

How many times?

Notes on the Bible readings

- Peter asks Jesus how many times someone should be forgiven, then offers his own suggested answer of seven times – more than double what was suggested by traditional Jewish teaching at the time. Jesus blows Peter's suggestion out of the water by saying not seven, but 77 times. This is not a suggestion that we should keep a strict tally, rather that we should forgive countless times.

- Jesus illustrates his point using a parable about a king forgiving one of his servant's debts, but the servant in turn not forgiving the much smaller debt of a fellow servant. To get a picture of the contrast here: if the 100 denarii debt was represented in 5p coins, it could be carried in one pocket. But the 10,000 talent debt would require about 8,500 people each carrying a bag of 5ps weighing 30kg. Jesus uses this contrast to show how great the forgiveness offered to us by God is.

- How might your life and your community be transformed if you lived with this attitude of forgiveness?

Forgiveness

Search through some recent newspapers and magazines for images or stories that either show forgiveness or situations that need forgiveness. Make a collage with stories/images, starting 'shows forgiveness' from one end and 'needs forgiveness' from the other. Will they meet in the middle? If they don't, what might that suggest?

Questions for reflection

- ▶ How many sweets do you think are in the jar?
- ▶ Is your 'jar' of forgiveness always full, like this one?
- ▶ What things can we do to nurture a forgiving attitude?



A prayer of approach

*Teach us, O God, how to treat you,
how to know you, how to love you,
how to learn of you,
how to do as you would have us do.
Teach us, above all,
how to show those same things to those around us,
and those whose lives meet ours,
those who rub alongside us each day,
and those who flit briefly by.
Amen.*

A prayer for others

*Jesus' parables inspire us to pray for those who forgive us,
for big things and small...
for those who do not forgive, no matter what...
for those who do not know how to forgive...
for those who do not want to forgive...
for those who have not been forgiven.
God of forgiveness, for them all, we pray.
Amen.*

A personal prayer

*I am not worthy, yet you love me, God.
I do not deserve so much and yet I have it.
I have many needs and before you I acknowledge them;
fill my life with your presence,
that others too may come to know your healing balm.
Amen.*

Live your faith

If anyone does something that annoys, angers or upsets you this week, try not to react immediately. Stop, count to seven – or even seventy-seven! – and make a decision to forgive them.