

Learning More with  
**Stories of the Master**

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~ *A Night of Stories, A Night of Lessons* ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read Luke 17:1-
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

**1. Read the text of the story.**

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Luke 17:1-10 NASB	Luke 17:1-10 NLT
<p>He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!  <sup>2</sup> It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.  <sup>3</sup> Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. <sup>4</sup> And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”</p> <p><sup>5</sup> The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”  <sup>6</sup> And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you.</p> <p><sup>7</sup> “Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’? <sup>8</sup> But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and <i>properly</i> clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’? <sup>9</sup> He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? <sup>10</sup> So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done <i>only</i> that which we ought to have done.’”</p>	<p>One day Jesus said to his disciples, “There will always be temptations to sin, but what sorrow awaits the person who does the tempting! <sup>2</sup> It would be better to be thrown into the sea with a millstone hung around your neck than to cause one of these little ones to fall into sin. <sup>3</sup> So watch yourselves!</p> <p>“If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. <sup>4</sup> Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive.”</p> <p><sup>5</sup> The apostles said to the Lord, “Show us how to increase our faith.”</p> <p><sup>6</sup> The Lord answered, “If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘May you be uprooted and thrown into the sea,’ and it would obey you!</p> <p><sup>7</sup> “When a servant comes in from plowing or taking care of sheep, does his master say, ‘Come in and eat with me’? <sup>8</sup> No, he says, ‘Prepare my meal, put on your apron, and serve me while I eat. Then you can eat later.’ <sup>9</sup> And does the master thank the servant for doing what he was told to do? Of course not. <sup>10</sup> In the same way, when you obey me you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants who have simply done our duty.’”</p>

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## 2. Discover key cultural and historical insights

From *Through Peasants' Eyes* by Kenneth Bailey, pages 114-125

1. Even the poor had servants. In this story, the servant is the plowman and the cook. The master probably has only one servant and the master may be renting the land. But Jesus is appealing to the common understanding that all had about master-servant relationships.
2. Service to a nobleman provided great security and also provided a sense of worth and meaning in life. The servant provided hard work, loyalty, and obedience.
3. The servant, after plowing in the field all day, would not expect to return and have special privileges. He would be expected to come into the house and prepare the meal for his master. The meal would be about three in the afternoon.
4. The issue is not the master allowing food and rest for the servant but the servant fulfilling the duties already proscribed for him.
5. 17:9 – he does not think the slave should probably be translated, the servant has no merit. The idea here is that the servant has no special merit because he did his day's work. The master is not indebted to him in any way to give a special reward because the servant has only done what he should have done.
6. I am an unworthy servant – the word unworthy is *achreios* which had two shades of meaning – useless and miserable. But originally *chreios* meant “need” and *achreios* meant “without need.” It is easy to see how “without need” came to mean useless and that that came to mean miserable. But the original idea is that the servant, after doing all that he was supposed to do, had an attitude of “I am a servant without need,” i.e., a servant who does not need any special reward or merit. I am just doing what I am supposed to do.

Other Notes:

1. Millstones could weigh anywhere from one hundred to 3500 pounds.
2. The Greeks, Syrians, and romans would tie one around a person's neck and throw him into a river, lake, or ocean as a form of capital punishment.
3. The roots of a mulberry tree were regarded as very strong and it was thought such a tree could stand for 600 years. Commentary on Luke , Norval Geldenhuys, 434
4. They grow horizontal the width of the canopy with vertical spikers going down for stability.  
<http://homeguides.sfgate.com/root-structure-mulberry-tree-60494.html>
5. Mulberry trees do not like to stand in water. They thrive in warm, well-drained soil. They can bear fruit for hundreds of years. [http://www.illustratedbible.net/mulberry\\_tree.htm](http://www.illustratedbible.net/mulberry_tree.htm)

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**3. Answer these reflective questions.**

**Jesus' first lesson was about the inevitability of temptations and trials coming our way in this world. How does this make you feel, knowing that temptations and trials will come? How can you prepare for them?**

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**Jesus gave a very sobering picture of the coming judgment. It will be worse than being thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around one's neck. How does the coming judgment of God affect your life?**

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**Jesus told the disciples that they must be abundant in their forgiveness towards others. Have you forgiven everyone of their offenses toward you?**

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**Why do you think the disciples asked, "Lord, increase our faith?"**

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**What do you think is the main lesson from the story of the humble servant?**

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