"God > My Bitterness"
Matthew 18
Small Group Plan

Put away from you all bitterness
— Ephesians 4:31 (NRSV)

See to it that no one misses the grace of God
and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.
— Hebrews 12:15 (NIV)

The heaviest thing to carry is a grudge.
— L. James Harvey

Never trust your tongue when your heart is bitter.
— Unknown

Resentment is like drinking poison
and then hoping it will kill your enemies.
— Nelson Mandela

Forgiveness is not an occasional act,
it is a constant attitude.
— Martin Luther King Jr.

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable
because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.
— C.S. Lewis

To live above, with the saints we love,
that will be grace and glory.
But, to live below, with the saints we know,
well, that's another story.
— Unknown

OPEN IT / INTRODUCE IT …

- Which of the above quotes or scriptures stands out to you? Explain.

- Describe the most forgiving person you have ever known?

LOOK AT IT / STUDY IT ...

— *PETER'S QUESTION* —
Matthew 18:21-22

²¹ Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" ²² Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

- How was Peter feeling about himself when he asked his question?

- Why do some have limits to their forgiveness while others have no limits?

- What does Jesus think about the whole concept of limiting forgiveness?

— *JESUS' PARABLE* —
Matthew 18:23-31

²³ "Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴ As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. ²⁵ Since 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.' ²⁷ The 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. ³¹ When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

- Why did Jesus choose money to illustrate the concept of forgiveness?

- Where in Jesus' story do you see the principles of generosity and kindness?

- What did the "*other servants*" see in the heart of unforgiving servant?

- What is going on in the life of a forgiven but unforgiving person?

- How does this parable speak to our anger when we are wronged?

<p style="text-align:center">*— OUR LESSON —*</p>
<p style="text-align:center">*Matthew 18:32-35*</p>

[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.* [33] *Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'* [34] *In 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."*

- Why are some of Jesus' sternest comments directed toward rigid, inflexible attitudes?

- Imagine and describe what Peter might have been thinking after hearing Jesus' answer to his question.

USE IT / APPLY IT …

- How can hurt lead to hate?

- What can keep hurt from becoming hate?

- How would you describe the high cost of being bitter?

- Think about the attitude of the unmerciful servant. How would Jesus respond to the following slogans that are widely spoken today?

<p style="text-align:center">*"An eye for and eye"*
"Business is business"
"He made his bed, now let him lie in it"</p>

- What happens to forgiveness when it is received but not extended?

- Close by asking God for a better understand of His amazing grace. Ask for an understanding that cannot be contained, but must be shared