

Daily Discipleship

Sunday, October 2-8, Luke 17:5-10

Discipleship: *A New Response*

Focus Question: *How is Jesus calling you to respond in new ways?*

word of life

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

Read Luke 17:5-10

Luke 16 concludes with Jesus’ parable about Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus is convinced if people will not listen and believe the words of Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced by someone who rises from the dead. *Where is their faith?*

Luke 17 begins with a series of teachings by Jesus. (Take a moment to read Luke 17:1-4 to understand the context for the assigned lesson.) He sternly warns his listeners against becoming a stumbling block to those new in the faith. The image of a heavy millstone being placed around the neck of any person who tempts another to sin and being thrown into the sea is both vivid and troubling.

1. *What might be an example of causing someone to stumble?*
2. *What responsibility do mature Christians have towards those new to the faith?*

Next, Jesus adds some challenging words about life in the Christian community by instructing people to confront those who have sinned against them. The clear desired outcome of this confrontation is one of repentance and reconciliation. “Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent’ you must forgive.” (Luke 17:1-4 NRSV) If the person repents, Jesus instructs disciples to forgive them.

Is it any wonder the apostles respond by requesting their own faith be increased? (Luke 17:5)

3. *What does it mean to increase one’s faith?*
4. *Can a person increase his or her own faith?*
5. *Or is increasing faith a job for the Holy Spirit? How so?*

But Jesus affirms their faith—even if it small. It does not take much faith to do much. Nothing is impossible with God who desires to be at work in our lives. “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” (Luke 17:6) Mustard seeds are the smallest of seeds. Imagine if you had the faith of an oak tree or a mountain.

6. *What do the words of Jesus mean to you?*
7. *How much faith do you have – more than a mustard seed?*
8. *What can you accomplish because of your faith?*

Jesus continues his teachings with an example of a master who asks a servant to prepare a meal for the master rather than permitting the servant to eat first, before the master is served. The servant has been hired to serve the master whether in the field, house, or both. That is his job. So, he does not need special rewards for doing his job. The servant is fulfilling the tasks of his job. In the same manner, disciples are called to serve and to do the work of God with whatever faith has been given.

9. *What point is Jesus trying to make with this example of the worker?*

word among us

Mary sat quietly beside her husband's hospital bed and watched as the dawn light gently caressed the room. She pondered the news from the physician given to her in the early hours of the day. As a nurse, she knew what was ahead for her husband and herself. Her prayer was a simple one, "Increase my faith."

Jacob was confused by the actions of his teenage daughter. She used to be loving, cooperative, and a delight. Now it was like a stranger had taken over her body. His prayer for wisdom was captured by a simple prayer, "Increase my faith."

The world of Chris had been turned upside down again. How much more could be handled? Life seemed so overwhelmingly unfair. Chris was sliding into depression and despair. Yet, in a final cry to God, Chris offered, "Increase my faith."

1. *When have you asked for God to increase your faith? What would that mean?*
2. *When have you experienced a boost in faith?*

Our faith can increase as we are blessed by the love of Christian community, inspired by God's word, moved through worship, as well as other many ways. Yet our faith can increase as we experience the trials and tragedies of life. In the process of being stripped down, we can become open to God in new ways.

3. *Reflect back on your own faith journey. How has your faith increased over the years?*
4. *How does God seem to be developing and forming your faith?*
5. *In what ways can our faith grow when we face challenges?*
6. *Is it ok to doubt and question God? How so?*

After the disciples hear about the expectations of Jesus, the disciples want their faith increased. They fear the millstone around their neck. They question if they can confront those who offend and whether they can forgive the repentant. Jesus expects them to respond as he would. They doubt if they are capable of responding in such new ways.

7. *What is so new and challenging about the expectations of Jesus?*
8. *Why do you believe the disciples want their faith increased?*
9. *What do you say today to disciples who are unsure if they can handle the problems before them?*

Jesus reminds the disciples that they already have enough faith. It doesn't matter if their faith is small like a mustard seed. Ultimately, the new response is not about them as humans and their own human ability to live as Jesus describes. Instead, it is all about God. Whether a disciple has a little or a lot of faith, God is at work. God is blessing. God is bringing the fruit. It also means the outcome is not under the control of a disciple, but of God.

10. *How do you respond to this news?*
11. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

Prayer

Mighty and powerful God, increase my faith. Amen

Dig Deeper

Psalm 37:1-10

last word

Offer a daily prayer,
"Increase my faith."



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