

The Heights Baptist Church

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS • GRATEFUL KINGDOM CITIZENS • LUKE 17:5-6, 11-19 •

1/24/2021

MAIN POINT

The more we grow to understand God's grace, His kingdom, and who we are as kingdom citizens, the more grateful we become for all He has done and is doing in our lives.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Describe a time when you were truly thankful for something someone did for you.

What does gratitude reveal about our hearts?

Conversely, what does it reveal about our hearts when we are ungrateful?

Following Jesus is a journey of faith—a journey we wouldn't be on if it weren't for the grace of God in our lives. The more we grow to understand God's grace, His kingdom, and who we are as kingdom citizens, the more grateful we become for all He has done and is doing in our lives.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 17:11-14.

Luke 4:19:27 recounts Jesus' journey toward Jerusalem and the cross. Jesus healed and taught as He went, but He never detoured from His course, even to go around Samaria. The Samaritans were not pure Jews, which to the Jews meant they were unworthy of God's blessing and favor. Often in Jesus' teaching and ministry, He used the Samaritans as an example of the scope of His love and God's kingdom (such as the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10 and the story of the woman at the well in John 4). Entering Samaria and encountering Samaritans would have made Jesus unclean under the Jewish law.

Read Leviticus 13:42-46. How did the Jews treat people with leprosy and other skin diseases?

What must the lepers have believed about Jesus to call out desperately for His mercy? What does this teach us about Jesus' reputation and ministry?

How were all ten lepers changed by their encounter with Jesus?

Jesus met ten men who suffered from a terrible skin disease. The men knew their condition; any contact with them made other people unclean. Still, they knew Jesus' reputation for healing, so they shouted from a distance. Calling Jesus "Master," they begged for mercy and healing. Jesus uttered a simple command: "Go let the priests see you." All ten exercised faith in Jesus' command by starting for the priests. When they did, healing came.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 17:15-19.

Of the ten men who were healed, only one returned to thank Jesus. What is significant about the one being a Samaritan?

What did this Samaritan understand that the rest of the men did not?

Healing sent nine of the lepers scurrying to the priests at a rapid clip. But one of the men reversed direction—he returned to thank Jesus. But he did not seek a private session to say "thank you." He publicly shouted praise and thanksgiving to God so everyone could hear. He knew that what Jesus had done came directly from God, and that he did not deserve it. Not only was this person an unclean leper, but he was also an unclean Samaritan. This fact reminds us that while no one deserves God's grace, God's grace is available to everyone.

The one man who returned understood that he did not deserve to be healed by Jesus, something Jesus attributed to the man's faith. How are faith and gratitude connected?

Jesus saw a direct connection between the one leper's faith and his gratitude to God. The more our faith in Jesus grows, the more we realize just how much we have to be grateful for. Earlier in Luke 17, Jesus' own disciples had asked Him to increase their faith.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ LUKE 17:5-6.

The more the disciples learned from Jesus about His kingdom and their role in it, the more they realized their dependency on Him and their need for faith. So naturally, the disciples asked for an added supply of faith to live in such an abnormal way. Like the one leper, they knew Jesus was the source of all faith.

How do you interpret Jesus' mustard seed statement? What does it teach us about faith and God's kingdom?

If the amount (size) of faith isn't important, then what is the characteristic of faith that Jesus said is important, according to these verses? How does this relate to our discussion of gratitude and the example of the leper?

Jesus did not grant the disciples' request for more faith. Rather, He told them to exercise the faith they already had. This is a call to dependence on God and humility before Him. True faith knows God and trusts Him to do the kind of things He does in the way He chooses. When we live within His will and ask for His will to be done, then we will see marvelous things happen among His people in the world. As our faith in Jesus deepens, we can't help but be grateful for who He is and what He has done. Faith in Jesus naturally produces gratitude for Jesus.

From this description of a mustard seed, how would you evaluate your own faith?

Do you see any direct connections to gratitude, or a lack thereof, you have felt lately?

As our faith grows, so does our understanding of God's grace in our lives. This kingdom perspective helps us see how we truly do not deserve any of the earthly or spiritual blessings God has given us.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is one situation or blessing you have not shown appropriate gratitude to God for lately? What does that reveal about your faith in God and your understanding of His kingdom? What steps do you need to take toward change?

What are some specific ways we can practice gratitude toward God together as a group?

How might a consistent spirit of gratitude and faith give further opportunity to share the gospel with others?

PRAYER

Close in prayer by giving your group members the opportunity to voice their own prayers of gratitude to God for who He is and all He does for us. Then, close the prayer time by asking God to deepen your faith in Him, and to help you see the wide scope of His kingdom and your role as a kingdom citizen.

COMMENTARY

| LUKE 17:5-6

17:5. The disciples caught a glimpse of the price Christ was asking them to pay. No one is that patient with another person. Normal human aptitudes and abilities cannot fulfill such a command. Total faith in God and total dedication to God's way of life are required. Thus, the disciples asked for an added supply of faith to live in such an abnormal way—abnormal at least from a human perspective. They did not think they could supply such faith themselves. They knew Jesus was the source of all faith.

17:6. The disciples asked Jesus to “increase” their faith. The word they used means to add to what is already there. They recognized their need for divine help in this area. Jesus spoke of faith that can uproot a tree and plant it in the sea. Matthew's parallel account refers to moving a mountain from one place to another. These hyperbolic expressions describe what faith can do. But in practice, Jesus was not speaking of a faith that stages a miraculous event. It is a faith that leads to healing (Luke 7:9; 8:48; 18:42; Acts 14:9), that understands the need of Christ to suffer (Luke 24:25-26), that has confidence in God's providential care (8:25), that will not fall away (8:13; 22:32), but will endure (Acts 14:22) and believe God and grow (Acts 6:5; Luke 1:45 with 1:20).

| LUKE 17:11-19

17:11. Jesus apparently walked along the border between Samaria and Galilee, then crossed the Jordan River at the nearest point, proceeding down the eastern bank of the Jordan toward the crossing point opposite Jericho, which is the next location mentioned in the narrative (18:35).

17:12-13. As if he were not unclean enough, Jesus met ten men who suffered from a terrible skin disease (see 5:12). The men knew their condition. Any contact with them made other people unclean (Lev. 13:42-46). Still, they knew Jesus' reputation for healing, so they shouted from a distance. Calling Jesus “Master” (5:5; 8:24, 45; 9:33, 49), they begged for mercy. Mercy, in their case, would mean empathy and pity that would lead to an act of healing.

17:14. Jesus pronounced no great healing formula. He did nothing dramatic. He uttered a simple command: Go let the priests see you. Such a command demanded action from the sick men. To run to the priests meant to show them that they were no longer infected and so could return to normal human contacts. But they had to start to the priests before they were healed. All ten exercised faith in what Jesus said. They started for the priests. When they did, healing came.

17:15-16. As they proceeded to the priests, they were healed. One of the lepers upon observing his healing returned to give thanks to Jesus. It is then pointed out that this leper was a Samaritan. This one had been not only physically healed but spiritually healed as well (17:19). Whereas the other nine received God's word and believed for a time, they fell short of the ultimate healing, i.e., experiencing the divine salvation. They had "been enlightened ... [and] tasted the heavenly gift" (Heb 6:4) in their experience of divine healing, but they fell short of saving faith.

17:17-19. Jesus responded to thanks giving and praise with a surprising question: Where are the other nine who were healed? Did only this foreigner return to show what God had done and let God get the glory for it? Note that on Jesus' lips "foreigner" was not a word of scorn and contempt but one of fact to bring to the attention of the town and especially of the disciples the identity of this man. By identifying the foreigner, he showed the "superiority" of the foreign man of faith to the Jewish men who lacked faith.