

WATCH YOURSELF // Luke 17:1-10

Message from the series, The Gospel of Luke

Where are the signposts for the lost? Believers, you and I, are the signposts in the way we live if we are bringing clarity to the gospel.

Main Point: You should watch yourself because others are watching you.

Do not confuse watching yourself with being obsessed with yourself or putting on a spiritual straightjacket as though you were afraid to make a wrong move. Instead, focus on living in a way that does not bring confusion about who Jesus is, but brings clarity.

This passage from Luke provides four lessons for careful disciples. The first two, which deal with temptations and forgiveness, focus on horizontal relationships—those with other people. Lessons three and four deal with faith and serving with humility—these focus more on our vertical relationship with God.

1. Careful disciples are living above reproach (v. 1-2)

The word translated as “temptation” in the ESV is *skandalon* in Greek—more literally a “stumbling block.” We do not want to be a stumbling block for other people. When Jesus speaks of the “millstone around the neck,” he is making the case that a violent death is better than leaving a legacy of confusion for tender, in-process believers. Ultimately, if we are never a spiritual help to anyone, but always a hindrance, our salvation must be questioned.

2. Careful disciples are growing in and learning forgiveness (v. 3-4)

The gospel we preach is a gospel of grace and forgiveness. We have been forgiven by God, so two questions are pertinent: has it changed us? And, are we willing to give what we’ve received? We are called to “rebuke” a brother who sins, and the goal of this interaction is that our brother may repent and be restored and reconciled. When this repentance happens, we are to forgive and forget it. As Ephesians 4: 32 makes clear, we forgive others as Christ forgave us. Are we a forgiving people?

3. Careful disciples are depending on Christ (v. 5-6)

To forgive others in this way is a high calling, and in response to this teaching, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. But Jesus’ response to this deflects from faith to himself. We are not saved *by* faith; we are saved by grace *through* faith. The focus must be on the object of our faith—Christ—rather than the size of our faith. Disciples can move mountains or mulberry trees because it is contingent on Christ’s power, not the strength of their faith.

4. Careful disciples serve with humility (v. 7-10)

The Lord is a kind taskmaster. Our service is of no gain to God—he does not need us--but he allows us to partake in the work of his kingdom. Verses 7 through 10 form a mini parable—the point is that we don’t look for applause; we merely serve with gladness and humility. As Mary said to the servants at the wedding feast in Cana: “Do whatever he tells you” (John 2). Discipleship is on the most basic level simply reading the Bible and doing what it says.

We should care about how others see us. The catalyst for moving from not caring to caring is the question, “Do you love Jesus?” Lord, give us a love for Jesus that prompts us to watch ourselves and forget ourselves.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do we both “watch ourselves” and “forget ourselves”? Is it easy for these two things to happen together?
2. How can our lives bring either clarity or confusion to the gospel? What particular areas of your life could obscure the message of Christ for others?
3. What does it mean that we are saved *through* faith rather than *by* faith? Why is this distinction necessary?