

"Increase Our Faith"

Lesson Scope: [Luke 17 to 18:1-8](#)

References in brackets refer to Luke 17 & 18:1-8 unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus

As Jesus made his way to Jerusalem (17:11), He continued teaching His disciples and preparing them for His departure. The disciples, awed by the force of Jesus' teaching to the Pharisees (chapter 16), were brought to a crossroads in their own personal lives (17:4). How could they forgive when trespasses came unnumbered against them? The only realistic answer was for them to say to their Lord, "Increase our faith." And Jesus, seeing this spark of faith in their lives, opened to them the avenues through which faith could sprout and flourish in their lives.

A pressure Christians have faced throughout time is to ascribe to a faith without discipleship. The call for sincere Christians is to daily crucify self, face life's trials victoriously, and continue striving to endure in our march of faith.

The disciples' request "Lord, Increase our faith" follows Jesus' statement on forgiveness. We, like the disciples, can say we forgive, but what about the repeated personal offenses? Our faith is measured by the readiness with which we forgive.

Humans place themselves on varying levels of what they consider ranks of importance. Jesus' calling is for all mankind to become humble servants, doing the Father's will. Doing the will of God should be a heartfelt response to what He has done for us.

All believers yearn to endure to the end. This attitude is not sufficient in itself but needs persistent prayer and sincere discipleship. Be sure to explore the contrast between God's goodness and the judge's impatience with mankind's needs.

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ produces willing obedience. The Lord delights in rewarding the faith of His servants.

Lesson Aim: To see evidences of living faith.

Theme Verse: [Hebrews 11:6](#). But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Lesson Text

Faith for Daily Life

[Luke 17:1-10](#) Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! ² It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones. ³ Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. ⁴ And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. ⁵ And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. ⁶ And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. ⁷ But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? ⁸ And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? ⁹ Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. ¹⁰ So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.

Faith for Trials

[Luke 17:12-19](#) And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off: ¹³ And they lifted up *their* voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. ¹⁴ And when he saw *them*, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed. ¹⁵ And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, ¹⁶ And fell down on *his* face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan. ¹⁷ And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where *are* the nine? ¹⁸ There are not found

that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger. ¹⁹ And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

Faith for Endurance

Luke 18:1-8 And he spake a parable unto them *to this end*, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; ²Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: ³And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. ⁴And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; ⁵Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. ⁶And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. ⁷And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? ⁸I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?

Questions for Study

Faith for Daily Life

1. List some offenses that "will come" and tell why these are such a reproach to Christ.
2. Since offenses are to be avoided, why did Jesus challenge us to such a high calling in forgiveness?
3. What may be some indications that someone has not truly forgiven?
4. How does one's view of self affect one's response to the duty described in 17:10?

Faith for Trials

5. How did the lepers express their faith?
6. How might we be guilty of not giving proper glory to God?

Faith for Endurance

7. What conditions are necessary for God to "avenge his own elect"?
8. Why is persistent prayer essential to Christian experience?

Analyzing the Passage

Offenses are inevitable; they present themselves as words or actions that could influence others to sin. Perhaps even unintentional offenses will come to trip these little ones (the weak or young in the faith). Jesus' teaching is directed to the one who brings this offense.

"Increase our faith" follows Jesus' teachings that forgiveness should not be measured by man's standard and that man should extend unlimited forgiveness. Jesus' answer shows that the quality of faith is more important than the quantity of faith.

Faith is exemplified by an attitude of servanthood. Jesus is clear that human obedience to God does not put God in debt to man. Trow not means "think or suppose not." Stranger literally means "from another race of people." Here was a man forbidden to enter the temple's inner confines, yet Jesus could say, "Thy faith hath made thee whole."

In order to endure, a man of faith must avail himself in prayer so that he does not faint, or loose heart. In this parable of contrasts, Jesus is showing how God's response is so different from that of the unjust judge.

Principles and Applications

Faith for Daily Life

1. How we relate to others reveals the quality of our faith (17:1-2). Every man is personally responsible to God for his influence on others' lives. Negative circumstances will influence our lives, but the man of faith looks beyond these trials to God's promises.
2. Living faith enables a man to forgive the one who has offended him (173, 4). Jesus commands us to forgive even if we are wronged repeatedly. "Seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22) suggests unlimited forgiveness. Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Failure to forgive results in dire consequences. "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:15).
3. Living faith yearns for active growth (17:5). As the man of faith expands his knowledge in the teachings of Christ, a sense of need arises within his soul. The magnitude of Christ's calling in forgiveness leads him to plead for assistance. Our finite weakness is the very reason we need infinite help. "For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you" (2 Corinthians 13:4).
4. Living faith increases as one steps out in trusting obedience (17:6). Even the smallest act of faith when coupled with the power of God can produce results that seem impossible. Only through faith can we do anything, "for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13).

5. Living faith willingly stoops to be a servant for the Lord (17:7-10). Every Christian must allow the great sacrifice of our Lord to stir him to a life of serving. An attitude of humility is necessary in serving others. "We are unprofitable servants" (17:10). Jesus is clear that human service does not put God in debt to man. Rather, man must see Christian service as his duty.

Faith for Trials

6. Living faith identifies Jesus as the only source of help (17:13). Sin-sick man, prone only to a downward course of death, must realize salvation is not in himself. His need for healing draws from his heart the words "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." Salvation can be experienced only by the healing power of Christ.

7. Living faith promptly obeys our Lord's commands (17:14). Perhaps we might think that our method is better than the Lord's. But if we expect to have His blessing, we must abide by His means and methods, even if it seems unlikely to succeed. Faith sees His ways as best.

8. Living faith is expressed in thanksgiving (17:15, 16). Thankfulness should ever spring from the Christian's heart and lips. When the man of faith experiences the cleansing power of God, his response should be overwhelming thanksgiving. God's continuing sanctification in our lives hinges on our attitude of thanksgiving.

Faith for Endurance

9. Living faith is strengthened by a vibrant prayer life (18:1). We are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Persistent prayer reveals man's depth of faith in God. He desires to hear us voice our helplessness and need of Him in all circumstances. "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16).

10. Living faith perseveres in spite of being in the minority (18:7, 8). God's elect are people who cry day and night unto Him. The question is not God's faithfulness. It is whether believers will persist in supplication (18:7) or whether their patience and perseverance will give out before Christ finally returns (18:8). The man of faith views the goal of eternity as a motivation for daily faithfulness.

Important Teachings

1. How we relate to others reveals the quality of our faith (17:1-2).

2. Living faith enables a man to forgive the one who has offended him (17:3-4).
3. Living faith yearns for active growth (17:5).
4. Living faith increases as one steps out in trusting obedience (17:6).
5. Living faith willingly stoops to be a servant for the Lord (17:7-10).
6. Living faith identifies Jesus as the only source of help (17:13).
7. Living faith promptly obeys our Lord's commands (17:14).
8. Living faith is expressed in thanksgiving (17:15-16).
9. Living faith is strengthened by a vibrant prayer life (18:1).
10. Living faith perseveres in spite of being in the minority (18:7-8).

Answers to Questions

1. List some offenses that "will come" and tell why these are such a reproach to Christ.

These are the stumbling blocks people place in other's lives. Inconsistencies in Christians or excuses for one's weaknesses can discourage those who are weak in the faith. Hypocrisy in the lives of those in leadership brings insecurity. Moral abuse and anger can offend a soul to bitterness. Unguarded words bring hurt feelings and discouragement.

Souls with an eternal destiny are at stake. The influence of one person can carry for multiple generations. "Little ones" can easily be offended by even one small offense.

2. Since offenses are to be avoided, why did Jesus challenge us to such a high calling in forgiveness?

Offenses are inevitable. They will come; therefore forgiveness will be necessary in life. Multiple trespasses will come from perhaps the same person. Multiple forgiveness is needed. Forgiveness, unlike offense, is not natural for man. It takes a change of heart with the indwelling love of Christ.

3. What may be some indications that someone has not truly forgiven?

When someone tallies and remembers the offenses, he has not truly forgiven. If someone cannot rebuild trust in the one who trespassed against him, perhaps he has not forgiven. Indicators may range from harboring a vindictive spirit to purposely avoiding the supposed offender.

4. How does one's view of self affect one's response to the duty described in 17:10?

Humility is necessary in all of Christian service. Without a right attitude toward oneself, our duties may be drudgery. We are in debt to God, not He in debt to us. Therefore we will see ourselves as unprofitable servants.

5. How did the lepers express their faith?

They recognized who Jesus was and what He could accomplish in their lives. They did not allow personal affliction, status, or race to affect their determination to reach Christ. Faith was expressed best by their ready obedience to Christ's command to go show themselves to the priest.

6. How might we be guilty of not giving proper glory to God?

God receives glory by prompt obedience to His directives. Heartfelt thanksgiving can be verbally expressed through singing and other forms of worship. By not grasping and experiencing Jesus' provision personally, one becomes unthankful for the great price that has been paid for his salvation.

7. What conditions are necessary for God to "avenge his own elect"?

We must persist in prayer to God for our requests. We must have faith that God hears and will answer according to His will. We must see our helpless state before our almighty God.

8. Why is persistent prayer essential to Christian experience?

Persistent prayer is a gauge to the depth of faith in a man's life. Faith on the earth is determined by the Christian's connection to God, which shows the sincerity of the believer's experience.

Summarizing the Lesson

A living faith requires obedience, humility, and complete surrender to God's terms. It is a faith that endures the pressures of time and seeks the blessing of God. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

Research Guide

1. Study Hebrews 11:1-2. This passage explains that to have living faith, one needs to be active in his Christian life.
2. Look up faith in Nave's Topical Bible. Man's need of faith is made obvious by the great number of Scriptures referring to faith.