



## Lessons on Forgiveness, Gratitude, and the Kingdom Luke 17

### Introduction

As Jesus began His final journey to Jerusalem, He still had much to teach His disciples and time was short. They needed to know about inevitable offenses, forgiveness, duty in service, and the coming kingdom. The Pharisees continued to hover around Him to promote discussion.

### Outline of Luke 17

- I. Offenses, Forgiveness, and Faith - Luke 17:1-6
- II. Obedience and Gratitude - Luke 17:7-19
- III. Observations on the Kingdom - Luke 17:20-37

### I. Offenses, Forgiveness, and Faith - Luke 17:1-6

- A. Offenses and Offenders - Luke 17:1-4; Matthew 18:7,15
  - 1. Offenses inevitable - 17:1

Jesus told His disciples, "*It is impossible that no offenses should come.*" Difficulties and disasters are inevitable, or as Job said, "*Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward*" (Job 5:7). Offenses are things that cause people to stumble or sin. We all encounter stumbling blocks. No one escapes them. They are part of life and we must learn to cope with them.

- 2. Offenders accountable - 17:1-2

*"But woe to him through whom they do come!"* The person who perpetrates the offense will be held accountable. Death by drowning in the sea with a millstone around one's neck, or mutilation, is better than causing a little one, young in years or young in faith, to sin (Matthew 18:6-10). Be careful of causing a child or a new believer to stumble. Their faith is precious and needs to be developed. They are like tender plants, needing to be nourished. It is a terrible thing for adults (or mature believers) to lead the immature astray by bickering, doubting, divorce, indulging in pornography, violent TV, sex-filled movies, foul language, or bad habits such as alcohol and drug abuse. What else can you name?

- 3. Dealing with offenders - 17:3-4

Jesus gives instructions on how to relate to one who offends in such ways.

- a. Rebuke - verse 3

*"If your brother sins against you, rebuke him."* Later, the apostle Paul wrote, if you see another believer sinning, *you who are spiritual* are to restore such a one *in a spirit of gentleness*. He adds that the one who is restoring ought to be careful not to fall into the same sin (Galatians 6:1). Christians have a communal, or family, duty to rebuke in love, with the object being to restore errant fellow believers. In Matthew 18:15-20, Jesus gives the orderly procedure for doing this.

- b. Forgive - verses 3-4

*"If he repents, forgive him."* Many people find it easier to rebuke than to forgive. But a person who is genuinely sorry and wants to change must be genuinely forgiven. Forgiving means wiping the slate clean and moving on. Even if he comes to you every hour on the hour to repent of a new offense, Jesus says you must forgive him. This is developed more fully in Jesus' great answer to Peter's question regarding forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35. Are you more quick to forgive or to find fault, to restore or to rebuke?

- B. Disciples and Faith - Luke 17:5-6

- 1. Increased faith needed

This teaching was too much for the disciples. They responded, "*Lord, increase our faith.*" How difficult the task to forgive habitual offenders seven times a day! But how many times daily do you need God's forgiveness?

- 2. Not quantity but quality needed

The Lord said it was not more faith that was needed, but real faith. "*If you have faith as small as a mustard seed...this mulberry tree...would obey you.*" The mustard seed was the smallest seed known to Palestinian farmers and that is all the faith needed.

Faith is believing God when you cannot see the outcome. Faith can be small as a seed but it must be real. Faith moves mountains and believes nothing is impossible (Matthew 17:20). "Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees and looks to God alone. Laughs at impossibilities and cries, 'It shall be done!'" (Hymn by Charles Wesley, 1742).

How is your faith? Are you taking a promise of God as your security in your current circumstances, as king

David did in his circumstances and as the apostle Paul did in his? Do you believe God is able to make all grace abound to you (2 Corinthians 9:8)? *He is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think* (Ephesians 3:20). What problem are you facing today? Take it to the Lord for He has grace for even that!

## II. Obedience and Gratitude - Luke 17:7-19

### A. Obedience - Luke 17:7-9

Jesus posed a situation to the apostles to illustrate his teaching on duty and thankfulness. He used the example of a servant.

#### 1. Illustration - 17:7-9

Suppose one of them had a servant who came in from a full day of plowing or herding sheep. Would the servant be invited to sit down and eat, or would he be expected to prepare the supper and serve it while they ate and drank? Would they even thank the servant after he had done what he was told to do? The implied answer was, "Of course not! Those are the things that servants do." (We must remember the master/slave society of that day and not impose our modern understanding of relationships.)

#### 2. Application - 17:10

Jesus said to them, "*So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty'*" (NIV). What is duty? It is what is expected of us. Lord Wellington said to his men going into the battle of Waterloo, "England expects every man to do his duty." They did, and Napoleon's strength was broken at Waterloo. Their duty was to give their all, to fight to the finish.

Paul said he could not boast about preaching the gospel because it was a necessity laid upon him, adding, *Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel* (1 Corinthians 9:16)! Do you expect special treatment and commendation for serving the Lord? Or do you have a servant's heart that considers it a privilege to serve the One who died for you? Do you look forward to doing what pleases you after you do a few things for Christ? Do you quit if no one thanks you for what you do in the church or other Christian ministry? For Paul, the end of his race was the end of his life. *I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith* (2 Timothy 4:6-7). Paul did what God told him to do and he did not stop until his life on earth was over. How long are you able to do what God tells you before taking a break and doing what you want to do? How could you be more like the apostle Paul?

### B. Gratitude - Luke 17:11-19

Jesus traveled toward Jerusalem after His great Galilean ministry ended (Luke 9:51). He toured Judea and Perea, across the Jordan, and ministered in and around Jerusalem. Now it was the final leg of His journey to Jerusalem. From the border between Samaria and Galilee, He joined the pilgrims trekking to Jerusalem for the Passover feast.

#### 1. An encounter with ten lepers - 17:11-13

In an unnamed village, ten lepers met Him. They *stood afar off*, at the prescribed distance, and said loudly, "*Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!*"

#### 2. Obedience - Luke 17:14

Jesus saw them and said, "*Go, show yourselves to the priests.*" This is the same command He had given to the leper at the beginning of His ministry (Luke 5:12-14), except He had told that leper to show himself to the priest after he was healed (Leviticus 13:1-3; 14:2). These ten were told to go as lepers. What were they to show the priest? No healing had occurred. But, having nothing to lose, they obeyed.

#### 3. Cleansing - 7:14

As they obeyed and went, all ten lepers were changed. While they limped along, the miracle occurred. Maybe one looked at another and saw that he was no longer leprous. He was clean. As they stared at each other, they began to realize that a miracle of healing was taking place. Now they had something to show to the priest! Their journey changed from hopelessness to joy. If we obeyed God more completely, would we have more miracles? Is your attitude hopelessness or faith?

#### 4. Two attitudes - Luke 17:15-19

The next incident illustrates two different attitudes of people in the light of God's blessings bestowed.

##### a. Thanks - verses 15-16

*One of them* (one of the lepers), *when he saw he was healed*, did three things. First, he *returned*. He went back to Jesus, praising God. Second, he *fell down on his face at His* (Jesus') *feet*. Third, he thanked Him. This set him apart from the others. Furthermore, he was not even an Israelite, but a Samaritan.

##### b. Ingratitude - verses 17-19

Jesus expressed surprise that the leper was alone, for had not all ten been cleansed? Did only the foreigner return and give praise to God? Jesus asked, "*Were*

*there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"* Telling him to rise and go, Jesus credited his healing to his faith.

Are you also shocked at the ingratitude of the nine, even as Jesus was. But are people today any different? How often do you remember to thank God for His many daily blessings? What will you thank Him for at this moment? What will you thank Him for this evening when you go to bed? What will you thank Him for in the morning when you awaken? What if you woke up in the morning with only the things you had thanked Him for today?

### III. Observations on the Kingdom of God - Luke 17:20-37

#### A. To The Pharisees - Luke 17:20-21

At this time, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. His answer has two parts.

##### 1. Do not look for it - 17:20

*"The kingdom of God does not come with observation."* The Pharisees knew that the kingdom of God was promised (Deuteronomy 30:3). After all the healings and miracles they had witnessed, Jesus' answer borders on saying, if you cannot see it, do not look for it. The kingdom of God is not a physical, observable kingdom. It is not a kingdom about which people will say, *"See here!"* or, *"See there!"* It is not in a geographical location such as a temple or a city. Curiously, Jesus' disciples had the same question both before and after His resurrection (Luke 19:11-12; Acts 1:6). They persisted in looking for the restored Davidic kingdom.

##### 2. "In your midst" - 17:21

On the other hand, Jesus said, *"The kingdom of God is in your midst"* (NASB). Jesus is the personification of the kingdom because He is God. Where Jesus is, the kingdom is. But somehow they missed it.

The New King James Version, along with some others reads, *"The kingdom of God is within you."* This is also true since the Holy Spirit has been given, for the Spirit of Christ dwells within each believer (1 Corinthians 3:16). The kingdom of God is both within us and in our midst.

#### B. To The Disciples - Luke 17:22-25

Jesus turned and spoke to His disciples. *"The days will come when you will desire to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it."* No doubt, when

the persecutions came and the disciples suffered for Christ they wished for His appearing and return, as many have done down through the ages to the present day. Herschel Hobbs says, "The kingdom of God is a present reality and a future hope" ([Bible Studies for Life](#)). We are a part of it, but there is more to come. Do you sometimes wish the Lord Jesus would return and usher in His kingdom now? The time is set, even though Jesus said, *"Of that day and hour no one knows but My Father only"* (Matthew 24:36).

##### 1. Knowing the time - 17:23

*"They will say to you, 'Look here!' or 'Look there!' Do not go after them or follow them."* Date-setters are to be avoided. Jesus could return today or a thousand years from now. Our duty as believers is to be ready, not to set dates.

##### 2. As obvious as lightning - 17:24

*"For as the lightning which flashes..."* One thing is certain. The return of Christ to judge the world and usher in His kingdom, referred to here as the *Days of the Son of Man* (17:22), will be obvious to all. It will be as brilliant and startling as lightning. *"So also the Son of Man will be in His day."*

##### 3. Suffering and rejection - 17:25

Before the fullness of the kingdom could occur, Christ had to *"suffer many things and be rejected by His generation."* Necessary events had to take place. Jesus had to be rejected, crucified, resurrected, and ascend before He could return. God has a plan.

#### C. For Us Also - Luke 17:26-36

##### 1. Sudden - 17:26-30

Jesus spoke of the end times which are future to us also. There will be preceding events, but the final event will be sudden. He gives two Biblical, historical examples.

###### a. Flood in Noah's day - verses 26-27

Conditions in the days of the Son of Man will be similar to those of Noah's day. People will be occupied with eating and drinking, marrying and preparing weddings. Noah's generation was busy with normal activities, too busy to heed or prepare. Suddenly, but not without warning, the flood came and destroyed them all.

###### b. Destruction in Lot's day - verses 28-29

Also in Lot's day, *"They ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built."* They were caught

up in the material and preoccupied with the secular. They had no intention of changing their lifestyle. But on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone and destroyed them all. It will be much the same when the Son of Man is revealed to all people. Are you looking and living for Jesus, or are you willing to suffer sin's consequences? Will you dare to be different from the world? See 1 Thessalonians 5:1-9!

## 2. Separation - 17:31-36

### a. From goods - verse 31

*"In that day, he who is on the housetop, and his goods are in the house, let him not come down to take them away."* Everything must be left. Time will have run out. Even if something could be saved, what would you do with it? The history of this world and of man's ways in it will be ended.

### b. Example of Lot's wife - verse 32

*"Remember Lot's wife."* In blatant disobedience to the angel she looked back to the way of life that was forever gone (Genesis 19:26).

### c. Self-preservation is self-destruction - verses 33-34

*"Whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it."* Jesus had said this before (Matthew 10:39). Lot's wife had tried to save her life and lost it. Christ's followers who were willing to die for Him will find the true meaning of life and receive renewed life. In which group are you?

### d. From those unprepared - verse 35-36

The day of judgment will be a time of separation as it was for Noah and Lot. Day or night will make no

difference. Two as close as being in bed at night will be separated. Two at work in the daytime, indoors in the mill or outdoors in the field, will be separated. The separation is either to judgment or to salvation.

## D. Disciples Ask "Where"? - Luke 17:37

### 1. "Where the body is...."

The disciples wanted to know "where?" in order to avoid the place this was going to happen. Jesus gave an answer so enigmatic that it is puzzling to this day. *"Wherever the body is, there the eagles will be gathered together."* What *body* does He mean? The same quotation in Matthew uses the word *carcass* instead of *body* (Matthew 24:28).

### 2. Eagles

Especially in Jesus' day, it was easy to locate a carcass because carrion birds could be seen from great distances circling overhead (Job 39:27-30). The picture of the carcass and the eagle makes two points. First, when Christ returns to usher in the kingdom of God, everyone will be able to see. Secondly, it will also be a time of judgment.

## Applications

1. In what ways can you put the spiritual above the secular every day?
2. Which do you value most, things or people? How does your life reflect this?
3. Whom could you forgive, serve, or warn today?
4. How are you faithfully helping make the Bible and its message known?

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## QUESTIONS

Questions are based on the New King James Version of the Bible.

### **DAY ONE: Read lesson notes and references.**

1. What was new or interesting to you in this lesson?
  
2. Why do you think forgiveness and gratitude are good qualities to possess? Why or why not?
  
3. What thought or verse on the coming judgment do you think is important enough to share?

### **DAY TWO Read Luke 18:1-8.**

4. What is the point of the parable?
  
5. a. How does the widow illustrate this point?  
  
b. Why did the judge grant her request?  
  
c. In what ways is God like the judge? How is He unlike the judge?
  
6. a. ♥(Heart Question) Do you have the kind of faith that perseveres in prayer and keeps coming to God day and night for justice? Can you give an example?  
  
b. How can you have that kind of faith?

### **DAY THREE: Read Luke 18:9-14.**

7. a. Which individuals went to pray?  
  
b. Where did they go to pray?
  
8. a. Describe the Pharisee's physical and mental prayer attitude.

b. Describe the tax collector's physical and mental prayer attitude.

c. What was the result for each?

9. What is the point of this story Jesus told?

**DAY FOUR: Read Luke 18:15-17.**

10.a. What did the disciples do when people brought children to Jesus?

b. Can you think of ways people still do this today?

11. What three things did Jesus say about bringing children to Him?

12. a. What blocks people's entrance to the kingdom of God?

b. What do you think this means?

c. How should we be like infants? See 1 Peter 2:2.

**DAY FIVE: Read Luke 18:18-30.**

13. What did Jesus help the young man understand before He answered his question?

14. a. What did Jesus tell him to do?

b. What kept him from doing it?

c. How did his choice make him feel?

15. a. What was a new thought to the disciples?

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- b. How did Jesus explain it?
  
  - c. What was a comforting thought to Peter?
  
  - d. Do you think Jesus meant that His followers should leave all these things, or that they should be willing to do without them? Please explain your answer.

**DAY SIX: Read Luke 18:31-43.**

- 16. a. How did Jesus know what would happen to Him in Jerusalem?
  
  
  - b. From these Scripture passages: Psalm 16:10, 22:7, 69:12; Isaiah 50:6, 53:3-8, give the prophecies that Jesus would be:
    - Delivered to Gentiles
  
    - Mocked and insulted
  
    - Scourged and spat upon
  
    - Killed
  
    - Resurrected on the third day
17. How much of this did the disciples understand?
18. What happened as Jesus and His disciples approached Jericho?
19. a. What did the blind man say to Jesus?
- b. How did Jesus encourage him to be more specific in his request?
  
  - c. ♥(Heart Question) How would you answer Jesus' question today?
20. a. What made the blind man well?
- b. ♥(Heart Question) How has your faith been a healing influence in your life?