

Following the King

Studies in Luke's Gospel

Luke 17:1-10

Read Luke 17:1-10

It is difficult to see a common theme that binds these verses together. What is clear, however, is that Jesus' teaching in these verses relate in some way or another to the overall theme of these chapters – that is, what it means to follow Jesus.

Note to leaders: If you have enough people in your group you may wish to divide the group into 4 smaller groups. Each group could be assigned one of the following sections to discuss. After an appropriate period of time each group could then report back on their discussion to the larger group.

If your group is not large enough to break into smaller groups perhaps ignore section (3) below. 'Faith', which is on view in those verses, will be picked up on in the next study.

(1) Guarding against 'stumbling blocks', vv 1-3a

In verse 1 Jesus says that his disciples are bound to encounter 'stumbling blocks' along the way as they follow him.¹

1. Based on what you have read in Luke, chapters 9 to 17, what kinds of 'stumbling blocks' were Jesus' disciples likely to encounter? What are some common 'stumbling blocks' we're likely to encounter?
2. Given the context of the previous two chapters, **who** do you think Jesus was talking about in v 1? How were they at risk of causing people to 'stumble'?

Look up Romans 16:17-18. Here Paul warns his readers about those who put 'obstacles'² in the way of God's people.

3. How might Jesus' words in Luke 17:1-2, and Paul's words in Romans 16:17-18, apply in churches today? Who do you think these words might be of particular relevance to?

(2) Forgiveness & following Jesus, vv 3b-4

4. What do these verses teach us about: a) repentance, b) forgiveness.
5. This is not the only passage in the New Testament that mentions the importance of 'rebuking'³ one another. Why should we do this? Why do we often avoid doing it? If you have time look up the following passages: Titus 1:13, Revelation 3:19
6. Why is forgiveness sometimes hard? Can you think of a time in your own life when you struggled to forgive someone?
7. Why **must** Jesus' disciples be people who forgive? Look up Matthew 18:21-35 for important background to this question.

¹ 'Stumbling blocks' is a literal translation of Jesus' words from the Greek. The idea of 'stumbling into sin' is on view here.

² The same word is used here as in "temptations to sin" in Luke 17:1.

³ This carries the sense of a frank, but gentle admonition.

“If physical exercise had a mental equivalent, it would probably be the process of forgiveness. Researchers continue to tally the benefits of burying the hatchet—lower blood pressure and heart rate, less depression, a better immune system and a longer life, among others.”⁴

8. What are some other practical ‘benefits’ of forgiveness?

(3) Faith & following Jesus, vv 5-6

9. What do you understand by the term ‘faith’? What role does ‘faith’ have in the Christian life?

10. How did our study of Luke 12:1-34 help us understand what ‘faith’ is?⁵

11. What point do you think Jesus is making about ‘faith’ in these verses?

12. How would you illustrate the Christian understanding of ‘faith’ to a non-Christian friend?

(4) The servant’s heart, vv 7-10

13. For whose benefit does Jesus tell this parable?

14. Are you, as a follower of Jesus, comfortable with being compared to a slave?⁶ What is this image meant to imply?⁷ Look up the following passages to fill out your understanding: Romans 6:15-23; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

15. One commentator has said that this parable ‘*illustrates the ideal attitude that a disciple should have in serving God*’.⁸ What is this attitude? In what ways will Christians express this attitude in the way they live their lives?

16. While ‘slave’ may describe our *attitude toward serving God* it certainly does not describe our *status before God*. What does Romans 8:12-17 say about our true identity in God’s eyes?

Conclusion

- In light of what you have read and discussed today finish the following sentence: *Following Jesus means...*

Pray it in

- Two or three people should pray out loud, asking God to help us all become the disciples He has called us to be.

⁴ Quotation taken from *Psychology Today*, a popular US-based psychology journal (<http://psychologytoday.com/articles/pto-20040209-000022.html>)

⁵ You might like to look up Hebrews chapter 11. Quickly scan through the entire chapter. What contribution does this chapter make to your discussion about ‘faith’?

⁶ The word translated ‘servant’ is *doulos* in Greek. This ordinarily means ‘slave’.

⁷ It’s important to realise that the household slavery of which the New Testament speaks seems to have lacked the brutality and cruelty of slavery in some other eras (eg. 18th & 19th centuries).

⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, p. 1392.