



# Good News **for all people.**

## The Gospel of Luke

### Week 17 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 1/29/23

Text: Luke 17:1-19

**Icebreaker:** Fill in the blanks: “I find it *easiest* to forgive someone who is \_\_\_\_\_.”  
“I find it *difficult* to forgive someone who is \_\_\_\_\_.”

1. Verses 1-2 express a harsh warning from Jesus to his disciples about doing anything that might cause others to sin. What does this suggest about the influence one person’s life can have over others in a Christian community?

Jesus has been confronting and rebuking the religious leaders for their negative example and now he is turning toward his own followers. It’s as if Jesus is saying, “Don’t think you can ignore the impact of your influence too!” It’s possible that the “Pay attention to yourselves!” in v. 3 is meant to be read as the summary of these first two verses. We all have influence over others, and especially so if we are living in community with each other. This influence is meant to strengthen each other’s faith and faithfulness to Jesus; however, our influence can work in a negative sense if we aren’t careful. The common saying that *we become like those we spend the most time with* is often true.

*Application:* Think about your own relationships. What people around you do you think your life influences most? Have you thought about how something you do might have a negative influence on them?

2. There are three main actions listed in verses 3-4 that are to be common practices for Christians living in community with each other: *rebuke*, *repent*, and *forgive*. What do you know about what these words mean?

These each have their own challenge. We rebuke when we call out something in another person’s life that is contrary to God’s ways. Matthew 18:15-20 supplies a good description of how to do this in a way that is not harsh and that provides a means for keeping the issue as small and private as possible. To repent means both to admit and to turn from that thing that was contrary to God’s ways. Finally, to forgive means to release or let go of the offense. Consequences may still occur, but they are contained or limited.

*Application:* What do you find challenging about each of these? What benefits do you think a community of people would experience where these are done well?

3. Forgiveness can be held back or hindered for different reasons. Why do people sometimes stop short of forgiving others?

Some possible reasons may include that we don’t believe the person deserves to be forgiven. Maybe they haven’t apologized yet or we feel they should be punished more. We might feel like the harm they caused is so great that to “let them off the hook” through forgiveness would be an injustice. We might fear that the offending party will only repeat their same actions, so they really can’t be trusted with forgiveness. We might

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believe that forgiveness is a feeling more than a choice, so we are unable to forgive (so we think) since we don't yet feel like forgiving.

*Application:* What impact has unforgiveness had on relationships you've experienced? All of these issues might be true about a person—they're unapologetic, they committed unspeakable harm, they haven't yet faced justice, they aren't trustworthy—but unforgiveness always backfires and results in additional harm to the person who won't forgive. Forgiveness does not depend on a person first making amends. See Romans 5:6-11.

4. Given what Jesus has just instructed his disciples to do, why do you think they respond with "Increase our faith!" in verse 5? How would you summarize Jesus's response in verse 6?

It appears that the disciples realize the humanly impossible nature of what Jesus is calling them to do. Forgiveness isn't natural for us! The disciples ask for more faith, but Jesus instead refocuses their attention to the quality, not quantity, of their faith.

*Application:* Based on your own experiences, what do you think faith has to do with our ability to forgive others?

It's appropriate, again, to point to Romans 5:8 or 2 Corinthians 5:21. Faith means embracing what God has done to forgive us and how undeserving we are of receiving that forgiveness. It also means trusting that God is the final judge of all things. He will set things right in his own time and for his own purposes. We would do well to remember that the greatest injustice in history (i.e., the crucifixion of Jesus) was simultaneously the greatest justifying act in history. All of this requires faith to believe and accept.

5. What kind of attitude or perspective is Jesus prescribing for his disciples in verses 7-10?

It's probably good to admit that, on the surface, this seems harsh! Isn't the master kind of cold toward the servant here? The point seems to be that the servant realizes his role and all that it entails. Everything he has done was in his job description. By implication, then, the servant realizes that his service in no way obligates the master to do something for him. He is the servant, after all! Reflected in this is an attitude recognizing that God does not owe us. Everything we have is due to his grace rather than our merit. This is a perspective that leads to humility and service.

*Application:* What's the danger if we take the opposite attitude, something like, "We are deserving (of reward, accolades, etc.) since we went above and beyond what was our duty!"?

This is an attitude of pride and would likely hinder our ability to forgive others.

6. In verses 11-19, why is the Samaritan leper commended above the others?

He's commended for returning to Jesus to display his gratitude. In Jesus's day, one cultural value was known as *reciprocity*—the idea that if someone does something good to me then I am obligated to do something of a similar magnitude for them. Reciprocity could be at play here in the sense that the Samaritan leper realizes how incredibly unable he is to reciprocate since Jesus has just performed a miracle on his behalf. All he can do is to humbly return to Jesus and say, in essence, "Thank you! There's no way I could repay you so I'm eternally indebted to you."

*Application:* What relationship, if any, do you think there is between gratitude and faith? Have you ever known someone who was generally ungrateful, yet had great faith?

Gratitude, faith, and forgiveness all tie together. Gratitude is associated with an attitude of humility, which opens us up to having faith and recognizing how great God's

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forgiveness is for us. The more I realize how undeserving I am of being forgiven by God, the greater the likelihood I will be willing to extend forgiveness to people who (just like me) don't deserve forgiveness.