

SUNDAY HANDOUT FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION - October 18th

Keep Giving it Away (Matthew 18:15-35)

How should you respond when someone sins against you, especially another apprentice of Jesus? When the pain runs deep, the hurt is real and all you want to do is write them off, where do you find the strength to pursue restoration and extend forgiveness? In Matthew 18, we learn that mercy is the atmosphere of the kingdom of heaven – the air we breathe – and the mercy we’ve received gives us the strength to pursue restoration and extend forgiveness. Mercy is meant to be the ongoing response of those who have truly received it. Will we keep breathing it in and giving it away?

1. Mercy doesn’t retreat or retaliate - mercy pursues (Matthew 18:15-20)

2. Forgiveness is at the heart of apprenticeship to Jesus – keep giving it away (Matthew 18:21-22)

3. Mercy is the atmosphere of the kingdom of heaven – keep breathing it in (Matthew 18:23-35)

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Matthew 18:15-35. Re-read verses 15-20. What steps does Jesus give for pursuing another apprentice who has sinned against you or confronting another apprentice caught in sin? According to verse 15, what is the goal, and how should that shape the way we approach someone?
2. Why are we often tempted to retreat, retaliate or write someone off when they’ve wronged us? What would it look like to pursue them instead, driven by mercy?
3. In verse 21, Peter asks how many times he should forgive. What does Jesus’ response teach us?
4. In verses 23-35, how do the two servants’ debts compare? What makes the master’s response to the first servant so extraordinary, and his treatment of the second servant so shocking?
5. Jesus often describes sin as a debt (Matthew 6:12). Forgiveness involves canceling a debt and absorbing a cost. What does forgiving someone mean, and what does it not mean? Consider 1 Peter 2:22-23. How does Jesus’ example of entrusting himself to the Father help us forgive?
6. Re-read verse 35. What warning does Jesus give about withholding forgiveness, and why should we take it seriously? Consider Matthew 6:12-15; Colossians 3:12-14; Ephesians 4:32.
7. What does our willingness to forgive reveal about whether we’ve truly received God’s mercy? Consider Romans 5:6-10 and Titus 3:3-7.
8. If mercy is “the atmosphere of the kingdom of heaven,” what does it look like to keep “breathing it in”? What practices help you to do just that? Where might God be calling you to give it away?

Take some time to reflect on the extravagant mercy you’ve received through Jesus. Thank God for forgiving a debt you could never repay and for the freedom you have in Jesus.

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any bitterness, resentment or unforgiveness you’re holding on to. Is there someone you’ve written off, someone you need to pursue or forgive? Ask God to help you keep breathing in his mercy and give you the compassion, courage and strength to keep giving it away.