

Luke 17:1-19 Five Traits of a Disciple

A common part of serving in most government organizations, and especially the military is leadership training. You study these things at every level of your training and if you are in the military you memorize them in preparation for boards and inspections.

USMC 14 Leadership traits - JJ DID TIE BUCKLE

The interesting thing is that many of those leadership traits that they teach you are also Biblically grounded. Concepts like Integrity, Unselfishness, and Courage all have Biblical foundations. So, if you focus on growing as a Christian FIRST, you should naturally discover that your leadership traits are growing as well and now your leadership has a specific moral grounding.

But what are some of the traits of a growing Christian? Well, this morning we will see Jesus focus on several of them. If you're taking notes, we're going to see:

Innocence; Forgiveness; Faith; Humility; and Gratefulness – not an exhaustive list.

We'll start by looking at Innocence

¹And he said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin ^[fn1] are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come!²It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. ^[fn2] ³Pay attention to yourselves!

The first thing Jesus says is that temptation is bound to come. Some of your translations may have offenses, or stumbling blocks, or as the NIV bluntly puts it ‘things which cause you to sin.’ The Greek here is skandalon – from which our English word scandal descends – in it’s original sense it was used to refer to a trap that would spring.

But it is important to know that there is a difference between temptation and actual sin. One does not by necessity lead to the other. Just because the traps are there, you don’t have to be caught by them.

Jesus, you remember, was tempted - according to Heb 4:15 “we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus knows what it is like to be tempted – turn to Him for strength.

And one of my favorite verses is 1 Cor 10:13 which tells us that through God’s mercy and intervention, we can stand in the face of temptation:

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”

So, although Jesus says temptation is bound to come in this fallen world, *that doesn't mean you have to fall* every time it comes your way.

But Jesus is dealing with more than just the fact of temptation here, He's also addressing it's source. He says, "Woe to him" who causes others to fall in to sin.

It is a horrific thing to think that you can be responsible for leading someone else into sin, for being their bait. It's bad enough to be guilty on your own, but now you are also guilty of leading someone else into it.

Ever teach someone how to be deceitful in filling out paperwork? Tempting others to lie.
 Ever choose to wear something that you know will attract a lot of attention to a certain part of your body? Tempting others to lust.
 Ever lead your girlfriend into sexual sin?

Leading others into sin is a lot more common than we think.

Many great and godly men have wept for years and years over the sins they led others into before they surrendered to Christ. Some of you may deal with this very issue of the guilt you feel for persuading others or teaching others to sin – how do you deal with that guilt?

Let me offer you a few steps from my own past:

1. Ask God for forgiveness
2. Pray for them fervently, ask God to intervene in their lives
3. Trust God – remember that He can get their attention just like He got yours
4. Continue doing it until He says drop it, or you see your request fulfilled.

This is why it is so important for us to grow, to be sanctified in our walks with Jesus. We need to let Him conform us more and more into His image and we need to openly repent when we sin so that no one else sees our example and follows in our error. If you sin in front of your friends, repent to them. If you sin in front of your children, or against them, repent to them. If you sin against your spouse, repent to them, lest they see your actions and follow your example.

Ask God to search you and show you if in any way you are guilty of tempting others toward sin and led Him lead you into greater and greater innocence.

Now, we continue dealing with sin as we get into our next trait, forgiveness.

(3) If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,⁴ and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

Now we deal with issue of sin being committed. How should we respond? Well, this section is thick with instruction; we'll break it down word by word:

1. “If your **brother** sins, rebuke him” – we are talking about another Christian here. If they sin, how should we respond? Well, start by remembering that they are a brother or sister, a spiritual family member, which means you have a common Father – that fact should help set the tone in which you approach the individual.
2. “If your brother **sins**, rebuke him” - it must actually be a matter of sin, not just preference. Do you have chapter and verse to show where they have gone wrong or do you just not see eye to eye? Have they simply done something differently than you would or have they actually **sinned**?
3. “If your brother sins **rebuke** him” – to rebuke is to speak the truth in love.
 - a. The Greek word here is *epitimao* which means to show honor to, to elevate – it’s fourth definition is to rebuke. You get the idea that a rebuke means to show them how far they have fallen and to encourage them to return to the proper height and position.
 - b. Your rebuke may be firm, but it should always be undertaken in love, this isn’t just a chance for you to vent. If it is done properly in meekness you stand a greater chance of being heard.
 - i. Pr 17:10 A rebuke goes deeper into a man of understanding than a hundred blows into a fool.
4. “If your brother sins, rebuke **him**” – you take the matter directly to the one who offended, you don’t go telling everybody else about how somebody hurt you or how badly they blew it. You saw it, or you were affected by it, you deal with it.

And once you go to him, then what? Well, if he repents, forgive him. Repentance is an action, not just an emotion. *Repentance is different than remorse.* They don’t just *say* they feel bad, they actually attempt to change and you forgive them and move on. Because, after all, you have been forgiven of so much yourself.

But what if they don’t repent? You have two options:

1. You can escalate – Matthew 18 lays out the whole process of how to involve other witnesses and if necessary take it to the church leadership and then if necessary, turn the person out from fellowship with the church.
2. Or, you can wait. People rarely respond immediately to rebuke. Often you have to speak the truth, in love, and then let God work on them as the words seep into their hearts.

But no matter which course you take, you have to be governed by love. You can’t harbor bitterness toward the person, even if they hurt you deeply. Take your pain to Jesus and ask Him to bear it. According to Galatians 6, the fruit of the spirit includes longsuffering. 1 Cor 13:5 tells us that love keeps no record of wrongs; and 1 Pet 4:8 says love covers a multitude of sins.

So, after you rebuke, you have three options – if they repent, you forgive; if they don't you escalate or wait, but in all things you walk in love, even if they come right back and do it again later the same day.

Pretty high standards here huh? Perhaps that was part of the reason the apostles said:

[5](#)The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”[6](#)And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.

Notice who is asking for increased faith – *the apostles!* After all they have already seen and experienced, they are asking for increased faith. That's a little depressing, because if they needed more, after all they had been through, what about us?

Fortunately, they didn't need *more* faith, all they needed was *living* faith. Jesus said if you have even the smallest amount of faith God can do incredible things – like picking up the mulberry tree which could grow to 35' tall and had a vast underground root structure that enables it to live up to 600 years, and throw it into the sea. A small amount of faith can have huge results.

Now of course, all of this is figurative. In over 2000 years of church history there has never been a saint Mulberry who threw a tree into the sea. In fact, it's ridiculous, why would you do it? But the point is if God can do something radical like that, can't He work in you to change you and make you capable of fulfilling His expectation?

And what about this notion of increased faith – can faith be increased, or is it just one standard size? I think it can be increased, you **can** grow in your faith and I'll tell you how – by knowing more of God. I think God is constantly asking more and more of us, He is always leading us toward growth, but the way we get there is by looking back. I put it this way - *faith for the present is drawn from the past.*

We are to look back on the things that God has already done in order to draw the courage to step forward in what we are facing now. And as we do so, we see God consistently showing up in more and more ways, and our faith grows. This is one reason it is so valuable to talk to older Christians, or to read biographies and study Church History – you get to see what God has done in the past and strengthen your faith for the future.

So there's faith, the third of our traits, next we will look at humility.

[7](#)“Will any one of you who has a servant [\[fn3\]](#) plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’?[8](#)Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, [\[fn4\]](#) and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’?[9](#)Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?[10](#)So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; [\[fn5\]](#) we have only done what was our duty.’”

Here Jesus deals with the fact that we all want to have a little recognition. Remember, the religious people of His day were big shots, a sort of religious celebrities that people oohed and aahed over. But Jesus says we're just servants – we're just doing our job.

How many of you have ever gone out to dinner and had **the waiter comes over** – you can tell he's tired. Do you offer for him to sit down with you? Offer to get him a drink? Do you ask him what he would like for dinner and then go in the back to the kitchen and bring it out for him? No. That's his job. He gets paid for it, and if he does a great job you leave him a great tip, but you're not there to serve him, he's there to serve you. It's what he does.

So too with us as servants of the Lord – He saves us, He gives us gifts, He lets us serve His people through the power of His Holy Spirit – what's so great about me? It's all about Him.

But we all crave recognition – of some sort. And honestly, I struggle with the people who serve here in the church. I want to thank you for serving the Lord, but then I think, wait, who am I? You're not serving me, you're doing it as unto Him right? So I should let Him speak to you directly.

I don't have a great answer on that one yet – I'm still trying to figure it out, so in the meantime – thank you to everyone who serves in any way in this church. It's not my church, it's Jesus' church, but I'm going to stick my neck out and tell you thank you for quietly and humbly serving our Lord and His sheep.

One last trait to cover: gratefulness.

[11](#)On the way to Jerusalem he was passing along between Samaria and Galilee.[12](#)And as he entered a village, he was met by ten lepers, [\[fn6\]](#) who stood at a distance[13](#)and lifted up their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.”[14](#)When he saw them he said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went they were cleansed.[15](#)Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice;[16](#)and he fell on his face at Jesus' feet, giving him thanks. Now he was a Samaritan.[17](#)Then Jesus answered, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?[18](#)Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”[19](#)And he said to him, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” [\[fn7\]](#)

Leprosy was the term used for a variety of skin diseases all of which were thought to be highly contagious, so lepers were condemned to live outside the city with others who suffered in the same way. They had to call out “unclean” wherever they went as a warning to others to keep their distance, that is why they shout over to Jesus and keep their distance.

They ask to be healed, and instead of healing them immediately as we have already seen Him do, Jesus tells them to go and show themselves to the priest – which was the requirement, according to Leviticus 13 and 14 for someone healed of leprosy. And you notice, it was *on the way* that they were healed. Obedience came first, then results. We all want to see results first, but sometimes God says you do this and *as you do it*, then I will bless you, and it is often seemingly simple things that He tells us to do.

Once they are healed though, only one guy comes back to say thank you and worship God, the rest kept going eager to get on with their lives. And that is often way we act too. We ask, we beg, we plead for God to work in our lives, and then when He does we race off to the next thing instead of taking a moment to sit at His feet and worship out of a thankful heart.

All ten lepers received healing, but only one received fellowship with God. And for him, Jesus says, ‘your faith has made you well’ or as your footnote might say, another translation is ‘has saved you.’ The Greek word here is *sozo*, it occurs 110 times in the NT and 93 times it means ‘saved.’ So, many commentators believe that this man received eternal life, not just physical healing because He worshiped God as the source of the blessing he had just received.

So the fifth trait we see this morning is gratefulness – and specifically, a gratefulness that leads to worship. And this is why true worship belongs to the saints, to those who have been saved. If you don’t understand what God has done for you in saving you from the judgment your sins deserve, you just can’t worship Him. On the other hand, when your eyes are opened to see all that He has done, the only proper response is to praise Him.

There you have it – 5 traits of a disciple – 5 qualities that should present in the life of those following after Jesus: Innocence; Forgiveness; Faith; Humility; and Gratefulness

Traits that we don’t have to just generate on our own, but which are slowly produced in those who are willing to lay down their lives, recognize the authority of Christ, and submit to Him.

This concept is so important it is recorded by 3 out of the four gospel writers. It appears here and also in Mark 9 and Matthew 18. Mark and Matthew record longer versions of Jesus' thoughts on the issue and include the instruction that if your eye causes you to sin it is better to pluck it out or if your hand causes you to sin then it would be better for you to cut it off.

Now those are just extreme figures of speech, but Jesus is telling us to deal that radically with sin because it's a deadly issue in our lives. In each of these instances Jesus is telling people to avoid temptation or being a temptation at all costs. The problem is: we don't get it. We aren't this serious about living in purity.

It's sad to think of the measures we will take to rid our bodies of physical illness, like cancer. Some of you have probably watched loved ones battle against cancer and have to go through chemotherapy. You've watched them drop weight, become frail and sick, maybe have their hair fall out. You've watched them undergo surgery to remove the source of the disease; it's a powerful, heart wrenching thing to watch. But let me ask you – do we treat the sin in our lives that way? Are we willing to undergo God's knife and His treatment program to rid our lives of the sin that so easily ensnares us and the traps that pull us down?

But what Jesus is talking about here is not just things that tempt us, but He is saying woe to us if we lead others into temptation.