

THE CATHOLIC PARISH OF BOGNOR REGIS AND SLINDON

We are followers of Jesus, on fire with his love,
sharing that love with each other and with the world.



The Story of the Unforgiving Servant

All the content below is for you to make your own, please do read through it, pick what would work best for your children and would best engage them.

Rest assured of our prayers for your family and you this coming week!

This week in the gospel according to Matthew we learn Jesus' teaching about forgiveness. As citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, we forgive others their debt against us since Jesus forgave our debt against him.

MATTHEW 18:21-35

21Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. 23"Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24When he began the reckoning, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents; 25and as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27And out of pity for him the lord of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28But that same servant, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat he said, 'Pay what you owe.' 29So his fellow servant fell down and besought him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30He refused and went and put him in prison till he should pay the debt. 31When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. 32Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you besought me; 33and should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34And in anger his lord delivered him to the jailers, till he should pay all his debt. 35So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

Let's start with the conversation that takes place just before this parable. Peter asks Jesus how many times he is supposed to forgive someone who sins against him, who does something wrong to him. Peter guesses that seven times should be enough. It seems like a strange number to pick out, doesn't it? It also seems like a lot of times to forgive someone when they keep sinning against you.

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Some conversation pointers, when talking at home about this -

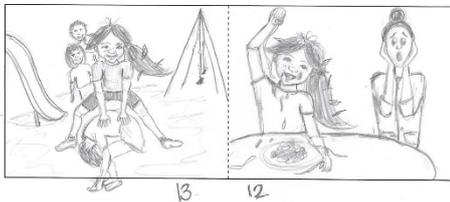
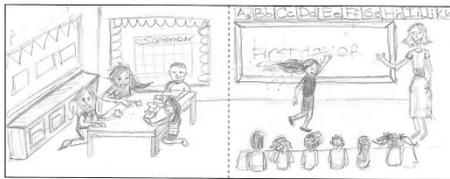
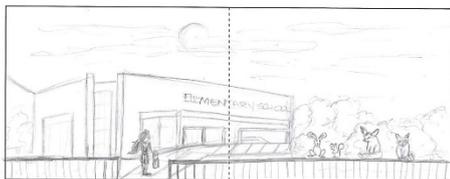
Imagine you are playing football with a group, and your best friend keeps stealing the ball from you. You hardly get to play because they are being such ball hogs! But every time your best friend steals the ball, he at least says he's sorry. I don't know about you, but by about the third or fourth time that happens, I don't think I would want to play with him anymore. What do you think? (Give your children a moment to share). Peter probably thought he was being very generous by saying he could forgive someone seven times. A lot of Rabbis, who were the Jewish religious teachers at the time, said that it was plenty to forgive someone three times. Most people in Jesus' time thought that if you forgave someone three times and they still wronged you, that you would not have to forgive them. So with that in mind, Peter's guess that forgiving someone seven times seems awfully kind. But Jesus has a different idea of what forgiveness looks like. How does Jesus respond to Peter in verse 22 of Matthew 18? Jesus says we must forgive them seventy times seven times! Let's do a little maths to figure out exactly how many times that is. (Work out this multiplication problem briefly on a piece of paper, or if your children are old enough have them do the sum.)

Seventy times seven is 490! Now that is a lot of times to forgive someone. Think of our story of playing football with our friend, or a time in your own life where someone kept sinning against you and hurting your feelings. Can you imagine forgiving them 490 times? But do you think that is really what Jesus means? Do you think he really wants us to forgive people exactly 490 times, and then we stop forgiving them?

So if Jesus does not want us to literally forgive 490 times, what do you think he means. Jesus gives this really big number for two reasons. One is to tell us that we should forgive endlessly. We can't keep record of wrongs, we can't tally up the number of times we must forgive. We cannot keep track of the number of times we forgive. We must keep forgiving and forgiving and forgiving, no matter what, even if it means forgiving more than 490 times! The other reason he gives us such a big number is to tell us that we cannot forgive endlessly on our own. We need Jesus to help us forgive. So Jesus sets up this parable, the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, by telling us that we must forgive endlessly.

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Activities to remind us about this message from
Jesus

Make a story board of the gospel passage you
have just read. Or you could draw an example
of doing this, like the football match.

Finish your time together focusing on this piece of scripture with prayer