

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 17:1-10

Q. What are you doing to increase/grow in your faith? Or to ask it a different way, what are you doing in order to be rightly formed?

“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” (17:5)

What caused the apostles to make this request of Jesus? The most likely answer is that they were overwhelmed by everything they had been taking in that day. (Keep in mind that day goes back all the way to chapter 15, perhaps even 14:25—this included the cost of being a disciple, the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin, the prodigal son, the shrewd manager, and the rich man and Lazarus.) This was a lot to take in.

Then in 17:1-2 Jesus gives a stern warning. And in 17:3 Jesus sets a high bar regarding forgiveness. All of this leaves the disciples intimidated and shell-shocked (rightly so). They understood that they were being groomed for leadership in the movement that Jesus was starting (even if they didn’t understand the nature of that movement quite yet). Their request of Jesus to increase their faith demonstrates their sense of inadequacy. This may be one of the most honest moments we’ve yet seen of the disciples.

The stern warning in 17:1-2 likely has as a backdrop the Jewish religious establishment, who instead of helping people grow in their faith, were discouraging them; instead of serving the people, were focused more on making sure the people looked up to them. They were concerned about status and position and influence, not the hearts and faith of the people they were supposed to lead. The Greek word Jesus used in these verses is “skandalizo”. And that is a good way to describe the Jewish religious establishment...scandalous. And verse 3, regarding forgiveness, also stand in contrast to the judging/condemning nature of the Pharisees. Jesus wanted the soon-to-be leaders of His movement (the disciples) to be of a different character.

Their request in verse 5 shows that they were heading in the right direction. Being overwhelmed at the calling of Jesus and the responsibility He wants is healthy.

Q. Describe a time when you felt overwhelmed by the task in front of you. (possible icebreaker). What was the end result of that situation (or perhaps it’s an on-going situation)?

Q. What has been your experience with forgiveness? (How have you come to grips with needing forgiveness? How have you sought forgiveness? How have you struggled to forgive somebody? Etc.)

In verse 6 Jesus states that even a small amount of faith can do great things (a simple paraphrase). Jesus was less concerned about the AMOUNT of their faith, and more concerned about the SUBSTANCE of their faith. Whereas the Jewish religious leader’s faith was in their

system, structure, and position, Jesus wanted the disciple's faith to be in Him and the way/culture of the Kingdom that He was ushering in. Which leads to the lesson found in verses 7-10.

The point of this lesson is the proper understanding of the nature of the relationship between a master and a slave (analogous to our relationship with God). Verse 10 is really the focus and punch of the lesson: *"So you also, when you have done everything you were called to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants (slaves); we have only done our duty'"*. The point is, you and I can never do anything great or spectacular that will ever put God in our debt. Thus, we are never, ever, entitled to anything. Even if (and it's a big IF) we ever got to the point we actually did *"everything we were called to do"*, even then, we are but unworthy (unneeded, unprofitable) slaves who have only done what we owe to our master.

So in response to the disciples request to have their faith increased, Jesus says, "You need to view yourself properly in your relationship with God." (to paraphrase). To increase in faith means to increase in humility. The fruit of faith is less about religious/spiritual accomplishments, or attaining some level of righteous standing; rather it's about relating to God and others accurately/properly...and that begins with humility.

Now humility should not be understood as having a low self-esteem or self-image. As was mentioned in the sermon, along with being "unworthy servants" we are also dearly loved children of God...which is where our value, worth, and significance comes from. Humility is about knowing our place. Humility is about deferring to God and others as opposed to striving for our way and will. And the beautiful and powerful irony in it all is that as we embrace the humble nature of a servant/slave we discover our truest freedom and potential.

All this takes trust (another word for "faith"). Do we trust that the Kingdom way of descent is actually correct when the worldly way all around us screams that we should be climbing the ladder of success? Do we trust that the greatest is the one who is servant of all? We see this modeled in Jesus, but do we embrace and embody His way?

- Q. How have you wrestled with entitlement? Do you feel entitled to anything? (Perhaps a helpful way to analyze that: we can't be offended unless we first felt entitled to something. So think about a time when you were offended. What were you feeling entitled to at that time?)**
- Q. As you consider the paradox of being both a dearly loved child of God AND an unworthy servant who on your best day can never rise beyond just doing your duty (both true at the same time): How are those truths forming you? What sort of tension do you experience between those two important truths? Do find/experience more freedom or burden in that paradox? (explain)**

- Q. What evidence can you see and point to that a sense of entitlement is running rampant in our culture/society? Where do you think that comes from? How has it “infected” you? How can we (the church) model something different?**
- Q. As we consider humility versus entitlement, how are such things as responsibility, forgiveness, and gratitude affected by one versus the other?**
- Q. How can we cultivate humility in ourselves?**
- Q. How you’ve experienced your pride getting the best of you? How have you experienced your pride cause damage in a relationship?**
- Q. The backdrop of this passage is good leadership vs. poor leadership (i.e. the poor leadership of the Jewish religious leaders vs. the good leadership of Jesus—and the good leadership Jesus was wanting to cultivate in the disciples). Describe a particularly good leader you’ve experienced. Describe a particularly poor leader you’ve experienced. At the core, what was the difference between the two?**