (vs.24-27) The king's compassion led him to forgive the huge debt owed by servant #1.
 4. (vs.28-30) Servant #1 refused to forgive the small debt that servant #2 owed him.
 5. (vs.31-34) The king punished servant #1.
 6. Jesus concluded in vs.35 by making His point very clear.

III. ADDITIONAL PASSAGES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS

- A. Ephesians 4:31-32
- B. Colossians 3:12-13

Conclusion:

1. In Matthew 18:21 Peter asked Jesus a question.
2. As Jesus answered Peter's question He revealed His will on a very important subject -- "forgiveness."
3. We need and want God's forgiveness; however,:
 - a. in order for God to forgive us, we must forgive others
 - b. if we will not forgive others, God will not forgive us.