

Caring

A Parable of Forgiveness

FRIENDLY FIRE

Introduction

Even among the closest of friends, sometimes we hurt each other. In this Bible story, the apostle Peter asks Jesus what to do when you get hurt by a friend. He was probably talking about relationships within the close circle of friends who were followers of Christ.

Have someone read the story. Then, divide into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire. Remember, there are no right answers ... so feel free to share.

1. If you were Peter, what would have been your thoughts after Jesus answered your question?
 - I don't understand.
 - This is serious stuff.
 - This is going to be hard for me to do.
 - I'm anxious to give this a try.
 - I'm sorry I asked.
2. What was one of the worst things your brother or sister ever did to you?
3. To whom do you have to say "I'm sorry" the most?
 - my spouse / boyfriend / girlfriend
 - my parent(s)
 - my children
 - my brother / sister
 - another family member
 - a friend
 - my boss
 - a coworker
 - other

THE PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

²¹Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

²³"Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

²⁶"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.' ²⁷The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

²⁸"But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

²⁹"His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

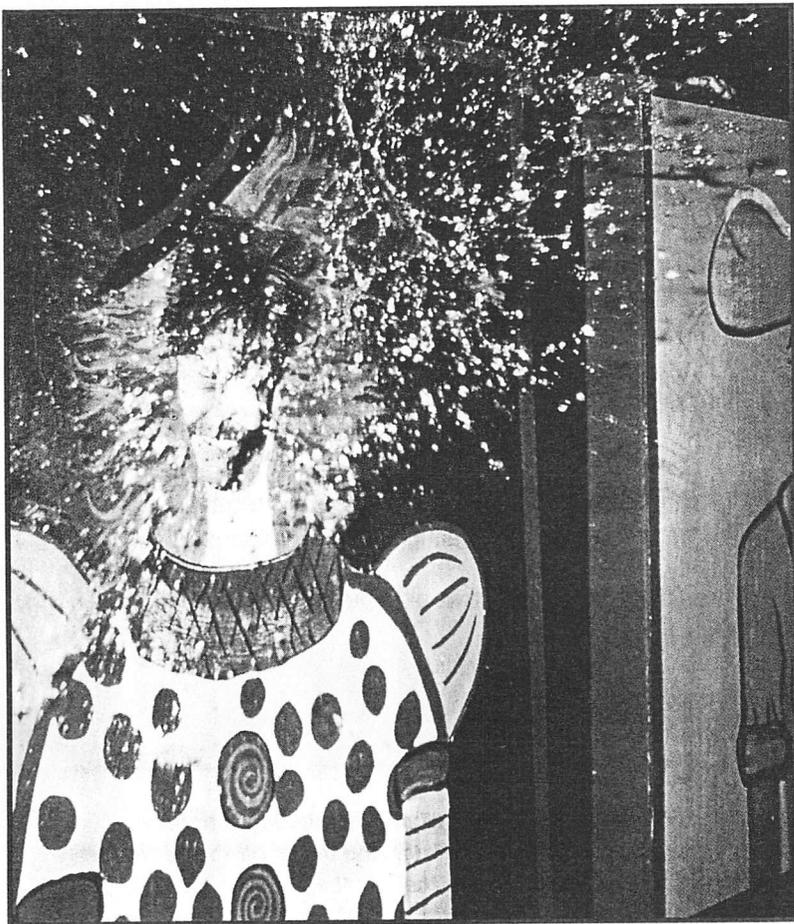
³⁰"But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

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. ³³Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' ³⁴In anger his master turned 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 from your heart."

Matthew 18:21-35

4. Do you tend to be more like the master who forgave (v. 27) or the servant who wouldn't forgive (v. 30)?



5. Word gets back to you that something you shared in confidence with your youth group or small group last week is "all over town." What do you do?
- stop going to the group
 - confront the group and tell them how this hurt me
 - never share anything again at the meetings
 - go to the leaders and ask them to handle it
 - go to the person I think said it and confront him or her
 - accept this as part of life and try to get on with it

6. When you get hurt in relationships, what do you usually do?

- have it out with the person
- sulk for three days
- withdraw into myself
- cry on someone's shoulder
- try to look at it from the other person's point of view
- watch reruns all night
- complain to God
- other: _____

7. What have you found helpful in dealing with conflict?

- writing out my feelings
- breaking off the relationship
- being up front with the person
- doing something nice for the person
- ignoring it and hoping it goes away
- appreciating God's forgiveness of me
- asking someone else to help deal with it
- seeing the other person as hurting himself or herself

8. What is hardest for you?

- forgiving again and again
- not punishing those who hurt me
- forgiving from my heart—I can say the words but I don't feel them.
- wondering how I can forgive without encouraging irresponsibility

9. Is there someone you need to forgive? If so, what is keeping you from forgiving them?

10. How would you like the group to pray for you?