

**October Family Devotion**  
Biblical Character Trait: Forgiveness

*Matthew 18:32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. 33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' 34 In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. 35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart."*

**NO IFS, ANDS OR BUTS**

The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant is told in Matthew 18 after Peter asks Jesus how many times he should forgive someone. Peter felt as we often do, that there is a limit to forgiveness. Jesus told this parable to illustrate the immense debt each of us owes to the Savior and, in view of this great forgiveness, we are to forgive each other.

All of us like the idea of forgiveness. We especially like it when it is directed our way. We struggle when we must extend it ourselves. Nursing our hurts and anger, we feel there is no way we can forgive.

Over a hundred years ago in his "Essay on Criticism," Alexander Pope said, "To err is human, to forgive divine." This can be taken that only God can truly forgive and, in some ways, I suppose this is true. To me this means that it is in forgiveness we most closely mirror the God of Heaven.

Consider the Cross, when a completely blameless and holy God took all the ugliness of my sin and yours, put it on Himself and paid the price - which was death - for that sin. He then conquered death and freely offered forgiveness to you and I. No strings attached.

We often offer forgiveness with caveats. "If" this, "and" this or "but" that accompany our proffered forgiveness. We expect some type of reward for forgiving. But when we put a price tag on forgiveness, is it really forgiveness?

My children have heard endless times, "If you want grace, you must extend it. And trust me, you're going to need it." We've also taught them that we need to ask God to "help us forgive those who sin differently from ourselves." Forgiving those who have trespassed against us and those we love is the awesome responsibility and privilege of those of us who call Christ Lord.

Extending grace and forgiveness is hard. Some offenses may even require the help of trusted counselors before we experience the full freedom of forgiveness. The Cross was hard but there are no limits to the grace it offers. In view of that great grace, let's forgive and show the world the beauty and wonder of the Cross.

Reflection Question: Is there someone that you need to forgive?