

# Jesus the Storyteller: Hearing the Parables Afresh Today

**Lim Kar Yong**



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## Foreword

When Jesus taught about the kingdom of God, he usually did so in parables, stories from daily life that drove his message home, and showed his listeners what living God's way truly meant.

Unfortunately, many churches today do not teach or preach from the parables well. Even if we try to do so, the parables are often allegorised and stripped of their context, or simply reduced to children's stories of good behaviour. We think we know all there is to know about the parables, and wonder if there is anything else.

This is where New Testament scholar Rev Dr Lim Kar Yong surprises us with many insights drawn from these stories Jesus told, bringing to light details and nuances that have too often been overlooked. In his careful exegesis, Kar Yong unpacks the parables by drawing from their cultural, historical and literary backgrounds, and provides applications for today. The result is a book that reveals the full strength of Jesus' parables, and challenges, inspires and encourages us to consider how we should live our lives as his followers.

Kar Yong is deeply concerned about how the church in Malaysia should hear the parables of Jesus afresh. He rightly believes that the teaching of Scripture should not merely be reduced to personal application by individuals, but be heard and shared among a community that will move the whole church to action.

While Kar Yong has written predominantly in an Asian context, I believe that readers from other regions will find

this book helpful and inspiring. Preachers will also find many illustrations, insights and homiletical ideas here that could assist them in their preparation to preach the parables.

There are also discussion questions for each chapter, so this book can be used in Bible study—such as in cell groups or Christian education classes.

I am confident that *Jesus the Storyteller* will be a great resource for the church in Malaysia and beyond. May we listen to the parables of Jesus afresh, and take their true meaning to heart.

**Rev Dr Ezra Kok**

Principal, Seminari Theoloji Malaysia  
Lent, 2015

## Editorial Preface

Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM) is pleased to announce the formation of its publication division and the commencement of the STM Series, of which *Jesus the Storyteller: Hearing the Parables Afresh Today* is the ninth volume. The format of the STM Series follows a line similar to the successful SPCK series known as the International Study Guides (ISGs) and its earlier predecessor, the Theological Education Fund (TEF) series.

The STM Series will publish books under various subsections: Biblical, Theological, Historical, Missions and Pastoral. These books are intercultural and contextual in approach and written mainly by the lecturers and friends of STM. Although these books are written to cater to a wider public audience, scholarship and relevance to contemporary local issues will be addressed and kept up to date.

The STM Series is jointly published by STM and Armour Publishing, Singapore.

**Rev Dr Ezra Kok**

**Rev Dr Sivin Kit**

**Dr Elaine Goh**

**Ms Tham Soke Fong**

2015 Editorial Committee

## Author's Preface

### Other titles in this series:

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Many books on the parables have been written as devotional guides for the perplexed, for preachers and for academia. Why yet another book on the parables? How is this book that you are holding different from the rest?

First of all, I write as a New Testament specialist with homiletical eyes (that is, from a preacher's standpoint) and with relevant contextualisation for the Asian world, with the hope that it would be useful for readers who want to have a better understanding of what Jesus taught through his parables. The reader could be a busy pastor, a Bible study leader, a church leader or a serious Bible student. In addition, I also hope that those studying the parables in Bible colleges and seminaries find this book useful.

At the same time, this book is written with the community in mind. We have lost much of what it means to read the Scriptures within a community, and allow the text to challenge us as a community. As such, much of the application of the teaching of each parable is directed towards the church as a community.

Finally, at the end of each chapter, I have provided some discussion questions to help us better understand the parables and apply their teachings in our lives and communities. I trust that this could be profitably used by Bible study groups, cell groups, Christian education classes and anyone seriously studying the Bible.

While this book is not intended to be a piece of academic work, it does include academic insight. Much of what I learnt about the parables is built on the works of other scholars.

With this in view, I have tried to use simple language and kept technical jargon and extended footnotes to a bare minimum. When jargon is unavoidable, I have provided explanation of these words and phrases in the glossary found at the end of the book. Occasionally, I will refer to the Greek text of the New Testament when it is necessary, to bring out nuances that are not captured by English translations.

Readers will notice that I have adhered to the traditional titles of the parables. While titles often say outright or strongly determine the interpretation of the parable, readers will soon see that I may not necessarily think that the traditional titles truthfully capture the central points of some of the parables. However, giving new or revised titles might be confusing, and as such I have refrained from doing so.

This book has been a work in progress for many years. It is the result of the privilege of teaching and preaching the parables over the years that gives me much space and time to reflect on their meaning. I have taught elective courses on the parables at various seminaries of diverse traditions in Malaysia: The Bible College of Malaysia, a Pentecostal seminary; Seminari Theoloji Malaysia, an ecumenical seminary; and Malaysia Bible Seminary, an interdenominational evangelical seminary. These interactions with students from different traditions have made me rethink and relook at the parables from angles and perspectives that I had never seen before. The creative projects (assignments where students had to retell the parables from their own perspectives) also brought fresh insights in understanding the parables from an Asian, and more particularly, Malaysian context.

At the same time, the great privilege of teaching in these seminaries has enriched my learning experience. For this book, I have occasionally drawn from the insights of my students, along with the questions asked and the informal discussions

that continued after the class. In many ways, this book is a continuation of those conversations.

I have preached and conducted seminars on some of the parables found in this book over the years. I have also written Bible study materials on the parables, which were used in cell groups for a local church. These opportunities have opened my eyes to see the relevance of the message of the parables for the church in Malaysia and beyond.

Writing a book is never a lone enterprise of the author. I am indebted to colleagues and students, and the community of faith who has taught me what it means to be a citizen of the kingdom of God. A number of friends also volunteered to read earlier drafts of this manuscript. Their comments, feedback and suggestions to improve this book are greatly appreciated. Any shortcomings in this book remain my responsibility.

Many thanks also to Seminari Theoloji Malaysia and Armour Publishing, for their work in publishing and distributing this book.

**Rev Dr Lim Kar Yong**  
The Feast of the Epiphany, 2015  
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

# 6 The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant

*Is There a Limit to Forgiveness?*

*Matthew 18:21–35*

## INTRODUCTION

On 14 November 1940, more than 500 planes of the German Luftwaffe attacked the city of Coventry in England, destroying more than 4,000 homes and killing over 500 people.

The city centre was levelled. The most prominent landmark and the pride of the city, the Coventry Cathedral, was not spared and burnt down with the city. The Germans were so delighted with their success that they coined a new word to describe the complete destruction of the towns of their enemies: their targets were 'coventrated'.<sup>1</sup> The Luftwaffe bombing raid is known to this day as the Coventry Blitz.

After such horrible acts of violence and devastation, it would be understandable if the rebuilding of the city, and in particular, the Cathedral, was carried out with pain, hatred and unforgiveness towards the Nazis. Amazingly, the bombing set

the Cathedral on a different path: a path towards reconciliation, forgiveness and hope.

After the bombing, the Cathedral's stonemason, Jock Forbes, noticed that two charred beams of medieval roof timber had fallen, and mysteriously formed the shape of the cross. Creatively, he then set up the cross and placed those beams on the high altar of the destroyed Cathedral. He had the words, "Father Forgive", inscribed around the cross, demonstrating that through Christ, there could be forgiveness and reconciliation even in the midst of violence and conflict.

Later on, a local priest discovered three medieval nails on the destroyed Cathedral site. He fashioned them into the shape of the cross, and today the 'Coventry Cross' is placed on the altar of the rebuilt Cathedral. After the war, similar crosses made of nails were sent to various German cities that suffered similar fates of destruction during the war as gestures of reconciliation. Today, the Community of the Cross of Nails is an active ministry of Coventry Cathedral, bringing reconciliation to the world's major conflict areas through peace-building.

While planning for the rebuilding of the Cathedral, it was decided that the ruins of the Cathedral should not be demolished, but allowed to stand. The new Cathedral being rebuilt should be attached to the shattered ruins of the old Cathedral.

As a result of clever architectural design, we can now see the new Cathedral of Coventry standing side by side with the destroyed old Cathedral. These two buildings constitute a single place of worship. One without the other would not have the same powerful message of reconciliation and forgiveness. The old ruins remind us of our human capacity to destroy, the evil of destruction and the devastating effects of conflict. The new building shows us our human capacity to reach out to our enemies in friendship and reconciliation, and that forgiveness

is one of the most powerful acts we can offer to those who have wounded us.<sup>2</sup>

## LITERARY CONTEXT

The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant speaks about the power of forgiveness and the destructive nature of unforgiveness. It is about a person who had experienced an enormous debt cancelled, and yet could not forgive a far smaller debt owed to himself. This parable is sandwiched between the broader context of Jesus' teaching on resolving conflict and reconciliation (Matthew 18:15–20) and the topic of divorce and remarriage (19:1–12), both issues that involved forgiveness.

Jesus' teaching on resolving conflict and reconciliation in 18:15–20 is often misunderstood because of these frequently misquoted verses:

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them. (vv. 19–20)

These verses sound like a promise that God will answer prayer whenever Christians gather to pray. How many times have we heard prayers that go like this: "Lord, your Word promises that when two or three are gathered in your name, you will be in our midst, and that you will hear us when we pray."

But if we examine the context of this promise carefully, it has nothing to do with God's promise to answer prayer or his presence in prayer meetings, cell groups or any other Christian gatherings. Yes, God is present in the gathering of his people, but we should not use these verses out of context!



These verses relate to conflict between members of a community, and what to do when a brother sins against another. It is Jesus' promise that he will be in the midst of his people when they confront conflicts with grace, honesty, and with the ultimate aim of reconciliation. In this respect, Jesus clearly states his expectation for the faith community when they deal with conflicts. The fact that the word 'church' appears twice in v. 17 clearly demonstrates that the power and authority to forgive, reconcile and carry out means of justice rests in the community of believers.

It is within this context that we read Matthew 18:21–25. After listening to Jesus addressing the issue of forgiving a brother that had sinned against another, Peter asked, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" (v. 21). For Peter, forgiveness had a limit. That's why he suggested the limit of seven times.

However, before we point a finger at Peter, we must acknowledge that to forgive someone seven times is indeed very commendable. How many of us could even go that far? I suspect Peter expected some praises from Jesus for his gracious suggestion. However, he was in for a surprise.

Jesus' answer to Peter would have shocked him. He was to forgive "seventy-seven times," essentially meaning times without number. The point Jesus was making is not to remember how many times one forgives, but to continue to forgive. Peter may have been thinking of seven, the traditional number of perfection—but Jesus' number surpassed all ethical and societal norms.

To explain his point further, Jesus then told the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant.

## LISTENING TO THE PARABLE

For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, 'Pay what you owe.' Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. Then his lord summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?' And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart. (Matthew 18:23–35)

There are three scenes in this parable. The first scene opens with the king settling his accounts with his servants. A servant who owed 10,000 talents was brought to face the king.

This amount would have been a shock to the disciples. Let's consider how much the slave owed—a *talent* was a large sum of money, the equivalent of 6,000 denarii. A single denarius was a day's wages for a common labourer. Since a common labourer worked some 300 days a year (excluding the Sabbath), a talent would be worth nearly 20 years' wages.<sup>3</sup>

Multiplied by 10,000, the slave owed an amount equal to nearly 200,000 years' wages for one person, or a year's wages for 200,000 people. Translated into today's equivalent (assuming that an average worker earns RM1,000 a month in Malaysia), this amount would worth at least RM2,400,000,000.<sup>4</sup>

The figure of 10,000 talents was the biggest accounting figure in the first century. In other words, the amount owed by the servant was a truly astronomical figure. What servant could ever accumulate such a debt owed to a king? During Jesus' time, it was impossible for anyone to owe this amount and it was doubtful that even Herod the Great, one of the richest persons of his day, could have paid such a debt.

To give us an illustration of the monetary amount, let us consider the wealth of the local rulers. According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, the total annual revenue of Herod's territory was 900 talents.<sup>5</sup> As a comparison, the average price of a slave as sold in the open market those days was 500 to 2,000 denarii. Therefore, in the context of this parable, the use of this amount was hyperbolic—not meant to reflect what was reasonable, true to life or typical. It was done on purpose, to display actions that were surprising and outlandish, especially when the king forgave and cancelled such a debt.

It was obvious that the slave was not able to pay off the debt. The king wanted to sell the slave and his family. This was a fairly common practice where a person could be sold in order to repay a debt.<sup>6</sup> Immediately, the slave begged for the king's mercy and

asked for some time so he could pay back the debt. At this stage the story gets more unbelievable. How could this slave ever earn enough to pay such a huge debt?

At his begging, the king was moved with compassion. In v. 27, the NIV's translation "took pity" does not bring out the force of the meaning of the Greek word *splanchnizomai*. This word literally means 'to be moved with compassion'. It appears 12 times in the New Testament, and only in the Synoptic Gospels.<sup>7</sup> Apart from its use here and in two other parables in Luke,<sup>8</sup> the term is used exclusively in reference to Jesus or God, expressing divine compassion extended towards people that are in extreme and desperate circumstances, where divine help or a miracle is needed. In this parable and in the other two Lukan ones, the term is used in reference to persons who reflect divine compassion.

Since the king was moved with divine compassion, he "forgave him the debt." The use of the verb "to forgive" is significant. This is the usual word used for the act of forgiving sins<sup>9</sup> and the forgiveness of others (vv. 21, 35). As a result, the slave was able to walk away as a freedman.

Then scene two is unveiled. Here we see how the forgiven slave treats another slave who owes him some money. Fresh from having his debt cancelled, one would have imagined that the forgiven slave would be more thankful and gracious to others. However, this did not seem to be the case. He saw another slave who owed him 100 denarii, and he demanded that the debt be paid immediately.

The amount of 100 denarii was equivalent to four months' wages. If we calculate the ratio of the two debts, it would be immense, about 600,000 to 1.

However, we should not downplay the significance of this amount to an average Palestinian family, who lived in an agrarian

culture. It was by no means small. While the ratio may seem absurd, the debt remains significant.

This second slave who owed 100 denarii begged for some time for him to repay the debt—just as the first slave had done before the king! Jesus’ listeners would have anticipated the same of the forgiven slave: That he would cancel the far smaller debt. Instead, he had him thrown into prison.

The refusal of the unforgiving servant toward the request of his fellow servant was quick and the retaliation decisive. Putting one’s fellow servant in prison for debt was an act forbidden by Jewish law. One would expect a court procedure prior to imprisonment (compare Matthew 5:25–26 and Luke 12:58–59), which is not mentioned here. At this point, we see that the forgiven slave refused to exercise the power to forgive in his hands.

The story now shifts to the third scene. The friends of the victim didn’t like what they witnessed. As such, they gathered enough courage to report it to the king who then took decisive action. In this scene, we often focus on what the king did to the forgiven slave, and miss out the role his fellow slaves played in order to see justice being carried out. (The role the community played in this part of the parable is missed out in many popular commentaries.)

We have often heard it said that “to err is human, and to forgive is divine.” This has been used often in our pastoral counselling. Many times, I have heard a pastor or church leader say to the offended party, “You must forgive. God has commanded us to forgive.”

Yes, it is true that we are to forgive, and not to take revenge into our own hands. But imagine a rape victim who is told to forgive the person who raped her. Imagine a mother who is told to forgive the drunk driver who killed her son in a tragic car

accident. Imagine a pastor who is told to forgive the leader who has spread rumours about him to undermine his leadership.

The main problem is that all these calls to forgiveness are done without the community doing anything at all towards the people who committed the offence. It is easy to ask victims to forgive the persons who have hurt them beyond words could possibly express, yet we do not take it upon ourselves to ensure justice is meted out. We often neglect the emotional damage being done to the victims.

So the third scene illustrates for us what the community did to help the victim. The others reported to the king the injustice being done to their fellow servant. Next time you are tempted to simply ask others to forgive those who have hurt them, ask yourself: Are you giving that advice on the cheap? Are you willing to fight for justice for this person? Do you dare to confront the other party who has caused the hurt?

When the king heard what the unforgiving slave did to the other slave, he was furious. It was only right for the king to expect the slave who had had his debt cancelled to be generous in showing compassion to others. As a result of his unforgiveness, the king sent the slave to be tortured until he was able to pay his original debt.

## END STRESS

The ending of the parable forcefully brings home the point: “So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart” (Matthew 18:35). Since God had forgiven the disciples so lavishly, they ought to forgive others in the same way.

Surely the parable does not teach that forgiving others is a prerequisite or means for gaining God’s forgiveness. Therefore,

this parable seeks to move the disciples to forgive: Since you have been forgiven so much, how can you *not* forgive the other person?

At the same time, Jesus challenges the community to carry out acts of justice that are necessary, so that offences affecting its members will not recur in the future. Appropriate and concrete steps should be taken to see that justice is being carried out, within ethical and legal bounds.

### HEARING THE PARABLE AFRESH TODAY

No matter how deep the wound, there can still be forgiveness. If we have seen the magnitude of our sin towards God and what we are forgiven of, how can we not forgive those who have hurt us, be it intentionally or unintentionally?

Forgiveness does not mean that the hurt is less painful. Nor does it mean that what was done to us was okay, or that it should be condoned. What it does mean is that the victim has the power to choose to free the offender of their crime, and hold it against them no longer.

Jesus' teaching here is not about unconditional forgiveness. Neither is it about retaliation as the last resort. We need to connect the parable to Peter's question as well as its context based on Matthew 18:15–20, which is reconciliation. What is essentially wrong with Peter's questioning was the limit he was imposing forgiveness. Suggesting a maximum number of times to forgive indicated that Peter preferred to have the power to withhold or to dispense forgiveness.

Liberia, a small nation on the west coast of Africa, has suffered acts of violence from two civil wars—the first from 1989 to 1996, and the second from 1999 to 2003. These two prolonged conflicts have resulted in more than 250,000 deaths and many more left homeless.

The country was left in economic ruin, and even its capital, Monrovia, was left without electricity and running water. Many of its buildings and much infrastructure were destroyed.

During the civil war, people were recruited into the militias, and among their loyalty tests was to shoot their family members dead—be they parents, siblings or relatives. Bullet shell casings littered the streets, reminding observers of the devastation and hatred humanity can unleash. The nation was paralysed, and there seemed no way to move forward.

One day, Jonathan Worlobah, who worked at the Lutheran Centre, decided to do something with the bullet casings that were lying everywhere. Jonathan, like everyone else in Liberia, had had family members killed in the civil war. He decided to take the casings and craft them into the shape of the cross.

Since then, Jonathan has made many more crosses, enabling him to buy food for his family and send his children to school. I am very privileged to have been given one of those crosses—handcrafted from an instrument of death, they are today a powerful symbol of forgiveness, hope and peace. The crosses are a compelling testimony of how the gospel of Jesus Christ can transform and change lives.

If we look around us, I wonder if we see many bullet casings around us—casings of unforgiveness. Casings of wounded hearts and spirits. Casings of pride and prejudices. Casings of hurt and pain, of scarring words spoken by others. Casings of inconsiderate actions of others that left us deeply wounded. Casings of broken relationships between husband and wife, father and son, mother and daughter.

This parable encourages us to pick up all the 'bullet casings' in our lives and, with God's help, carve them into the shape of the cross so that there can be reconciliation, love, forgiveness and hope. Remember, the power to release forgiveness lies in

the hands of those offended. As people who have been offended, will we, as churches and individuals, allow God to help us so that we can not only be reconciled to God but also to one another?

In a nation like Malaysia, I have often wondered why we remain so fragmented in our ethnic and religious relations, after more than 50 years of independence. Today, ethnic relations are at their poorest. Although we seem to be living together peacefully, the harmony that we enjoy remains fragile. Almost everything we see, from political parties to education system, is divided according to ethnic, racial, language and religious divisions.

In light of the present situation, can there even be genuine ethnic reconciliation? Or is the power that drives us apart so strong that it cannot be restrained? I believe that if there is any real ethnic reconciliation at the national level, the church of Jesus Christ holds the key to lead the way forward. After all, aren't we people who have been reconciled to God and with one another? Isn't it through Christ our peace that the dividing walls of hostility between ethnic divisions have been broken down?<sup>10</sup>

Aren't we all one in Christ? Therefore, will the church be an extension of the balm of Gilead for the nation?

One of the most beautiful prayers offered at noon every weekday at Coventry Cathedral speaks powerfully of what the followers of Jesus could do. Perhaps we too could spend a moment to pray the Coventry Litany of Reconciliation:

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

The hatred which divides nation from nation, race from race, class from class, **Father forgive.**

The covetous desires of people and nations to possess what is not their own, **Father forgive.**

The greed which exploits the work of human hands and lays waste of the earth, **Father forgive.**

Our envy of the welfare and happiness of others, **Father forgive.**

Our indifference to the plight of the imprisoned, the homeless, the refugee, **Father forgive.**

The lust which dishonours the bodies of men, women and children, **Father forgive.**

The pride which leads us to trust in ourselves and not in God, **Father forgive.**

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Read Matthew 18:21–35.
  - a. In v. 21, what do you think is the motive Peter has in asking the question?
  - b. What does Peter's question reveal about his understanding of forgiveness?
2. Jesus tells Peter to forgive his brother seventy-seven times (v. 22). What does this number signify compared to Peter's suggestion to forgive seven times? What do you think Jesus is trying to say?
3. Based on the estimation above, 10,000 talents (v. 24) is equivalent to more than RM2,400,000,000 today, or 200,000 years of wages.

- a. What do you think of the servant’s request and promise in v. 26? Do you think it is possible for him to repay his debt?
  - b. The servant was not simply given an extension of time to repay his debt, which was all he had asked for. Instead, he was forgiven the entire debt. What does this reveal about the king? If you were the king, would you have done the same? If you were the servant, how would you have felt before and after the king cancelled your debt (vv. 25–27)?
4. A hundred denarii (v. 28) may seem like a small amount compared to 10,000 talents, but it was still a large sum to the average person in the times of Jesus.
- a. What lesson do you think Jesus intends by the sum?
  - b. How should the comparison of the two sums affect our view of the sins of others?
5. Think of someone who you have had difficulty forgiving. How would it help to compare their actions to those that God has forgiven you for? Take time to thank God for his forgiveness. Ask his help and strength in forgiving those who have hurt or offended you.
6. In light of the story of Coventry Cathedral, what role do you think your church can play in nation-building, particularly towards reconciliation and peace-building among various ethnic and religious groups? Suggest one or two tangible ways the church can be an extension of the balm of Gilead for the nation.

**FOR FURTHER STUDY**

1. There is a progression in this parable. The first part concerns the king’s dealing with his servant (Matthew 18:23–27). The second concerns that servant’s dealing with his fellow servant (vv. 28–31). The third concerns the king’s dealing with the unforgiving servant once more in the light of what happened (vv. 32–34). The final verse (v. 35) is an application.

To fully appreciate this parable, it would be good to make a comparison of the progression. What similarities and differences do you notice? What are some of your insights? The following chart may be of help.

<b>The Servant and the King</b>	
The situation	
The plea	
The king’s response	
<b>The Unforgiving Servant and Another Servant</b>	
The situation	
The plea	
The king’s response	
<b>The King and the Unforgiving Servant</b>	
The situation	
The king’s response	
<b>Application</b>	
Your response	

- Do a word study on the word translated “to be moved with compassion” in Matthew 18:27. This word, *splanchnizomai*, appears 12 times in the New Testament, all in the Synoptic Gospels.

Notice how the word is being used in all of these occurrences. In what situation or context is this word being used? What significance do you discover? What does this tell you about God?

“to be moved with compassion”	Situation/ context this word is used	Significance	Who demonstrated compassion?
Matthew 9:36			
Matthew 14:14			
Matthew 15:32			
Matthew 18:27			
Matthew 20:34			
Mark 1:41			
Mark 6:34			
Mark 8:2			
Mark 9:22			
Luke 7:13			
Luke 10:33			
Luke 15:20			

- Ross Mahoney, ‘To coventrate,’ *Thoughts on Military History*, 3 November 2011, at [https://thoughtsonmilitaryhistory.wordpress.com/2011/11/03/to-coventrate/#\\_ftn1](https://thoughtsonmilitaryhistory.wordpress.com/2011/11/03/to-coventrate/#_ftn1), accessed 21 January 2015.
- A video that beautifully captures the ruins, the rebuilding and the ministry of reconciliation of Coventry Cathedral can be seen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I39k4liafqQ>. As you watch this clip, pay attention to the timber cross where you see the words ‘Father Forgive’ being shown several times in this clip. Accessed on 30 November 2014.
- The footnote of Matthew 18:24 in the NRSV states that a talent was worth more than fifteen years’ wages of a labourer. The discrepancy in the counting of years could be due to the footnote omitting the weekly Sabbath rest for labourers.
- The NIV textual note reads, “That is, several million dollars.” This is misleading and surprisingly meagre, taking into consideration the calculation above.
- Josephus, *Ant.* 17:318–320.
- See Exodus 21:2; Leviticus 25:39; 2 Kings 4:1; Nehemiah 5:5; Isaiah 50:1.
- See Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 18:27; 20:34; Mark 1:41; 6:34; 8:2; 9:22; Luke 7:13; 10:33; 15:20.
- See Luke 10:25, the Parable of the Good Samaritan and Luke 15:20, the Parable of the Prodigal Son. For a study of the word *splanchnizomai*, refer to the section ‘For Further Study’.
- For examples, see Matthew 6:14–15; Mark 2:5–10; Luke 7:47–49; 11:4.
- See Ephesians 2:14–22.