

Luke 17:5-10

⁵The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

⁶And the Lord answered, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it will obey you.

⁷Which of you whose servant comes in from plowing or shepherding in the field will say to him, ‘Come at once and sit down to eat’? ⁸Instead, won’t he tell him, ‘Prepare my meal and dress yourself to serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’?

⁹Does he thank the servant because he did what he was told? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done everything commanded of you, should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’ ”

Berean Study Bible

1

At your service. Luke 17:5-10

Servants serve. 17:5-6

We servants are subordinate. 5 “Lord”

We servants have sufficient. 6 “size of a mustard seed”

Servants keep serving. 17:7-8

We servants have things to do. 7 “ploughing or shepherding”

We servants have people to help. 8 “Prepare my meal... serve me”

Servants do service. 17:9-10

We servants, serve selflessly. 9 “does not thank the servant”

We servants, serve dutifully. 10 “we have only done our duty”

2

Luke 17:5-10

Prayer. 17:5

Spiritual initiative. 5a “The apostles said to the Lord”

Spiritual ignorance. 5b “Increase our faith!”

Possibility. 17:6

Faith measured, not by looks. 6a “size of a mustard seed” (cp “increase”)

Faith measured, by outlook. 6b “tree... planted in the sea” (purpose?)

Parable. 17:7-10

Look at who you are. 10 "We are unworthy servants"

Look at what you do. 10 "we have only done our duty"

3

How to increase your faith. Luke 17:5-10

Problem of faith. 17:5-6

What I want from my faith. 5 "Increase our faith!"

Why I want from my faith. 6 "say to this mulberry tree"

Power of faith. 17:6

I have enough faith. 6a "faith the size of a mustard seed"

I need to use my faith. 6b "it will obey you"

Practice of faith. 17:7-10

My faith is found in service. 8 "dress yourself to serve me"

My faith is found in humility. 10 "unworthy servants... only done our duty"

4

Bigger is not better. Luke 17:5-10

The point of faith is to change relationships. 17:5

Faith recognises Lordship. 5a "Lord"

Faith desires companionship. 5b (desires what Jesus has)

The power of faith can change things. 17:6

Faith only needs to be small. 6a "faith the size of a mustard seed"

Faith can do what is large. 6b "uprooted and planted in the sea"

The purpose of faith is to change me. 17:7-10

Increased faith will enable me to serve. 8 "dress yourself to serve me"

Increased faith will enable me to be humble. 10 "unworthy servants"

5

Reality check to your faith. Luke 17:5-10

The faith we want. 17:5-6

What we mistakenly think our faith should be. 5 "Increase our faith!"

What we mistakenly think our faith should do. 6 “it will obey you”

The faith we need. 17:7-10

What we actually need is faith to be servants. 8 “dress yourself to serve”

What we actually need is faith to be humble. 10 “We are unworthy”

6

There is power in prayer. Luke 17:5-6

Prayer with a ‘No’ answer. 17:5

‘No’ can be the answer to a noble prayer.

‘No’ can be the answer to a nonsense prayer.

Prayer with a ‘Yes’ answer. 17:6

Speak to the problem.

Speak to the outcome.

7

Houston, we have a problem. Luke 17:5-10

We have a problem of perception. 17:5-6

I don’t understand what I have. 5 “faith”

I don’t understand what I want. 6 “it will obey you”

We have a problem of practice.

I need to understand what I am. 7a “servant”

I need to understand who is the centre. 9 “the servant did what he was told”

I need to understand what I am to do. 10a “everything commanded of you”

I need to understand humility. 10b “have only done our duty”

Other possible titles

Supersize your faith.

Do you want fries with your faith?

How much faith is enough?

Throwing trees around.

Amazing faith.

Spiritual landscaping.

Now hiring: slaves.

Mustard vs Mulberry
Mission impossible?
Increase our faith(fulness).
You do not need more faith.
Take your faith with you.
When trees don't fly.
Why won't the trees obey me.

Quotes and illustrations

S	Selfless
E	Energetic
R	Resolute
V	Virtuous
A	Authentic
N	Non-judgemental
T	Thorough

God, if You don't want to give me Plan A, then I don't want Plan A, I want Your Plan B.
"Change my heart o God, make it ever true. Change my heart o God, may I be like You"

Observation: my definition "Faith is not a possession that I hold, but a position that I take, after analysing the evidence", was not warmly embraced because people clung to the idea that their faith was something they held (like a possession).

Commentary

Greek of verse 5

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" (Luke 17:5) The root of "said", the first verb, is λέγω [Strong's 3004] meaning, 'say, speak, tell'. However, the form of this verb as used here, is εἶπεν, which is Aorist Indicative Active, thus giving strength to the disciples' words, moving their words from a request to a command!

Whose responsibility was it for the disciples to have an increase in their faith? Should they have expected Jesus to give them an additional amount of faith? Or, should they have exercised the faith they had in order to increase it?

Now we are faced with a challenging question: Whose responsibility is it, for me to have faith? Do I only have faith if God gives it to me, as implied by the disciples'

demand? But, since the disciples were wrong so often, should I expect that my faith is my response to God?

Faith in Luke's Gospel

When Jesus saw their **faith**, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." Luke 5:20

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such great **faith** even in Israel." Luke 7:9

Jesus said to the woman, "Your **faith** has saved you; go in peace." Luke 7:50

"Where is your **faith**?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement, they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." Luke 8:25

Then he said to her, "Daughter, your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace." Luke 8:48

If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you—you of little **faith**! Luke 12:28

The Lord answered, "Who then is the **faithful** and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? Luke 12:42

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our **faith**!" Luke 17:5 (this current study)

He replied, "If you have **faith** as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you. Luke 17:6

Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your **faith** has made you well." Luke 17:19

I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find **faith** on the earth?" Luke 18:8

Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your **faith** has healed you." Luke 18:42

But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your **faith** may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." Luke 22:32

Faith can differ in quantity and quality

Jesus spoke of "no faith" - He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have **no faith**?" (Mark 4:40) And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith. Matthew 13:58

Jesus spoke of "little faith" - If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of **little faith**? Matthew 6:30.

Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked, "You of **little faith**, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? Matthew 16:8

He replied, "Because you have so **little faith**. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." Matthew 17:20

Jesus spoke of "faith" - Then he said to her, "Daughter, your **faith** has healed you. Go in peace." Luke 8:48

Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your **faith** has healed you." Luke 18:42

Jesus spoke of "great faith" - When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd following him, he said, "I tell you, I have not found such **great faith** even in Israel." (Luke 7:9)

Jesus spoke of "failing faith" - But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your **faith may not fail**. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:32)
Thus proving that faith is not from God – because if it was, it would be perfect.

Benefits of faith

He did not discriminate between us and them, for He **purified their hearts by faith**. Acts 15:9

Improving the quality of my faith

Looking away unto Jesus, the Author and Perfector of **our faith**. Hebrews 12:2

Faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the **Word of Christ**. Romans 10:17

Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have **obtained a faith of equal standing** with ours by the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:1

Understanding faith

Faith is a synonym for confidence, belief, or trust. Faith is a position taken after analysing the available evidence. Children have faith in their parents. You have faith the chair will support your weight. You have faith the other drivers will stay on their side of the road.

In fact, we often have very little evidence on which to base our assessment. For example, you don't know the drivers of the other cars on the road. Yet, you place your faith in them, anyway. This paucity of evidence has led some cynics to wrongly assume that faith is a position adopted without evidence, or even contrary to evidence. However, that is not a definition of faith. That is a definition of superstition.

Your faith is also part of the body of available evidence that is being assessed by others. For example, "Faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1) Your chair is supporting your weight. Other people then adopt a faith position that a similar chair will also support their weight. As we look to the positions adopted by other reliable people, we have increasing

confidence that we can safely adopt a similar position. Therefore, “We look to Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith.” (Hebrews 12:2) In a similar vein, as increased evidence becomes available, our faith will increase with an increase in confidence. For example, an increasing understanding of what the Bible is actually stating, will give an increasing confidence, leading to an increasing faith. “Faith comes out of hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ.” (Romans 10:17)

Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10:17

Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

“How does she do that?” I think that whenever I see our organists play – especially at choir practice when they effortlessly play music they’ve never seen before. As much as I would like to do what they do, I can’t, even though I took eight years of piano lessons. I just don’t have the God-given talent they do to play the keyboard.

“How does she do that?” Have you ever asked this question in regard to another Christian? When you hear, for example, how the widow in the New Testament gave everything she had as an offering trusting that the Lord would take care of her, do you wonder how she did it? I’ve often even concluded that I can’t do what the widow did because my faith is not as strong as hers. If you too have thought this, Jesus has news for us. In our text he uses a mustard seed and a mulberry tree to illustrate how even a small faith can do big things like restrain, rebuke, and forgive sin. (with thanks to Daniel Habben)

Music and songs

Songs about our faith, v5

Be still, for the presence... in faith receive from Him, 527

By faith (Getty), Ot 87

Could that faith... There’s gonna be better day (Gaither).

Faith on fire (Brueske & Bond)

Have faith in God, Ot 80

I walk by faith, Ot 32

My faith has found a resting place, H 669

My faith, it is an oaken staff, H

Now by faith (Nicky Chiswell)

Passing the faith along (Gaither)

Rejoice, Rejoice, Christ is in you... By faith shall be made possible (Kendrick)

That’s where your faith is really put to the test... God on the mountain (Dartt)

Therefore, being justified by faith, SiS 29

Through the eyes of faith, I can clearly see, God is good all the time (Moen)

With my new eyes of faith... I'm looking for the city (Tunney)

Songs about our faithfulness

I'd rather have Jesus... I'd rather be faithful... (Bernadotte)

May all who come behind us find us faithful, Ot 115

Tho' shadows deepen... Obey his bidding and faithful be... We'll talk it over, CWH 78

Songs about unworthy servants, v10

Humble yourself (2nd Chapter of Acts)

We were sinners and so unworthy... God is good (Moen)

Make me a servant, humble and meek, (Willard)

Make me like You, You are a servant... SiS 281

Songs about our service

Brother, sister, let me serve you, SiS 256

I serve a risen Saviour... He lives, H 725

This is our God, the Servant King, 674

Thought starters for personal reflection or group discussion

1. When did you finally come to faith in Christ?
 2. What was the available evidence that moved you?
 3. Why is telling your faith journey helpful to you, and to others?
 4. Why is it beneficial to think of faith as a position (or a verb) rather than as a possession (or a noun)?
 5. Read Romans 10:17, and Hebrews 12:2. Explain how the faith journey begins, and then continues.
 6. Why is it difficult, and essential, to embrace the term "unworthy servants"?
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