

Peter was aware of this, but it sounded to him like Jesus meant he was to forgive more than three times. Therefore, he decides to be generous and little more than double the number of times the Jews said he was to forgive, and so he says to Jesus, "Lord, how (often) shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" We can detect the note of uncertainty in Peter's voice when he says, "Till seven times:" for he wasn't sure how many times Jesus wanted him to forgive. Jesus then says to him in verse 22, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven."

Once there were two children sitting in a church service. One was named Dick and the other Dorothy. They had an older brother who teased them all the time. On that Sunday they heard that story of Peter's question, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?" Then they heard Jesus' reply, "I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven." Dick figured out how much seventy times seven was, and then he exclaimed to Dorothy, "Look, it's four hundred and ninety times!" The children were silent for a moment, and then Dorothy said, "We'll keep a book and put in it every time we forgive him." "Yes, said Dick, "and when it's 490, let him look out!"

You see, Dick and Dorothy had a quota system of their own. They were going to forgive their older brother 490 times, but when he teased them the 491'st time, they weren't going to forgive him any more. But this isn't what Jesus meant when he told Peter that he was to forgive "seventy times seven" times. What then did Jesus Mean? He meant that Peter was to forgive an unlimited number of times. This is evident from the answer Jesus gives to Peter's question, for when Peter asks Jesus