

A NOTE TO PARENTS

The lectionary, our yearly schedule of Bible readings, carries us imaginatively through Jesus's life and teachings. The church year begins with Advent, four weeks before Christmas, so in the fall—the final weeks of the church year—the lectionary focuses on our Lord's last few weeks, when he came to Jerusalem for the Passover and faced the increasing hostility of the religious and political powers. His teachings during these final days reflect this atmosphere of tension and confrontation. They are about crisis and judgment: our acceptance or rejection of God's ways, and God's acceptance or rejection of us. These are not easy Scriptures to present to children.

In today's Parable of the Unforgiving Servant, for example, the servant's debt to the king runs to astronomical amounts, while the fellow-servant's debt is a trivial amount. Jesus is saying, "God has forgiven you infinitely more than you are ever called upon to forgive in another." This is indeed true for all of us—even children—in profound and important ways. But it is not a useful point to make with children, and Jesus was not speaking to children when he made it. It is confusing to children's sense of fairness, and it may give them the idea that all their ordinary imperfections (their immaturity, thoughtlessness, clumsiness) are somehow offensive to God the way they often seem to be offensive to irritable and demanding adults.

Instead, when you talk about this story with your child, concentrate on the idea of *mutual* forgiveness. You may need to explain the meaning of the word *forgiveness* itself—also the idea of "owing money." Talk about forgiveness as "love that is still there even when the other person has hurt you." God has it for us, so we can have it for each other. *All of us*: adults, children, parents, friends, siblings. None of us are more or less forgiven than any others. Ask your child to remember and describe a time when he or she needed to forgive ... and another time when he or she needed to be forgiven. Give thanks together for God's untiring love for us all.

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Year A
PROPER 19
TRACK 1



Jesus said,
"Because God has
forgiven you,
you need to
forgive each other."

MATTHEW 18:35

JESUS TOLD THIS STORY:

A king had a servant who owed him millions of dollars and could not pay it back.



The king could have put the servant in jail. Instead, he forgave him!



The servant had a friend who owed him a few dollars, and could not pay it back.



The servant had his friend put in jail! When the king found out, he was very angry!



All of us do things that we know are wrong. The Bible tells us that God forgives us, like the king who forgave the servant. So we need to forgive each other, too.

Draw a rainbow in the picture, to show God's promise of forgiveness.

