



Teachings of the Teacher – A study in the parables of Jesus
The Unprofitable Servant

Luke 17:5-10

Lesson 18

Is it time for an attitude check? Why do you do what you do? What do you think you deserve from God because you have obeyed Him or even faithfully served Him? We long to hear "well done", but should never think we deserve to hear it. In this parable, Jesus challenges servants to view all they do as *unprofitable*. May we learn, as we study this parable, what Jesus meant by that.

OBSERVATION: Read Luke 17:5-10

1. Read through this week's verses using both your Observation Worksheet (the last page of this homework) and another Bible translation or paraphrase. After reading through these verses, what would you say to someone if they asked you what they were about?
2. Key words help us to better understand a parable. We have listed below key words of this parable. Mark each one in a distinctive way (either with a symbol, highlighting, or some form of boxing, circling, or underlining). Mark each of the key words each time they are used in the text.
Key Words: words that refer to *Jesus*, *apostles*, and *servant(s)*
faith, *commanded/duty*, and *unprofitable*
3. The contrasting word *but* is used once in this parable. What is being contrasted?
4. The term of comparison, *likewise*, is used once in this parable. What is being compared?

CONSIDER THESE THINGS:

1. How do you feel when you have done something good for another person?
2. What expectations do you have when you help someone or do something good?
3. What are some examples of God's commands that sometimes seem to be "beyond the call of duty"?

THE PRELUDE TO THE PARABLE: Read Luke 17:1-4

1. The parable recorded in Luke 17:5-9 was preceded by a warning from Jesus. These four verses in the beginning of Luke 17 remind us of two sides of sin – sinning against others and being sinned against. What did Jesus say about people who *offend* others?
 - a. Consider Jesus' rebuke to Peter in Matthew 16:23. What is often the reason behind *offenses*?
2. Jesus began His second warning with the words *take heed to yourselves*. What do you think He meant by this? (Luke 17:3)
3. What was Jesus' command regarding our response to a *brother who sins against us*?
4. What do you find to be more difficult – refraining from *offending others* or *forgiving* those who *offend* you?
 - a. Why?

THE NECESSITY OF FAITH: Read Luke 17:5,6

1. In response to Jesus' warnings, the disciples found themselves falling short of His requirements. What are some ways people deal with failure?
 - a. Rather than look to themselves, what did the disciples ask Jesus to do?

- 1.) Why do you think Jesus' commands caused them to see the need for *increased faith*?

2. What is the result of *increased faith* according to 2 Thessalonians 1:3?
 - a. How does *love for others* cause us to walk in obedience to Jesus' warnings in Luke 17:1-4?

3. What example does Jesus give of *faith* in Luke 17:6?
 - a. What is our part according to Matthew 17:21?
 - 1.) How does prayer and fasting help to *increase our faith* and thus enable us to step out and act in *faith*?

4. In what way does *faith* enable us to obey God's commands?

THE PARABLE: Read Luke 17:7-9

1. Although the disciples viewed Jesus' commands as difficult, Jesus responded with a story about servanthood. Tell that story as you would relate it to a child.

2. In this story, who is represented by the:
master:
servant:

3. What scenario did Jesus place before them in verse 7?
 - a. How do the following verses refute the idea that a master is not to serve a servant?
Mark 9:35
Mark 10:42-45

4. According to Luke 17:8, what did the *master* command the *servant* to do?

5. In response to the servant's obedience, *does he* (the master) *thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him?* What was Jesus' answer?
 - a. Note: this is a parable told to *servants*, not to *masters*. From the *master's* side, appreciation should be expressed. However, from the *servant's* side, appreciation should not be expected. Considering the disciple's response to Jesus' commands at the beginning of Luke 17, why do you think Jesus told them this parable?

6. Did the servant in this parable express *faith* or *obedience*?
 - a. We have the privilege of knowing the heart and intentions of our Master. The servant of a human master does not. Faith is not required of that servant; only obedience. What do you know about your Master, Jesus, that helps you to *obey* Him?

THE POINT OF THE PARABLE: Read Luke 17:10

1. What is to be our attitude when we *have done all those things which we are commanded*?
 - a. Consider the paraphrase of this verse from the New Living Translation: *In the same way, when you obey me you should say, 'We are not worthy of praise. We are servants who have simply done our duty.'* How does the phrase *simply done our duty* help you understand the intention of the word *unprofitable* as it is used in this verse?

 - b. What does the *unprofitable servant* understand from 1 Corinthians 4:7?

2. According to the following verses, what does the *servant* of the Lord understand?

Psalm 25:10

Psalm 119:76

Psalm 119:129

Proverbs 16:3

Luke 11:28

John 14:15

John 15:14

3. We, like the disciples, often find God's commands to be difficult to obey. What do we need to believe when confronted with a command that seems contrary to our thinking or provokes fear in our lives?

4. How would you counsel a believer who:
excuses her disobedience by saying, "I just don't have the faith"?

says "To obey God when I don't feel like it is hypocrisy"?

5. ... *We have done what is our duty to do* (Luke 17:10). What is our primary duty? Luke 10:27

REVIEW: Read Luke 17:5-10

1. What are some common hindrances to obedience?

a. How does a true *servant* ignore those hindrances?

2. Explain the attitude of an *unprofitable servant*.
3. What are some attitudes of a servant who views herself as *profitable*?
4. In what ways have you been challenged by this lesson?

*O my soul, you have said to the LORD,
"You are my Lord,
My goodness is nothing apart from You."
- Psalm 16:2*

Observation Worksheet

Luke 17:5-10

And the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." ⁶So the Lord said, "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. ⁷And which of you, having a servant plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and sit down to eat'? ⁸But will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for my supper, and gird yourself and serve me till I have eaten and drunk, and afterward you will eat and drink'? ⁹Does he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I think not. ¹⁰So 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.' "