

LAYAWAY

by Tracy Wells



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**CHRISTIAN PUBLISHERS
EDUCATIONAL SERIES**

LAYAWAY

Parable: The Unforgiving Servant

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SYNOPSIS: Joe can't pay his rent, but his landlord forgives his debt. Then at work, when a financially strapped woman can't pay off her son's birthday gift, Joe shows no mercy.

BIBLE VERSE: Matthew 18:23-35

CAST OF CHARACTERS*(3 either)*

TENANT (m/f) Tenant who has not paid his rent. *(55 lines)*

LANDLORD (m/f) Tenant's forgiving landlord who turns out to be his new boss. *(29 lines)*

SHOPPER (f/m)..... Shopper who just wants to get a gift for her son. *(25 lines)*

DURATION: 10 minutes

SETTING: Exterior of apartment building/layaway counter at a store.

TIME: Modern day.

SET

The set could be representational, with only a bank of apartment mailboxes and a garbage can to indicate apartment building on one side of the stage, and a long rectangular table with a sign reading "Layaway" hanging across it or above it on the store side. Additional set or prop items could be used if desired.

COSTUMES

Casual attire. TENANT should wear a watch and a red vest to don when working at layaway counter. LANDLORD wears casual clothes in apartment scene and a shirt and tie in counter scene with a badge that reads “Store Manager.”

PROPS

- ☐ Envelopes and other mail
- ☐ Small slips of paper
- ☐ Purse and contents of purse, including wallet with money
- ☐ Large box with image of train set on it
- ☐ Piece of paper attached to train box
- ☐ Pen

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Parables are earthly stories intended to reveal a heavenly meaning. They are by nature stories that people could relate to and which would inspire questions and discussion, thus providing the opportunity for revelation of the truth. We have brought these parables into present time where the listener can relate and once again ask questions, which will reveal the true meaning.

SCRIPTURE: Taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION ®. Copyright© 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™. Used by permission of Zondervan.

PARABLE: ²³Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. ²⁴As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. ²⁵Since 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. ²⁶At this the servant fell on his knees before him. “Be patient with me,” he begged, “and I will pay back everything.” ²⁷The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go. ²⁸But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. “Pay back what you owe me!” he demanded. ²⁹His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, “Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.” ³⁰But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. ³¹When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened. ³²Then the master called the servant in. “You wicked servant,” he said, “I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. ³³Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?” ³⁴In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. ³⁵This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.



AT START: *Lights come up on apartment scene and are down on Layaway counter. TENANT enters and crosses to mailbox, takes a stack of envelopes out of the mailbox, and rifles through them.*

TENANT: *(Looking at an envelope.) Water bill. (Shuffles it back into the pile and looks at another envelope.) Electricity bill. (Shuffles it back into the pile and looks at another envelope.) Heat. (Takes stack of envelopes and throws them into garbage can.) Sorry, guys—not this month! (Turns away from mailboxes.) Maybe if the new boss at work gives me a raise, I’ll be able to pay off some of my bills. I’ll really need to impress him today at work when I meet him. They say nothing can beat a good first impression.*

LANDLORD enters, unseen by TENANT.

TENANT: Well, I'm going to make the best first impression ever—
and I'm going to get that raise!

LANDLORD: I certainly hope so. You owe me rent for the last six months.

TENANT: *(Turns and sees LANDLORD. Nervously.)* Oh, I didn't see you there.

LANDLORD: *(Sternly.)* You've been avoiding me.

TENANT: No, I haven't. I swear!

LANDLORD: Then why do you practically run out the door every time I enter the lobby?

TENANT: I'm just busy. So much to do, so little time. *(Tries to exit past LANDLORD, who blocks his path every time.)* In fact, I really must get to work, so if you would excuse me—

TENANT gets past LANDLORD, but LANDLORD stops him.

LANDLORD: You're not going to get past me this time. You owe me six months' back rent, and I want to be paid. *(Holds out his hand, waiting for payment.)*

TENANT: *(Upset.)* But I don't have it! I've had a lot of unexpected expenses come up lately.

LANDLORD: *(Crossing his arms and rolling his eyes.)* Unexpected expenses—like the brand-new car you have parked outside?

TENANT: *(With a wink.)* She's a beauty, isn't she? You should see all the features that car has!

LANDLORD: Oh, I will. Right after I evict you from your apartment and take your car as repayment for your debts.

TENANT: You can't do that!

LANDLORD: Oh, yes I can. And I will. *(Crosses to mailbox, pulls out stack of envelopes, and sorts through them, dismissively.)* I have half a mind to call the cops and have you forcibly removed right this minute.

TENANT: *(Rushes to LANDLORD, falls to his knees, grabs LANDLORD'S arm and begs.)* Please, sir, don't call the cops!

LANDLORD: Pay me my rent.

TENANT: Please, sir, don't evict me!

LANDLORD: (*Louder.*) Pay me my rent.

TENANT: Please, sir, don't take my car!

LANDLORD: (*Looks down at TENANT and yells.*) Pay me my rent!

TENANT: (*Falls into a heap, sobbing.*) I'm sorry! I know I've made bad choices in my life. I should've made a budget and stuck to it. I should've prioritized my bills ahead of fun. If I could take it all back, I would—but I can't! (*Holds his hands up, as if he is waiting for handcuffs to be placed on them. He looks down at the ground.*) I guess I deserve what's about to happen. Call the cops if you must. I'm ready to face my punishment for not paying my rent.

LANDLORD: (*Pauses a moment in thought, then takes TENANT'S hands in his.*) That won't be necessary.

TENANT looks up, surprised, as LANDLORD helps him stand.

TENANT: Really?

LANDLORD: I know you are a decent person with a good heart. We all make bad choices that we regret sometimes.

TENANT: I do regret my choices, honestly!

LANDLORD: I can see that. That's why I'm going to forgive your debts.

TENANT: Forgive them?

LANDLORD: Sometimes what a person really needs is a fresh start to get back on their feet, and that's what I'm going to give to you. As of right now, consider your rent paid in full.

TENANT: (*Throwing his arms around LANDLORD, happily.*) Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!

LANDLORD: (*Chuckling.*) It's quite all right. Just do me a favor.

TENANT: (*Pulling back and looking at LANDLORD. Solemnly.*) Anything.

LANDLORD: Remember how you felt when you thought you were going to lose everything, and make sure you never find yourself in that position again.

TENANT: I won't—not ever again, thanks to you. (*Starts to exit.*)

LANDLORD: Oh! And one more thing.

TENANT: *(Turns back.)* What is it?

LANDLORD: If you can help someone else from losing everything, make sure you do.

TENANT: I can do that. *(LANDLORD exits. TENANT wipes his brow.)* Phew! That was a close call. *(Looks at his watch.)* Speaking of close calls, I'm about to be late for work.

TENANT rushes Off-stage. Lights dim on apartment scene and come up on layaway counter. TENANT enters, crosses behind counter, and dons red vest.

TENANT: I hope I make a good first impression on my new boss. I'm willing to make some changes in my life, but I'm going to need that raise to do it.

SHOPPER enters carrying purse. She approaches the counter.

SHOPPER: I'm here to check on the status of an item I have on layaway.

TENANT: Can I have your layaway slip?

SHOPPER: Sure. It's in here somewhere. *(Puts her purse on the counter and rifles through it.)*

TENANT: *(Annoyed.)* Take your time. It's all right. I've got nothing better to do.

SHOPPER: I'm sorry. I know I have that slip. *(Holding up her purse.)* Do you mind?

TENANT: Be my guest.

SHOPPER: *(Dumps contents of purse on the counter.)* I guess I should've found it before I left the house.

TENANT: *(Sarcastically.)* You think?

SHOPPER: *(Holding up slip of paper and hands it to TENANT.)* Here it is!

TENANT: *(Reading slip.)* This is a coupon for one free small fries from the Burger Shack.

SHOPPER: *(Embarrassed, grabs slip from TENANT and stuffs it in her purse.)* Sorry about that. I forgot I had that in there. My friends say I'd forget my head if it wasn't attached to my body.

TENANT: (*Annoyed.*) Hilarious.

SHOPPER: (*Holding up slip of paper.*) Here it is! This is the right paper.

TENANT: (*Takes paper and reads it.*) Yep, this is it. It says here you have a train set on layaway. Is that right?

SHOPPER: Yes, it is. It's for my son's birthday. He's three years old and absolutely obsessed with trains. His party is tonight. I can't wait to give it to him.

TENANT: I'll just grab it and then we can finalize the sale.

TENANT puts down slip and starts to look around behind the counter while SHOPPER returns the rest of her purse contents to her purse. TENANT continues to look, then sees it.

TENANT: Ah, yes—here it is. (*Picks up large box with image of train set on it and sets it on the counter for SHOPPER, audience, and himself to look at.*) This is a great train set.

SHOPPER: I looked all over for the perfect set, and this is it. Unfortunately it was a little out of my price range, but luckily your store has this great layaway program.

TENANT: It sure does.

SHOPPER: Truthfully, just about everything is out of my price range these days. It's been a tough year. (*Looking down.*) First my husband passed away, which was especially hard on my son. (*Turning away from counter.*) I was a stay-at-home mom, so we relied on his income. He didn't make a lot of money, but it was enough to keep us fed and happy and comfortable. It wasn't enough for extra life insurance, though, and the little that he had went to pay for funeral expenses. So of course I had to go back to work. But it's hard to find a job that makes a decent wage when you haven't worked in over three years.

TENANT: Tell me about it. This job doesn't pay me near enough for the life I want to lead.

SHOPPER: So you can understand how important this gift will be to my son. There hasn't been enough extra money to get him everything he wants and needs. We aren't really even having a birthday party—just a simple cake I made and a few presents from some family. And of course—this train set.

TENANT: Well, let's wrap up this sale then. (*Takes layaway paper off of train box and examines it.*) It looks like the original price for this item was one hundred dollars.

SHOPPER: That's right. It was expensive, but worth it to see the look on my son's face when he opens it tonight.

TENANT: (*Reading slip.*) And you've been paying ten dollars a month.

SHOPPER: Yes. Ten dollars every month on the fifteenth—right when I get my paycheck.

TENANT: Are you ready to make your final payment today?

SHOPPER: I sure am.

SHOPPER takes wallet out of purse and pulls out money and hands it to TENANT. LANDLORD enters unseen by TENANT. LANDLORD now wears a shirt and tie and has a badge that says "Store Manager."

SHOPPER: Here's my ten dollars for this month.

TENANT: Great. (*Takes money. He looks at slip.*) Then it looks like you just owe me ten more dollars to finish up the sale.

SHOPPER: Ten more dollars? What do you mean? I thought I was all paid up as of today.

TENANT: (*Looking at slip.*) Our records show that you paid ten dollars a month for the last eight months. (*Holds up money.*) This is your ninth payment, bringing you to a grand total of ninety dollars paid. You still owe us ten dollars.

SHOPPER: (*Upset.*) That can't be right! I could've sworn I put this train set on hold ten months ago, not nine.

TENANT: Well, you must've forgotten. You did say you had a bad memory.

SHOPPER: I tried so hard to make sure I would have this paid off on time. Now what am I going to do?

TENANT: You're going to have to pay me ten more dollars if you want the train set.

SHOPPER: *(Nearly crying.)* But I don't have ten more dollars!

TENANT: Then I'm sorry, but I can't give you this train set.

TENANT starts to put the train set back behind the counter, but SHOPPER tries to grab it from him.

SHOPPER: Please! Don't do this.

TENANT: Let go! You haven't finished paying for this yet.

SHOPPER: But I need it today! *(Grabs box from TENANT.)*

TENANT: Then you need to pay me ten more dollars.

TENANT crosses around counter and grabbing box from SHOPPER. They each try and pull the box away from the other one, engaging in a push/pull battle with the box.

SHOPPER: *(Pulling box.)* But I don't have any more money.

TENANT: *(Pulling box.)* Then you can't have the train.

SHOPPER: *(Pulling box, crying out.)* I have to have this train. Please just let me have this gift for my son!

TENANT: *(Pulling box.)* That's not how layaway works.

SHOPPER: *(Pulling box, sobbing.)* I'll bring in ten dollars next month, I swear!

TENANT: *(Pulling box.)* Lady, you are not getting this train set today!

TENANT successfully pulls box out of her hands. SHOPPER falls to a heap on the floor and starts crying while TENANT holds box up over his head triumphantly.

TENANT: Welcome to layaway—where you get your item only if you can actually pay for it. *(Crosses to stand behind counter and holds up his hand to signal to next customer.)* Next in line!

LANDLORD crosses to TENANT.

LANDLORD: What is going on here?

TENANT: (*Surprised. Puts box down on counter.*) What are you doing here? (*Sees badge.*) And why are you wearing a badge that says “Store Manager”?

LANDLORD: I'm the new boss that you were so anxious to meet.

TENANT: But you're my landlord!

LANDLORD: Not anymore I'm not.

TENANT: What do you mean?

LANDLORD: (*Crossing to SHOPPER and helping her up.*) I saw the way you treated this woman. She was on the verge of losing what mattered to her most—a gift for her son—and you treated her without kindness or compassion.

TENANT: I was just following store policy! I wanted to impress my new boss—to impress you!

LANDLORD: What would have impressed me is if you had followed my advice to help someone in need, just the way I helped you earlier when I forgave your missing rent. (*Taking box and handing it to SHOPPER.*) Here, take this train set for your son. Consider it paid in full.

SHOPPER: (*Taking LANDLORD'S hand in hers.*) Thank you, sir. Your kindness has saved my son's birthday. (*Hugs box close to her chest and exits.*)

LANDLORD: (*Angrily, to TENANT.*) And you can consider yourself fired.

TENANT: Fired? But if you fire me, I'll never be able to pay rent.

LANDLORD: Then I have something for you. (*Crosses behind counter, picking up layaway slip and writes on it the words “EVICTION NOTICE” in large letters.*) Here's your eviction notice.

TENANT: Evicted!? But why?

LANDLORD: I told you earlier today that when you had a chance to help someone in need, to make sure you did just that. But when that shopper came to you asking for help to make sure her son got a special birthday present, you turned your back on her.

TENANT: Can't you give me another chance? I promise I'll do better next time.

LANDLORD: I'm afraid not.

TENANT: But where will I live?

LANDLORD: That's not my problem. (*Smiles and points to "LAYAWAY" sign.*) Welcome to the layaway department, where you get to keep your apartment only if you can actually pay for it!

TENANT: But—

LANDLORD: (*Interrupting him and looking past him, holding up his hand.*) Next in line!

TENANT puts his head down and exits as lights blackout.

THE END



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