



## Forgive Luke 17

### PRAYER BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### Forgiveness:

1. Forgiveness as Worship: The Role of Faith in Forgiveness
2. The Role of Anger in Forgiveness: Is it legitimate?
3. What Forgiveness Is/What Forgiveness is Not
4. Forgiving Oneself (Understanding Your Salvation)
5. Equality Beliefs
6. Making Judgements
7. Boundaries in Forgiveness
8. Necessary Endings: The Wise, The Foolish, The Evil
9. The Role Grief Plays in Forgiveness
10. Addressing Conflict: Peace Maker v.s. Peace Lover
11. The Art of Relinquishing Control

#### Small Group/or OPEN DISCUSSION

Why do we forgive others?

#### The Challenge of Forgiveness:

#### Luke 17:1-10

**#1.) LIVE a lifestyle that does *not* cause others to stumble, to offend God (Matt18:6; Mark 9:42)**

*17 And he said to his **disciples**, "Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! [Temptations = things that cause people to sin = *skandala* (lit., "traps," ]*

*<sup>2</sup> It 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,*

#### **1 Corinthians 8:12**

But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

***Forgiveness has requirements that are not visible.***

**#2.) GUARD your heart**

*<sup>3</sup> Pay attention to yourselves!*

**Well, HOW does one Guard their heart so we do not take offense? (NKJV)**

#### **Philippians 4:7**

and the **peace of God**, which surpasses all understanding, **will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus**. [Experience God's peace by being in His presence.]

**Isaiah 26:3**



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You will keep *him* in perfect peace, **Whose mind is stayed on You**. Because he trusts in You. [FOCUS OUR MIND ON CHRIST = Reading scripture, Talk often, Text Him(journal)]

### John 14:27

**27 Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you;** not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. [EXPECT IT]

### Philippians 4:9

**9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do,** and the God of peace will be with you. [Obedience has consequences that are not visible.]

### #3.) GUARD your heart so you can rebuke while taking no offense

3b *If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,*

The two members of v. 3b must be given equal weight. Rebuke of the sinner and forgiveness of the penitent are both Christian duties. Wilcock, M. (1979). *The Savior of the world: the message of Luke's gospel* (pp. 166–167). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Guard our hearts to take no offense so we are free to:

Rebuke him (engage in conflict)

If repentant = Forgive him

### *Forgiveness has requirements that are visible*

#1.) LIVE a lifestyle that does *not* cause others to stumble (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42)

#2.) GUARD your heart.

#3.) GUARD your heart so you can rebuke while taking no offense

### #4.) Living as a forgiven person comes with responsibilities.

*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."*

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

### *Forgiveness is my responsibility.*

### #5.) ASK for supernatural help (17:5–6)

#### Increase Our Faith

*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.*

I need more faith so I can see mighty miracles v.s. I need more faith so I can forgive.



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*Forgiveness is a byproduct of faith.*

- #1.) LIVE a lifestyle that does *not* cause others to stumble (Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42)
- #2.) GUARD your heart.
- #3.) GUARD your heart so you can rebuke while taking no offense
- #4.) Living as a forgiven person comes with responsibilities.
- #5.) ASK for supernatural help

**#6.) Forgiveness is what a servant of Christ does. (17:7–10)**

### **Unworthy Servants**

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

**Romans 11:35** Or who has ever first given to Him, and has to be repaid?  
[Arrogancy – Guard against]

*Forgiveness is an act of Worship*

Forgiveness is much more than ‘a choice’:

*Forgiveness has requirements that are not visible.*

*Forgiveness has requirements that are visible.*

*Forgiveness is my responsibility.*

*Forgiveness is a byproduct of faith.*

*Forgiveness is an act of Worship*



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- Increase our Faith, is that a response to hearing Jesus' statement on forgive?
- Is it our DUTY to forgive as we are HIS servants? (Just what a servant of JC does)
- What is the ROLE of rebuke in Forgiveness? (But ALSO Rebuke (hold accountable) towards repentance?)
- There is not a whole lot of room for choice here. That choice was made when we fell in love with Him.

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### NOTES:

Struggling with a title. Faithful Forgiveness. Faith Filled Forgiveness. Forgiven. Forgiveness. Forgive.

Found a connection in my devo with Faith and Forgiveness...Increase our Faith, is that a response to hearing Jesus' statement on forgive?

Is it our DUTY to forgive as we are HIS servants?

What is the ROLE of rebuke in Forgiveness?

There is not a whole lot of room for choice here. That choice was made when we fell in love with Him.

### Forgive Luke 17

Wednesday Night Church

With The Chew On This Crew: Pastor Orleen, Pastor Robin and Steve Lunde  
In the Auditorium

6:30PM

Begins Wednesday Night, January 6th

### NOTES:

#### 4. The challenge enacted (17:1–19)

We have not yet looked at the central part of this section, the first nineteen verses of chapter 17. They begin with a short address containing instruction again for disciples. Edersheim summarizes them well:

'Four things:

1. 'to be careful to give no offence' (17:1–2);
2. 'to be careful to take no offence' (17:3–4);
3. 'to be simple and earnest in their faith, and absolutely to trust its all-prevailing power' (17:5–6);



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4. ‘and yet, when they had made experience of it, not to be elated, but to remember their relation to their Master, that all was in his service, and that, after all, when everything had been done, they were but unprofitable servants’ (17:7–10).

This, in brief, is the way forward for men who have faced and accepted the challenge.

But the remaining paragraph, 17:11–19, is the ‘odd man out’ in this whole series of episodes. It is different from the discourses on either side of it and from the parables at the beginning and the end of the section. The question arises, therefore, as to why Luke included a miracle at this point in a group of chapters which are generally concerned not with the deeds of Jesus but with his words. Once or twice already we have found Luke doing this (11:14ff.; 13:10ff.), and on each occasion he seems to have had a special purpose in doing so; the miracle in each case relates closely to his teaching at that point.

But on reflection it is not now so hard to see why Luke, knowing of the healing of the ten lepers, thought it an appropriate episode to insert here. For it sums up the whole of what Jesus is saying both to his disciples and to the Pharisees in the section from 16:1 to 18:14. Both groups have been given the immense privilege of hearing the word of salvation from the lips of the Saviour himself. The Pharisees, who, though privileged in this way, do not respond with acceptance and gratitude, represent the majority. But always there are some who, like the penitent sinners and tax collectors, do respond wholeheartedly. So, whether by Luke’s design or by the Lord’s own design, a particular miracle which took place in the course of the journey towards Jerusalem fits in here as a living illustration of what Luke has been describing. Of the ten men who are touched by the healing power of Jesus, only one realizes that what has happened deserves a personal, heartfelt response to the Saviour from whom that power has flowed; and the one thankful man is the Samaritan, the outsider. Of the nine—Jews, we infer—Jesus sees nothing more.

Having been privileged to receive all this teaching, which is Luke’s basic theme (the message of salvation for all men), we also face the challenge which is spelled out in the words of Jesus in this section, and illustrated by the story of one of his great deeds put into the centre of it. It is the challenge to be like the one, and not like the nine: actually to turn back, praising God with a loud voice, and to fall on our faces at Jesus’s feet, giving him thanks.<sup>1</sup>

### Colossians 3:15

<sup>15</sup> And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.

### 2 Thessalonians 3:3

But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

## 7. Sin, faith, duty (17:1–10)

As the heading indicates, this unit contains various brief teachings. As with some other parts in this special section of Luke, it is difficult to understand why these teachings are brought together. The introductory words “Jesus said to his disciples” are similar to those in other places where there apparently is no attempt to establish a chronological sequence (e.g., 12:22, 54; 13:6; 16:1). This does not rule out the possibility that the parables in these instances were originally given sequentially, but they could be understood as merely marking a break from the preceding section. Yet it is also possible to see a logical connection between the end of chapter 16 and the beginning of chapter 17, if we understand “the things that cause people to sin” (v. 1) to be the sins of the Pharisees, such as those mentioned in 16:14.

Some may feel that logical connections within this passage are difficult to discern, e.g., between v. 4 and v. 5. However, there is a common unifying theme of attitudes in the Christian community. The connections are no weaker than those that join similar teachings in Matthew 18 about care for the little ones, the problem of sin in the community, and prayer. Actually, though we expect to find material in topical rather than chronological order in Matthew (in contrast to most of Luke), in Matthew 18 the pericopes are joined by chronological indicators, while those in Luke are not. The contexts of the two passages are totally different, and here in Luke the teachings on prayer are not parallel to those on prayer in Matthew 18 but rather to those in Matthew 17:19–20 and 21:21–22. Here, as throughout the Synoptics, each Gospel must be studied and interpreted in its own context.

**1–3a** Jesus has been addressing the Pharisees since 16:14. Now he resumes his conversation with the disciples. The “things that cause people to sin” (v. 1) are the familiar *skandala* (lit., “traps,” but symbolically whatever causes people to fall into sin). “Woe” recalls 6:24–26. A millstone (v. 2) was a stone of sufficient weight to crush grain as it was being rotated in a mill. The “little ones” would seem to be either young or new believers or people the world takes little notice of. There is no mention here of children as in Matthew 18:1–6. There is no antecedent for “these.” So if the conversation stands alone, it must be taken to refer to those who were actually standing there with Jesus. In the NIV paragraph structure, v. 3a—“So watch yourselves”—is joined with the preceding saying rather than with the following (as in RSV, NASB). Either way makes sense.

<sup>1</sup> Wilcock, M. (1979). *The Savior of the world: the message of Luke’s gospel* (pp. 166–167). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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**3b–4** The two members of v. 3b must be given equal weight. **Rebuke of the sinner and forgiveness of the penitent are both Christian duties.** Verse 4 does not, of course, establish a specific number of times for forgiveness but rather shows the principle of being generous in forgiving others (cf. Matt 6:12). This is the only right response for those who have themselves been forgiven.

**5–6** The apostles may have felt that this kind of forgiveness would demand more faith than they had (v. 5). The “mulberry tree” (v. 6) in Luke corresponds to the mountain in Matthew 17:20; 21:21; and Mark 11:23. In each instance the object is to be disposed of in the “sea” (probably Galilee). The black mulberry tree (KJV “sycamine,” not to be confused with “sycamore”) grew quite large, to a height of some thirty-five feet, and would be difficult to uproot. The mustard seed is proverbially small, a suitable metaphor for the amount of faith needed to do the seemingly impossible. Jesus’ answer to the request for additional faith seems to be that they should use the faith they had to petition God.

**7–10** This is one of the passages in which Luke presents Jesus’ teaching about the ideal of servanthood. The world’s idea of success is to lord it over others; Jesus’ way is the reverse—namely, servanthood—which is actually the way to true greatness. Two earlier parables on this theme occur in 12:35–37, 42–48. The circumstances Jesus describes here were normal in that society and the point obvious. In contrast, in the parable in 12:35–37, Jesus presented a reversal of the normal procedure, with the master doing just what 17:7 rules out. The master’s extraordinary act depicted in 12:35–37 symbolizes God’s grace, while the normal expectation of the master here in Luke 17 symbolizes the proper servant attitude. Jesus did not intend to demean servants but to make their duty clear. In this respect the NIV translation “unworthy” for *achreioi* (v. 10) is an improvement over KJV’s “unprofitable.”

### 8. *Ten healed of leprosy* (17:11–19)

Not only is this narrative peculiar to Luke, but it also stresses several characteristically Lukan themes. Jerusalem is the goal of Jesus’ journey (cf. 9:51; 13:33); Jesus has mercy on social outcasts; he conforms to Jewish norms by requiring that the lepers go for the required priestly declaration of health (cf. Lev 14); faith and healing should bring praise to God (cf. 18:43; Acts 3:8–9); and the grace of God extends beyond Judaism, with Samaritans receiving special attention (cf. 10:25–37).

**11–13** That Luke does not mention the particular place where the healing was done implies that he did not consider the exact locale important historically or theologically. What is important is the reminder (possibly to indicate a new phase of his ministry) of Jesus’ progress toward Jerusalem (v. 11). The “village” (v. 12) lies somewhere in the border territory between Galilee and Samaria (cf. Notes); so Jewish and Samaritan lepers share their common misery at its edge. The lepers maintain their proper distance, call Jesus by a term found only in Luke—“Master” (*epistata*, v. 13; cf. 5:5)—and ask only for pity without specifying their request.

**14–19** Jesus’ command (v. 14) required obedience based on some faith in the reliability of the speaker (cf. Matt 12:13; Mark 3:5; Luke 6:10). On their way to the priests, the lepers are “cleansed” (*ekatharisthēsan*). Jesus, however, uses the more comprehensive word “made well” (*sesōken*, v. 19) on speaking to the Samaritan who returned to give thanks. Though Luke does not say whether the others had faith, it need not be denied them. The stress is on the openly expressed gratitude of the Samaritan, who alone brought praise to God (vv. 15–16).



## Notes

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11 Διὰ μέσον (*dia meson*, “along the border between”) is a troublesome phrase. This accusative is well attested, but the Byzantine tradition has the genitive μέσου (*mesou* KJV, “through the midst”). Conzelmann (*Theology of Luke*, pp. 68–72) considered this a theological use of geography, with Luke trying to establish a travel theme based on an allegedly distorted view of the geographical relationship of Samaria to Galilee. On Conzelmann’s assumption, Luke thought that Judea was directly south of Galilee, with Samaria alongside both. On this view, Jesus was going south along this supposed north-south border. Actually, Luke does not state that Jesus made just one journey from north to south but rather suggests that he crisscrossed the area, making perhaps several trips to Jerusalem before his final stay there. In this case he might have been on his way east to Perea, to turn south on the highway along the east side of the Jordan River.<sup>2</sup>

### FAITH OR OBEDIENCE? (LUKE 17:1–10)

Jesus had just warned His disciples against an unforgiving spirit, and told them that if a brother “sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him” (17:4). This disturbed the disciples, who realized that this was a challenge indeed. Their response to Jesus was to beg Him, “Increase our faith” (v. 5).

Jesus reminded the disciples that a person with the least amount of faith (“as a mustard seed”) could command a nearby mulberry tree to pull itself up by the roots and be planted in the sea, “and it would obey you” (v. 6). He then asked them to imagine a man had a servant who had spent the day plowing. At the end of the day, wouldn’t the man say, “Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink” (v. 8)?

Jesus went on, “Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (vv. 9, 10).

Jesus’ familiar story reminds us that God forgives those who acknowledge their sins.

This story makes a fascinating point. Jesus, the disciples’ Lord and Master, had told His followers to forgive again and again. The disciples had asked for more faith, but Jesus dismissed their request, saying in effect, “Faith is fine for moving mulberry trees.” Then Jesus focused their attention on a servant, whose role was to serve and obey his owner. And Jesus concluded, “So likewise you” (v. 10).

Jesus had not *asked* His followers to be forgiving. Jesus had commanded them! Forgiveness is not a matter calling for more faith. The issue in forgiveness is one of obedience to God.

How often we make this mistake, asking God for more faith to do what He has commanded us, never realizing that the issue is not one of faith but of obedience.

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<sup>2</sup> Liefeld, W. L. (1984). [Luke](#). In F. E. Gaebelin (Ed.), *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Vol. 8, pp. 993–996). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House.





## BIBLE BACKGROUND:

### HARD SAYINGS OF JESUS

“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Luke 17:6; compare Matt. 17:20).

Here as in Matthew 17, where faith is said to be able to “move mountains,” the saying is proverbial. That is, Jesus was saying that with even a little faith a believer can do the impossible. But Jesus had not asked His disciples to do the impossible. He had simply asked them to keep on forgiving, and this was an issue calling for obedience, not faith.

We need to remember that what makes faith powerful is not the amount of faith we have, but the person in whom our faith is placed. In the end it is God who undertakes the impossible—and who succeeds.

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**17:1, 2 woe to him:** Jesus warned that judgment awaits those who cause others to stumble. The severe form of the warning suggests that false teaching, or leading someone into apostasy, is in view here. A **millstone** was a heavy stone used in a grinding mill.

**17:3 Take heed:** This command probably closes the warning of Luke 17:1, 2. **sins ... rebuke ... repents ... forgive:** Here Jesus makes disciples accountable to one another, but in a context that emphasizes being forgiving as v. 4 makes clear.

**17:4 you shall forgive him:** The repeated request for forgiveness is to be honored. The disciple is to be generous with compassion.

## Only One Returned?

Once again Jesus chose a route that made it likely that He would encounter Samaritans (Luke 17:11). And once again Luke’s account has to do with the tension between Jews and Samaritans.

It’s easy to see why Jesus would ask, “Where are the nine?” (17:17). He was amazed at their lack of gratitude. But why did He call the one man who did return a “foreigner”? Luke singles out the fact that he was a Samaritan. That meant that he and Jesus were divided by a cultural wall that was virtually impenetrable. In fact, it was said to be unlawful for a Jew even to associate with a “foreigner” (compare Acts 10:28). Yet Jesus openly violated that taboo as He marveled at the Samaritan’s thankful heart.

What of the other nine? Were they not Samaritans as well? Possibly, since this incident was taking place in or near Samaria. But is it not equally possible, given Luke’s comment and Jesus’ remark, that the other nine were not Samaritans, but Jews who had been driven away from the Jewish community to the Samaritans because of their leprosy condition?

<sup>3</sup> Richards, L., Pegoda, D., & Gross, P. (2001). *Every teaching of Jesus in the Bible* (pp. 114–115). Nashville: T. Nelson.





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If so, their ingratitude was inexcusable. There was no racial wall separating them from Jesus. The only barrier had been their leprosy—and Jesus had removed that. They had every reason to turn in faith toward the Lord, but instead they turned away.

By contrast, a man who had every reason to stay away from Jesus returned and gave glory to God. As a result, he received what the other nine—and most of the rest of Israel—did not: spiritual healing, and not just physical.

**17:5 Increase our faith:** The disciples desire to grow in their faith.

**17:6–10** Even faith the size of a tiny **mustard seed** can do wonderful things. The black **mulberry tree** has a vast root system that allows it to live up to six hundred years.<sup>4</sup>

### IX. THE SON OF MAN INSTRUCTS HIS DISCIPLES (17:1–19:27)

#### A. Concerning the Peril of Offending (17:1, 2)

The continuity or flow of thought in this chapter is obscure. It almost seems as if Luke pieces together several disconnected subjects. However, Christ's opening remarks on the peril of offending may be linked with the story of the rich man at the close of chapter 16. To live in luxury, complacency, and ease could very well prove to be a stumblingblock to others who are young in the faith. Especially if a man has the reputation of being a Christian, his example will be followed by others. How serious it is to thus lead promising followers of the Lord Jesus Christ into lives of materialism and the worship of mammon.

Of course, the principle applies in a very general way. **Little ones** can be stumbled by being encouraged in worldliness. They can be stumbled by being involved in sexual sin. They can be stumbled by any teaching that waters down the plain meaning of the Scriptures. Anything that leads them away from a pathway of simple faith, of devotedness, and of holiness is a stumbling block.

Knowing human nature and conditions in the world, the Lord said that it was inevitable that **offenses should come**. But this does not diminish the guilt of those who cause the offenses. **It would be better for** such that **a millstone were hung around their neck**, and that they were drowned in the depths of **the sea**. It seems clear that language as strong as this is intended to picture not only physical death but eternal condemnation as well.

When the Lord Jesus speaks of offending **one of these little ones**, He probably included more than children. The reference also seems to be to disciples who are young in the faith.

#### B. Concerning the Need for a Forgiving Spirit (17:3, 4)

In the Christian life there is not only the peril of offending others. There is also the danger of harboring grudges, of refusing to forgive when an offending person apologizes. That is what the Lord deals with here. The NT teaches the following procedure in connection with this subject:

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<sup>4</sup> Radmacher, E. D., Allen, R. B., & House, H. W. (1999). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible commentary* (p. 1287). Nashville: T. Nelson Publishers.



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1. If a Christian is wronged by another Christian, he should first of all forgive the offender in his heart (Eph. 4:32). This keeps his own soul free from resentment and malice.
2. Then he should go to the offender privately and **rebuke him** (v. 3; also Matt. 18:15). **If he repents**, then he should be told that he is forgiven. Even if he sins repeatedly, then says that he repents, he should be forgiven (v. 4).
3. If a private rebuke does not prove effective, then the person who has been wronged should take one or two witnesses (Matt. 18:16). If he will not listen to these, then the matter should be taken before the church. Failure to hear the church should result in excommunication (Matt. 18:17).

The purpose of rebukes and other disciplinary action is not to get even or to humiliate the offender, but to restore him to fellowship with the Lord and with his brothers. All rebukes should be delivered in a spirit of love. We have no way of judging whether an offender's repentance is genuine. We must accept his own word that he has repented. That is why Jesus says: "**And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him.**" This is the gracious way our Father treats us. No matter how often we fail Him, we still have the assurance that "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 Jn. 1:9).

### C. Concerning Faith (17:5, 6)

**17:5** The thought of forgiving seven times in a single day presented a difficulty, if not an impossibility to **the apostles**. They felt they were not sufficient for such a display of grace. And so they asked **the Lord to increase their faith**.

**17:6** The reply of **the Lord** indicated that it was not so much a matter of the quantity of faith but of its quality. Also it was not a question of getting more faith but of using the faith they had. It is our own pride and self-importance that prevent us from forgiving our brothers. That pride needs to be rooted up and cast out. If **faith** the size of **a mustard seed** can root up a **mulberry tree** and plant it **in the sea**, it can more easily give us victory over the hardness and unbrokenness which keep us from forgiving a brother indefinitely.

### D. Concerning Profitable Servants (17:7–10)

**17:7–9** The true bondservant of Christ has no reason for pride. Self-importance must be plucked out by the roots and in its place there must be a true sense of unworthiness. This is the lesson we find in the story of the bondservant. This **servant** has been **plowing or tending sheep** all day. **When he has come in from the field** at the end of a day of hard work, the master does not tell him to **sit down** for supper. **Rather** he orders **him** to put on his apron and **serve supper**. Only after that is done is the slave allowed to **eat** his own meal. The master does not **thank** him for doing these things. It is expected of a slave. After all, a slave belongs to his master and his primary duty is to obey.

**17:10** So disciples are bondslaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. They belong to Him—spirit, soul, and body. In the light of Calvary, nothing they can ever do for the Savior is sufficient to recompense Him for what He has done. So after the disciple has **done** everything that he has been **commanded** in the NT, he must still admit that he is an **unprofitable** servant who has only **done what was his duty to do**.

According to Roy Hession, the five marks of a bondservant are:



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1. He must be willing to have one thing on top of another put upon him, without any consideration being given him.
2. In doing this, he must be willing not to be thanked for it.
3. Having done all this, he must not charge the master with selfishness.
4. He must confess that he is an unprofitable servant.
5. He must admit that doing and bearing what he has in the way of meekness and humility, he has not done one stitch more than it was his duty to do.

### E. Jesus Cleanses Ten Lepers (17:11–19)

**17:11** The sin of unthankfulness is another peril in the life of the disciple. This is illustrated in the story of the ten lepers. We read that the Lord Jesus was traveling toward **Jerusalem** along the borders of **Samaria and Galilee**.

**17:12–14** **As He entered a certain village, ... ten men who were lepers** saw Him. Because of their diseased condition, they did not come near to Him, but they did cry out from a distance, pleading for Him to heal them. He rewarded their faith by telling them to **go and show** themselves **to the priests**. This meant that when they reached the priest, they would have been healed from the leprosy. The priest had no power to heal them, but he was designated as the one to *pronounce* them clean. Obedient to the word of the Lord, the lepers started out toward the priests' dwelling, and **as they went, they were** miraculously **cleansed** from the disease.

**17:15–18** They all had faith to be healed but only **one** out of the ten turned back to thank the Lord. This **one**, interestingly enough, **was a Samaritan**, one of the despised neighbors of the Jewish people with whom they had no dealings. He **fell down on his face**—the true posture of worship—and **at the feet** of Jesus—the true place of worship. **Jesus** asked if it were **not** true that **ten** had been **cleansed**, but that only one, **“this foreigner,”** had returned to give thanks. **Where were the other nine?** None of them came back **to give glory to God**.

**17:19** Turning to the Samaritan, the Lord Jesus said, **“Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well.”** Only the grateful ten percent inherit Christ's true riches. Jesus meets our turning back (v. 15) and our giving thanks (v. 16) with fresh blessings. **“Your faith has made you well”** suggests that whereas the nine were cleansed from leprosy, the tenth was also saved from sin!<sup>5</sup>

**17:2 Millstones** were circular stones used for grinding grain. Some were small enough for women to use; others were so large that they required an animal's strength to operate. “Little ones” may refer to young believers or (possibly) believers of any age.

**17:3, 4 Jesus spoke here** of one believer sinning against another believer. If the one who committed the wrong repented, the believer wronged was obligated to forgive him and not bear a grudge. The number of times he was to forgive his brother was unlimited.

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<sup>5</sup> MacDonald, W. (1995). *Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments*. (A. Farstad, Ed.) (pp. 1434–1436). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



## Forgive Luke 17

**17:11 Samaria**, in the first century A.D., was the region of Palestine between Galilee in the north and Judea in the south. Its inhabitants included Jews who, over the centuries, had intermarried with Gentiles. They had also brought in foreign gods to worship. The result was considerable hatred and prejudice between the Jews and Samaritans. When a Jew traveled between Galilee and Judea, he typically went a greater distance and crossed into Perea on the east bank of the Jordan to avoid going through Samaria. Jesus, however, felt no animosity toward the Samaritans (see John 4:4–6, note).

**17:14–19 Mosaic Law** gave the priests the responsibility of declaring a leper's healing valid (see Matt. 8:2, note). The person would then be allowed to reenter society. Only one of the ten, a Samaritan, returned to thank Jesus, (see Ps. 95, Gratitude). Jesus was, no doubt, grieved over the ingratitude of the other nine.

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## FORGIVENESS: *EXTENDING MERCY TO OTHERS*

When someone comes seeking your forgiveness, you have an obligation to grant forgiveness and extend mercy—even if the person has sinned against you repeatedly and regardless of how severe the sin may have been (Matt. 18:21, 22; Luke 17:4; Eph. 4:32; Col 3:12, 13). Your forgiveness of others is a prerequisite for your receiving God's forgiveness (Matt. 6:14, 15; Luke 11:4; James 2:13).

God does indeed forgive us (Ps. 32:1–5; 103:12; 130:3, 4; Is. 43:25; Jer. 31:34; Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14; 2:13). We forgive others, if we do not want to disobey God and break our fellowship with Him (Matt. 6:14, 15; Mark 11:25, 26; Luke 17:3, 4). No less important is the willingness for one who blames God for wrongs experienced to remember that the Lord does not direct evil against us, though He may choose to allow us to go through a trial resulting from our own sinful choices or from the sinfulness of the world in which we live (Gen. 50:20; Deut. 32:4; Rom. 8:28, 38, 39). Finally, we must be willing to forgive ourselves since we are finite beings and since our failures often open the door for His glory and provide the environment for our own growth (Phil. 3:12–14).

Love is the prime ingredient in forgiveness (Prov. 10:12). Often the one wounded must forgive with an act of the will, giving time for working through feelings and experiencing healing. Forgiveness comes with the removal of past offenses from the mind (Phil. 3:13), followed by meditation upon Scripture (Ps. 119:157–160), giving over to God our hurts (1 Pet. 2:21–23), praying for the offender (1 Sam. 12:23; Matt. 5:44), and serving as a willing channel for God's grace. God has promised that He will take care of all judgment so that revenge is not an option (Rom. 12:19–21).

Meaningful forgiveness demands thought and planning. Forgiveness is the willingness to search for new solutions. Forgiveness insists on a new way—neither yours nor theirs but one mutually acceptable. You must use words that do not cast blame or create questions (Prov. 15:23). You must be concerned with seeking forgiveness only for your own wrong (Ps. 51:1–4). You must remember that a forgiving attitude does not excuse self (Gen. 3:12), defend self (Gen. 3:10), or accuse another (Gen. 3:13).



## Forgive Luke 17

Seeking forgiveness frees you to receive God's mercy (Prov. 28:13). Showing mercy by a forgiving spirit brings blessing from God and gratitude from the one forgiven. A forgiving spirit brings good to yourself (Prov. 11:17) and to others (15:23).

See also Matt. 5:23, 24; 6:12; 2 Cor. 2:3–11; charts on Your Path to Freedom; Journey to Forgiveness; notes on Communication (Prov. 15); Conflict (Song 5; Matt. 18); Forgiveness (Ps. 51); Friendship (Luke 1)

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### DOING YOUR DUTY

**17:5–10** Jesus' words in Luke 17:6–10 raise many puzzling questions. Did He intend that we should never thank people for doing what is expected of them? Should workers never expect praise for doing their jobs? Why are the workers "unprofitable" if in fact they did what was their duty? Should we always do more than expected? Was this a sermon on initiative and creativity? Who was Jesus addressing, bosses or employees?

Actually, He was responding to the disciples' request for more faith (17:5). That's a key to understanding this passage. Jesus had just challenged His followers to forgive others freely and repeatedly (17:1–4). But they replied, "Give us more faith," as if it took great faith to forgive.

But it does not. Forgiveness is not some supernatural ability that only God can give. It is not the product of great faith, but rather of simple obedience. That's what the servant in the parable must do—obey his master. It doesn't take great trust on the part of the servant to get a meal prepared; it just takes doing it. In the same way, forgiveness is expected of us as Christ's followers, since Christ has forgiven us. We are obligated to forgive others, so there's no reward attached to it.

The disciples expected a payoff for following Jesus (9:46–48; Matt. 20:20–28). But Jesus wanted them to see that following Him was a reward in itself!

### WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas Nelson, I. (1995). *The Woman's Study Bible* (Lk 17:2–14). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



## Forgive Luke 17

**17:11–19** Once again Jesus chose a route that made it likely that He would encounter Samaritans (Luke 17:11; see map at Luke 9:51–56). And once again Luke’s account has to do with the tension between Jews and Samaritans.

It’s easy to see why Jesus would ask, “Where are the nine?” (17:17). He was amazed at their lack of gratitude. But why did He call the one man who did return a “foreigner”? Luke singles out the fact that he was a Samaritan. That meant that he and Jesus were divided by a cultural wall that was virtually impenetrable. In fact, it was said to be unlawful for a Jew even to associate with a “foreigner” (compare Acts 10:28). Yet Jesus openly violated that taboo as He marveled at the Samaritan’s thankful heart.

What of the other nine? Were they not Samaritans as well? Possibly, since this incident was taking place in or near Samaria. But is it not equally possible, given Luke’s comment and Jesus’ remark, that the other nine were not Samaritans, but Jews who had been driven away from the Jewish community to the Samaritans because of their leprous condition?

If so, their ingratitude was inexcusable. There was no racial wall separating them from Jesus. The only barrier had been their leprosy—and Jesus had removed that. They had every reason to turn in faith toward the Lord, but instead they turned away.

By contrast, a man who had every reason to stay away from Jesus returned and gave glory to God. As a result, he received what the other nine—and most of the rest of Israel—did not: spiritual healing, and not just physical.

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*At times Jesus chose to take His disciples through Samaria and challenged their prejudices—sometimes with explosive results. See “Condemnation or Compassion?” at Luke 9:51–56.*

*Lepers were common in the ancient world. They suffered from a slowly progressing, ordinarily incurable skin disease that was believed to be highly contagious and therefore greatly feared. Anyone who appeared to have leprosy, even if the symptoms were caused by some other condition, was banished from the community. See Matt. 8:2.<sup>7</sup>*

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<sup>7</sup> [Word in life study Bible](#). (1996). (electronic ed., Lk 17:5–11). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.