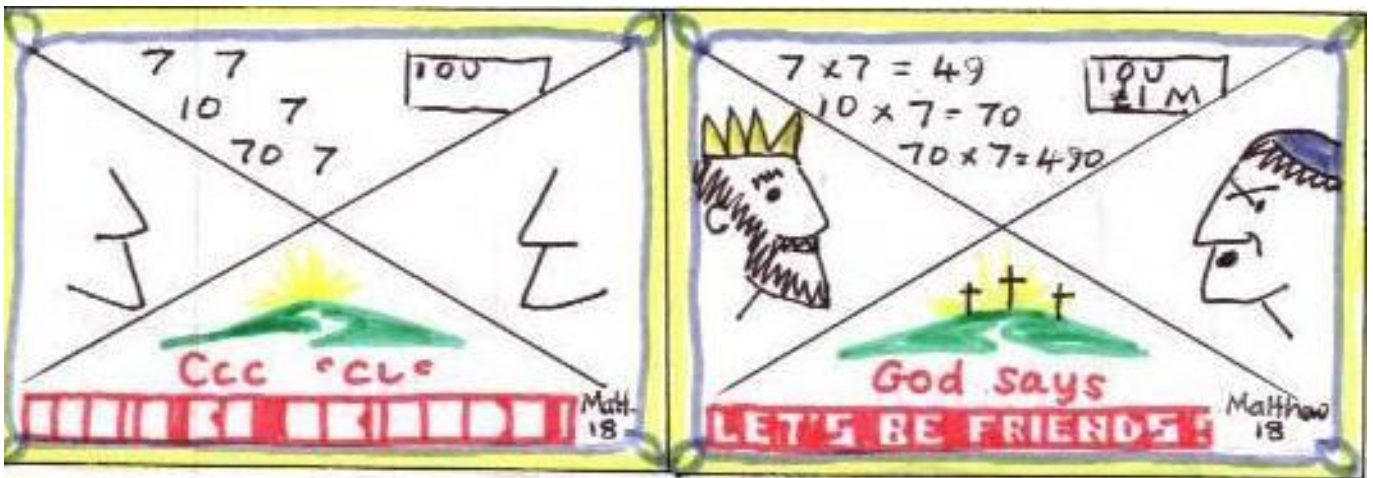


FORGIVENESS (SEVENTY x SEVEN)

Matthew 18 v. 21-35



Picture: divide the board diagonally into 4 sections.

Top section: incomplete sums 7×7 , 7×10 , 70×7

Left hand side: Profile of King, without crown.

Right hand side: Profile of servant

Bottom section: Hill without crosses,

Lower Headlines "God says" in Lower case letters

"LET'S BE FRIENDS" Ladder lettering

Who's good at maths? O.K. I'd like to do a maths test!

Who knows $7 \times 7 = 49$

What's $7 \times 10 = 70$

This is a trickier one $70 \times 7 = 490$

Peter, one of Jesus friends had a problem like this. He asked Jesus How often should I forgive someone? How about 7 times 7? Jesus said "No, 70 times 7!"

While Peter was trying to figure that one out Jesus told this story:-

"Once upon a time, there was a very rich man .. in fact he was not just a rich man but he was a .. (paint in crown) .. king. The day had arrived ... he had to settle his accounts. So he sat down at his desk with all his bills and receipts He began to check that all the people who owed him money had paid. " £10 from this one .. yes. £50 from him .. yes. £500 from this one .. yes. Hello, here's one not paid! Who's it from? One of my servants! How much does he owe ?.... HOW MUCH? Bring that man to me at once!"

All the servants hurried around to find that man, who came running to the King's office. "Now, then, Sir, you haven't paid your bills .. you owe me ... (paint in £s) .. £1 million!" Can you imagine owing someone £1 million ?.. You'd never do it if you had to save up your pocket money to pay it back! " Well, yes your Majesty, I know I owe you that money and I'm really sorry I haven't paid it back yet, really, really sorry..... but I've got a bit of a problem at the moment and I'm afraid I just don't have the money .." "Well, you know what the law says. If you can't pay me I'm going to have to sell you and your family as slaves, and sell all your possessions to try and get my money back!"

The story actually talks about 10,000 talents - which was about 15 years' pay for a labourer, or five times the tax revenue for the whole of Galilee.

The Bible tells us we are all a bit like that servant, we are in debt to God, not because we owe him lots of money, but because of all the wrong things we've done. You know, I want this, I want that, I want what I want, and I want it NOW. Selfishness. And wrong things we say and do... you know what I mean, don't you?

When the servant heard he was going to be sold as a slave he was really upset. "Oh, please, your Majesty, I'm ever so sorry, I've got a really big family and hungry children, **please** be patient - I'll do my very best to pay it back." Do you know what the king did? He said "Very well. It's O.K. I won't sell you as a slave and actually I won't make you pay that £1 million back either .. I forgive you your debt." And he took his big red pen and crossed right through the account, which meant the bill was settled. That was AMAZING! To forgive someone a debt like that!

The Bible teaches that God provided a way to cross out our debt to him, because he loves us and wants to forgive us for the things we do wrong. That was why he sent Jesus. Jesus went on to do something really special, he died on a cross. (*Paint in crosses on hill*) When he died he was being punished. We get punished when we do things wrong don't we? But did Jesus do anything wrong? No! The Bible tells us he never did anything wrong, ever.... but I just said he was being punished ! The Bible explains he was being punished for all the wrong things that I have done and that people all over the world have done. Christians believe that Jesus didn't stay dead but came back to life again and is alive today .. so he can forgive anyone who asks him to. and he will be the best friend of anyone who believes and trusts in him.

That servant went out of the King's office really happy! "WOW! I don't have to pay the money back - this is FANTASTIC! I'm free of that debt! Then he saw one of the other servants: " Hmmm, he owes me £5 - it's about time he paid it back .. Hey! Come here! You owe me £5 and I want it back! Now!" the Bible says it was 1 denarius - that's just one day's pay. "Oh dear, I'm really sorry, I know I owe you the money, but I've got a bit of a problem at the moment and I don't have it .. if you'll be patient I will try to pay it back as soon as I can". What do you think the King's servant did? He said "No! I want my money and I want it NOW .. and if you can't pay it then you can go to jail until it IS paid." And he marched the man off to jail.

The other servants were really upset when they heard about this and they went to tell the King. The King was really upset. "Bring that man here!" He came hurrying into the King's office. "You worthless servant! I forgave you a whole £1 million and you couldn't forgive your fellow servant just £5! Because you didn't forgive him like I forgave you, I'm going to sending you to jail to be punished until you can pay back the whole £1 million you owed me!"

Jesus told Peter: "That's how God will deal with you unless you forgive other people!"

When I was a bit younger I found out what Jesus had done for me on the cross. I was really amazed he could love me that much. I said to him I'm really sorry for the things I've done wrong. Please will you forgive me and make me clean inside? And that's exactly what he did. He always keeps his promises, and he promised that anyone who says sorry to him can have a fresh start.

Once I asked some children what God does when he forgives us - - what does it mean? What do

you think? A little boy put his hand up and said (*Paint it in*) "God says 'Let's be friends". That's right, isn't it? Much better even than saying "Just let's forget about it".... I know that I've got to forgive other people when they get things wrong, just like God forgave me. Having him as my best friend is the most wonderful thing. I asked him over 50 years ago... and I've never regretted it.

Reflection time. Prayer.