

Luke 14:25-33; 17:1-19

14:25-33: THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

1. Read 14:25-33. In v. 33 Jesus utters the challenging phrase “none of you can be my disciple of you do not give up¹ all your possessions.” This is given as a conclusion to the statements about the need to “hate” one’s family for Jesus’ sake and bear one’s cross, and the parables of the tower builder and the warring king.
 - a) Why *specifically* is this verse generally considered challenging? What does it require of the disciple? Are there any interpretive issues? On the face of it, is it in harmony with other verses on the topic?
 - b) Luke is well known for his focus on wealth and discipleship. See the list below, on page 4, of verses from the third gospel related to this theme. What interpretation of 14:33 is consistent with these?
 - c) The central section of Luke is his “travel section”, unique to his gospel account, describing simultaneously (i) Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem, and his death and glorification, (ii) the disciple’s journey to faith, and (iii) Israel’s march toward its fate (including 70 AD and the resulting dispersion). Focusing on the second of these, Green observes,

Given the travel setting... Luke uses an appropriate image, ‘to bid farewell to all one has.’ This ‘leaving behind’ is cast in the present tense, demarcating this condition not simply as a potential for which disciples must be constantly ready, but as a characteristic feature of the disciple. (567)

When and how have you *most recently* been called to release, cast off and bid farewell to attachments, material or otherwise, so that you can continue your journey with Jesus toward Jerusalem?

STUMBLING BLOCKS, MILLSTONES: 17:1-4

2. Jesus warns his disciples not to be the occasion of others’ stumbling. “Occasions for stumbling” (NSRV) and “things that cause people to sin” (NIV) are translations of a single Greek word, *skandala* (from which we get our “scandalous”). In the Septuagint this word is used to refer to a trap or a device for catching something alive. Here it refers to an enticement to sin (BDAG).²

If we apply this passage to leaders who lead others astray either deliberately or inadvertently, 3b-4 is telling us to be sure to *confront* and *forgive* those leaders whose example is a snare for us. Of course, the passage is broader than that, and can just as easily apply not just to leaders, but to all who trap us in sin. (We are also warned not to lead others astray.)

When have you felt led into sin, bitterness, or lack of faith by church leaders (or other fellow believers)? How did you react?
3. Jesus instructs his disciples to both rebuke and forgive those who sin against them. The idea of rebuking someone who sins against us is particularly challenging in a culture more prone to simply withdraw. Given our culture and its biases, can you imagine any way realistic at all in which we could confront those who have sinned against us?

1 “Give up” is the Greek *apotassetai*, the 3rd person present indicative of the verb *apotasso*, which means to renounce or give up (BDAG), a verb which elsewhere means to bid a formal farewell to (e.g. Lk 9:61). Marshall translates it by the phrase, “discipleship means saying a final ‘good-bye’.. to one’s possessions” (594).

2 In light of the many times the “scandal” of the cross is spoken of (Is 8:14; Lk 20:18; Rom 9:33; 1 Pet 2:6-8), Bock thinks the passage refers to loss of faith.

HEALING OF THE TEN LEPERS: 17:11-19

4. In 17:19, Jesus tells the Samaritan ex-leper, "Get up and go on your way; your faith (*pistis*) has made you well." Here "well" is *sozo*, meaning "free from disease." How exactly did the Samaritan's faith make him well? Was his faith different from that of the other lepers? What role did the Samaritan's faith play in this account?
5. What similarities and differences are there between this account and the healing of Naaman in 2 Kings 5?
6. Craig Evans points out,
Jesus' question [where are the other nine?] summarizes one of the major themes of Luke-Acts. It is the Gentle, the Samaritan, the outcasts and sinners, who respond enthusiastically to the offer of the Good News. Unlike the religious and proud, who assume that their piety guarantees their salvation, the outcasts and sinners assume no such thing (see 18:9-14) and eagerly accept God's gracious invitation (see 14:15-24).

A general principle of Christian outreach is that "it is the sick that need a doctor." How is this principle reflected in the way you, your church, or your denomination, spread the Gospel? Have you seen it born out in your life?

MUSTARD-SEED FAITH: 17:1-6

7. Christians have a tendency to think of faith as trust, and particularly in the context of petitionary prayer. The Greek word translated "faith" is *pistis*. *Pistis* can mean fidelity, as in "keep the faith." It can also mean the body of belief, as in "defenders of the faith." In passages like this one, though, it is best translated "trust, confidence or faith" (BDAG).

Jesus appears, in 17:5-6, to be addressing faith in the context of prayer. These verses may be compared to passages such as Acts 14:9b-10:

Paul, looking at him intently and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said in a loud voice, 'Stand upright on your feet.' And the man sprang up and began to walk.

Christians often, right or wrong, conclude that the lame man had sufficiently *confidence* to be healed. Passages like this one from Acts lead to the belief among many that God chooses to answer prayers in part on the basis of the emotional certainty of the one praying. This seems at first to be at odds with Jesus' statement about having a mustard seed's worth of faith.

Here is a survey of Luke's use of *pistis* in the context of petition:

- *The lowered paralytic* (Luke 5:20): "...but finding no way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the middle of the crowd in front of Jesus. When he saw their **faith**, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven you."
- *The Centurion* (7:9): "When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such **faith**.""
- *Calming the storm* (8:25): "He said to them, "Where is your **faith**?" They were afraid and amazed, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that he commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him?"
- *The woman with the hemorrhage* (8:48): "He said to her, "Daughter, your **faith** has made you well; go in peace." While he was still speaking, someone came from the leader's house to say, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the teacher any longer." When Jesus heard this, he replied, "Do not fear. Only believe, and she will be saved." "
- *Lilies of the field* (12:28): "But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive

today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you--you of little **faith!**"

- *The persistent widow* (18:8): "And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find **faith** on earth?"
- *The blind beggar* (18:41): "'What do you want me to do for you?' He said, 'Lord, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Receive your sight; your **faith** has saved you.'"
- *Peter addresses the crowd after healing the beggar* (Acts 3:16): "And by **faith** in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the **faith** that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you."

In light of these passages, what does it mean to have faith to uproot mulberry trees? Is Jesus saying a great *quantity* of faith isn't needed for success in prayer? What reading of vv. 5-6 is consistent with the passages above? (*Extra credit*: Did Jesus grant their request?)

KINGDOM COMING: 17:20-37

16. Contrary to older translations of Jesus' statement about the location of the kingdom in 17:21 which place the kingdom "within you" (KJV, Good News) or "inside of you" (JB Phillips), more recent translations have "in your midst" (NASB, NIV) or "among you" (NRSV, Message, NLT). To whom is Jesus speaking? Does this have any implication for how one reads his response?
17. In light of Noah and Lot, is it better to be left behind or taken away (vv. 31, 34)?
18. What practical advice does this passage hold for modern believers?

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Fun Quote: From Mishnah 'Abot 2:7, "If you have studied the Torah, do not claim merit for yourself, since you were created for this."

Fun Quote: The Gospel-of-Thomas version of 17:21, "the kingdom of God is among you," is: Jesus said, 'If those who lead you say to you, "See, the Kingdom is in the sky," then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, "It is in the sea," then the fish will precede you. Rather, the Kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you" (G. Thom, saying 3).

SOME PASSAGES IN LUKE RELATED TO MONEY

Renunciation of possessions; almsgiving:

- “Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.” When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.” (5:10)
- “And he got up, left everything, and followed him.” (5:28; note that immediately after this *Levi puts on a great banquet*)
- “When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” (18:22)
- “Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.” (12:33)
- “Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.” (19:8)
- “Give to everyone who begs from you” (6:30)

Extending hospitality and giving financial support of Jesus and his disciples:

- “After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.” (4:38-39) [This passage is mentioned because hospitality isn't free!]
- “Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their resources.” (8:1-3)

You can't serve both God and mammon; it is difficult for the wealthy to enter the kingdom

- “You cannot serve God and wealth.” (16:13)
- “How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” (18:24)

Wealth tempts us to rely on it rather than God

- “Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.” (12:15; also Lazarus and Dives; RYR)

You can't separate your handling of money from your response to God

- Dishonest steward; RYR; parable of the talents, etc.
- “Your eye is the lamp of your body. If your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light; but if it is not healthy, your body is full of darkness.” (11:34; remember *bad eye == stinginess*)
- “...but as they go on their way, they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature.” (8:14)

Give to the needy regardless of their inability to reciprocate

- Advice to hosts and guests (14:7-13)