



# *living in* ABUNDANCE



Sermon Series  
Resource

# **LIVING IN ABUNDANCE**

## **Sermon Series**

### **September 7 - October 5, 2025**

God has given us the abundance of creation, time, talents, treasure, and commitment. Our stewardship of these gifts is everything we do after we say "I believe." It is the way in which we use all of these resources to live in God's abundant love and share God's abundant love with our neighbor. The goal of our stewardship program is to help each of us grow in our relationship with Jesus.

September 7, 2025: Creation (Care for Creation)  
September 14, 2025: Lost and Found (Time)  
September 21, 2025: Love or Money? (Talents)  
September 28, 2025: Place/Sharing? (Treasures)  
October 5, 2025: Transforming Faith (Commitment)

Resource:

[Godsblessing.org](http://Godsblessing.org)

The Very Good Gospel by Lisa Sharon Harper

ELCA Lectionary Year C

Prepared by Pam Miller, Adult Ministry Coordinator

**September 7, 2025**  
**Living in Abundance: Creation**

In creation, God gave Adam and Eve dominion over the earth and all that is in it. God is the owner; we are stewards. Creation is our first stewardship. Caring for creation enables us to live in God's abundance.

**Focus Question:** How might you steward and care for the earth to sustain it for future generations?

**Opening Prayer:**

Dear God, You are the fount of all blessings, source of all life, and giver of all grace: we thank You for the gift of life, for air, food, and water; for the love of family and friends; for all the things without which we couldn't continue to live.

We thank You for the mystery of creation: for the beauty that the eye can see, for the marvels that the ear can hear, for all the amazing mysteries that fill the universe with wonder.

Help us to grow in knowledge and appreciation of Your Creation, to be good stewards of what You have given us, and always to remember that every good gift comes only from You.

We thank You for this day and our life. We thank You that You are our God, our Creator, and our Savior.

For these and all blessings, we give You thanks, eternal, loving God, through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen. (C.S. Lewis Institute)

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**2 Corinthians 9:6-11** "Reciprocity - the process of receiving and restoring."

This verse highlights the importance and impact of generosity and a joyful attitude in giving. When we provide with a generous and cheerful heart, we not only bless others but also open ourselves up to receiving blessings in return.

1. Giving is not just about material possessions. How does giving apply to our attitude and intention behind our actions?

2. How does a spirit of generosity help us to be good stewards of creation?

**Gospel Reading: Mark 6:30-44** "Generosity. God can feed 5,000 from one child's lunch."

Jesus and the apostles went to a solitary place on the western side of the Sea of Galilee. Instead of solitude, he found a large number of people from the surrounding towns had gathered to see him.

1. What was His response to the people who gathered?

2. What does this tell us about how He cares for his creation?

In the readings above, we see Jesus caring about the people He created and Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, reminding them of the importance of a generous and cheerful heart. We show our respect to the Creator by our stewardship of creation. The Bible teaches us about our interactions with God's creation.

**Genesis 1:1-31:** In the beginning God created....

1. What is one of the most amazing things God created?
2. When God saw what he had made, he called it "very good." (Genesis 1:31) In what ways would you describe what is "very good" about our world?
  - a. Relationships created?
  - b. Peace?
  - c. Mankind?

**Genesis 2:15:** Garden of Eden

1. God made us in His image. What was his plan for how creation would be cared for?

**Leviticus 25:1-7:** The year of Jubilee

1. How do these verses speak to caring for our creation?

**Matthew 6:25-34:** Do not worry

1. How do these verses show how much God loves and cares for all of His creation?

**Reflections:**

1. How have you experienced awe and wonder at God's creation?
2. How is the call to care for God's creation connected with your concern for every person's life and dignity?
3. What concerns you most about what is happening to our creation?
4. What has your experience with nature taught you about the Creator?

5. **Focus Question:** How might you steward and care for the earth to sustain it for future generations?

**Closing: The Lord's Prayer**

**September 14, 2025**  
**Living In Abundance: Lost And Found (Time)**

The grumbling of the religious leaders in today's gospel is actually our holy hope: this Jesus welcomes sinners and eats with them. That our God seeks and saves the lost is not only a holy hope, it is our only hope. As the writer of 1 Timothy reminds us, "The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Thanks be to God.

Stewardship begins with God and how God has shown love for us. We are first receivers. We belong to God, and all that we have belongs to God. Out of this receiving, we are freed in Christ to love, give, and serve.

**Opening Prayer:** O God, overflowing with mercy and compassion, you lead back to yourself all those who go astray. Preserve your people in your loving care, that we may reject whatever is contrary to you and may follow all things that sustain our life in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**1 Timothy 1:12-17** Christ Jesus came for sinners.

The letters to Timothy and Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles because they contain advice especially intended for leaders in the church. Here, the mercy shown to Paul, who once persecuted the church, is cited as evidence that even the most unworthy may become witnesses to the grace of God.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 15:1-10** Looking for the lost sheep, silver coin: Jesus eating with sinners.

Jesus tells two stories that suggest a curious connection between the lost being found and sinners repenting. God takes the initiative to find sinners, each of whom is so precious to God that their recovery brings joy in heaven.

**Notes:**

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, September 11-17 (C) - Luke 15:1-10**

**Discipleship:** *A New Joy*

**Focus Question:** *What does joy feel like?*

## word of life

**“Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”** Luke 15:10 (NRSV)

Read Luke 15:1-10

Once more Jesus is accompanied by the Pharisees and scribes who are complaining about the company Jesus keeps. They grumble, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2 NRSV)

1. *What might be wrong with interacting with sinners?*
2. *Who is not a sinner?*

Jesus responds by telling three parables describing the joy experienced when the lost is found. The parables include a shepherd who loses a sheep, a woman who loses a coin, and a father who loses his son. All are contained in Luke 15 and the first two parables are included as part of this lesson.

3. *What does it feel like to lose something?*
4. *What do you do when you realize something is missing?*
5. *How quickly do you give up on the lost item?*

The first parable describes a shepherd with one hundred sheep, but loses one. He leaves the ninety-nine to seek the lost. On some level this parable is not reasonable. Why abandon and risk the ninety-nine in order to help one? Perhaps the shepherd brought the sheep to a protected place before departing. Or perhaps the shepherd risks everything out of his love for the one. Either way, the lost sheep matters.

Yet, the parable is not about proper shepherding techniques as much as the joy of finding the lost. In fact, the joy is so abundant, the shepherd goes home and throws a party to rejoice at the lost being found.

6. *Imagine hearing this parable if you were lost. What might you feel?*
7. *Imagine hearing this parable if you were one of the ninety-nine. What might you feel?*

The second parable is of a woman who has ten silver coins but loses one of them. It is estimated her money is worth months of savings. She fervently searches her home until she finds it. Like the shepherd, she invites her friends to celebrate. Her joy is contagious and spreads to others.

8. *With whom do you relate: the shepherd or the woman? How so?*
9. *After searching so long for her lost coin, why spend the money on a party?*
10. *Why not forget the party and save the money?*

God’s joy when the lost is found and sinners repent is the heart of the gospel message. God does not condemn but rejoices with an overflowing party. There is hope for all of us, sinners that we are. Through the Holy Spirit, God is at work seeking us and drawing us to Jesus Christ.

11. *What is the message of this passage for you?*
12. *How do you share in God’s joy?*

## **word among us**

A struggling congregation considered closing its doors because worship attendance had dipped so low, but their newly called pastor had much enthusiasm. Slowly over a period of months, people who had not worshipped in years began to come back to church. One woman who always sat in the front was tempted to sit in the back saying, “If I’m in the front, then I can’t welcome those who finally come back to church. This is so exciting!” There was such joy each Sunday.

But not all had joy. Some of the congregation who had endured the pain of the bad years resented people coming back to enjoy the good years. One man asked, “Where were these members when we needed them? Why didn’t they call me back when I tried to get them involved?”

1. *Have you ever found yourself in a situation wanting to rejoice at the lost being found, but meeting resentment?*
2. *What prevents some from rejoicing when the lost has been found?*

The parables told by Jesus are familiar, but are not as simple as they appear. Sometimes it is easier to get caught up in grumbling about those newcomers and the changes needed to accommodate the lost. Take a moment to prayerfully ponder where you find yourselves in the lesson.

3. *Do you relate to those who complain about Jesus eating with sinners, those who are lost needing to be found, or those filled with joy at finding the lost? Explain.*
4. *Would you have answered the last question differently at various points of your life? Explain.*

Ultimately this passage is not about resentment and grumbling. It is not even about the lost, but about a God who seeks the lost and rejoices when sinners repent. The word “repent” means to turn and face a new direction. No longer lost, the person now faces God. Instead of anger and wrath, the lost person discovers a God who welcomes the lost home and throws a party. No doubt, the lost person rejoices, but this joy pales in comparison to the joy of God who finds the lost.

5. *Attempt to describe God’s joy when we as sinners repent.*
6. *Attempt to describe your joy at being found, forgiven, and accepted by God.*

At worship, we are invited to participate in the celebration of the feast of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Sinners are welcomed to the feast. Forgiveness is extended. Let the party begin with God as the host, rejoicing with gusto.

7. *How does your congregation welcome sinners?*
8. *How does your congregation rejoice?*
9. *What might be done in your congregation to more fully reflect the presence of God and God’s joy?*

### **Prayer**

God of grace, thank you for seeking and finding us. Thank you for rejoicing instead of condemning. Release joy in our hearts and lives. Amen.

### **Dig Deeper**

Psalms 51:1-17

## **last word**

Take a deep breath.  
Allow God to fill your whole being.



*Daily Discipleship*

Written by John and Robin McCullough-Bade

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**September 21, 2025**  
**Living In Abundance: Love or Money? (Talents)**

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. “Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all.” Apart from the generosity of God, we have nothing—we are nothing. By God’s gracious favor, we have everything we need. Jesus talks about money more than any other subject except the kingdom of God. Money is a powerful resource because it has the ability to take our heart with it.

**Opening Prayer:** God among us, we gather in the name of your Son to learn love for one another. Keep our feet from evil paths. Turn our minds to your wisdom and our hearts to the grace revealed in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**1 Timothy 2:1-7** One God, one mediator—Christ Jesus—who gave himself for all people. The pastoral epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church’s focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 16:1-13** A shrewd manager: faithful in little, faithful in much; serving God/wealth.

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest manager who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship, given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

**Notes:**

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, September 18-24 (C) - Luke 16:1-13**

**Discipleship:** *A New Shrewdness*

**Focus Question:** *How are you faithful in caring for what God has entrusted you?*

## word of life

**“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much.”** Luke 16:10 (NRSV)

Read Luke 16:1-13

When Jesus told parables, he often left listeners a bit confused. Such is the case with the parable about the dishonest manager.

1. *What do you know about parables?*
2. *Why do you think Jesus told parables?*

The parable describes a rich man who after discovering his steward is dishonest fires him. But first, the rich man expects some accountability from his steward. Some might question the wisdom of the owner to allow his employee additional time to continue his dishonest practices.

3. *How shrewd is the rich man?*

The steward is desperate and takes advantage of this delay before his last day of employment. Since he has already offended his boss, he chooses to befriend the debtors of the master. Consequently, the steward summons each of his master's debtors, lowers their debt, and accepts their money. He doesn't just reduce the debt by a small amount, but cuts the debt in half for some of the people. In doing so, he hopes to be welcomed into their homes.

4. *What do you think of the practices of the steward?*
5. *How would you respond if you were one of the debtors?*

The master discovers the activity of the steward and commends him. Commends him? That's right! Jesus concludes this parable with a surprise ending. “And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.” (Luke 16:8-9 NRSV) This is not a parable of justice with the manager getting his due punishment.

6. *What is the point of the parable?*
7. *Why is Jesus commending dishonesty?*
8. *Or is he commending a certain type of creativity and shrewdness?*

Most Biblical scholars have been mystified by this parable. It does not appear to be consistent with the values of Jesus. Yet, it is consistent with Jesus encouraging people to wake up, be aware of the times, take advantage of the opportunity, and to risk for the sake of Jesus. Followers of Jesus are not to stay in a closet to avoid engaging in a world full of challenges and decision-making. At least the steward acted with diligence and speed to protect himself and his interests.

Some suggest this parable is too absurd with no one expected to believe it. Those who are dishonest, including some in the religious community can not expect to be commended. Or do they? At least the steward did not add interest to the account and charge too much. Then the debtors would have been angered rather than grateful towards the master and the steward.

9. *What would you ask Jesus about this parable?*

## **word among us**

The teacher emphasized to the class the importance of submitting assignments on time. For weeks, the teacher had reviewed the date for the upcoming report. There would be no exceptions. Significant points would be lost if the report was late.

On that date, Sam realized on the bus he had left his airplane report at home and had no way of retrieving it until the next day. Well, actually he had not completed the report. Truthfully, he had not begun it. Unfortunately, that was his habit. But, he quickly went to work creating amazing paper airplanes on the bus. By the time he reached the school, he had a whole fleet of planes which he proudly carried into the classroom and flew them to the teacher's desk. The teacher shook her head and said, "Ok Sam, I've got to give you some credit for creativity. At least you pulled something together."

1. *Why would the teacher commend the student?*
2. *What are other examples of someone being commended in surprising circumstances?*

Sometimes in the church we leave our business sense at the door and forget our common sense. We give people jobs in the church who do not have the skills or the desire to produce excellent work. We do not keep our property, buildings, newsletters, websites, and brochures at the same standard as our workplaces. We assume the congregation does not need those components found in many workplaces such as a mission statement, goals, a planning process, and opportunities for evaluation.

3. *What might be gained if your congregation became shrewder (in the best sense of that word)?*
4. *What might be lost?*

Jesus concludes the parable with some general comments, not tightly connected to the parable, "Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." (Luke 16:10 NRSV) In many ways the steward was not faithful in caring for the master's goods, but he was extremely diligent in acting with speed about his limited opportunity to create friends.

5. *What have you been entrusted by God to care for?*
6. *Do you consider that you been entrusted with a little or a lot?*
7. *What has your congregation been entrusted to care for?*

It is easy to get caught up in the riches of this world. Once more, Jesus offers a warning about splitting our allegiance between Jesus and money. We cannot have two masters vying for our attention. Somehow we will end up resenting one. Hopefully, it will not be Christ.

8. *What competes to be master of your life?*
9. *How do we end up serving other "things" than God?*
10. *How might we be shrewd in making choices to follow Jesus?*

## **Prayer**

Ruler of all, rule my life. Show me ways to be shrewd in making decisions about following you. Amen.

## **Dig Deeper**

Amos 8:4-7

## *last word*

Ponder one common or business sense suggestion for your congregation and offer it with love.



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**September 28, 2025 - 16th**  
**Living In Abundance: Place/Sharing? (Treasure)**

Consideration of and care for those in need (especially those “at our gate,” visible to us, of whom we are aware) is an essential component of good stewardship. It is in the sharing of wealth that we avoid the snare of wealth. It is the one whom death could not hold—who comes to us risen from the dead—who can free us from the death grip of greed.

We are a church that is a catalyst, convener, and bridge builder. Our faith calls us to share a common vision to uphold human dignity and to love, walk alongside, and serve people, particularly those who are facing poverty.

**Opening Prayer:** O God, rich in mercy, you look with compassion on this troubled world. Feed us with your grace, and grant us the treasure that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**1 Timothy 6:6-19** Eager to be rich or eager to pursue the richness of God’s justice?

Timothy is reminded of the confession he made at his baptism and of its implications for daily life. His priorities will be different from those of people who merely want to be rich.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 16:19-31** Story of poor Lazarus and the wealthy man.

Jesus tells a parable in which the poor one is “lifted up” and the rich one is “sent away empty.” Jesus makes it clear that this ethic of merciful reversal is not new but is as old as Moses and the prophets.

**Notes:**

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, September 25-October 1 (C) - Luke 16:19-31**

**Discipleship:** *A New Messenger*

**Focus Question:** *How do we stay open to the message of Jesus?*

## word of life

**“He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” Luke 16:31 (NRSV)**

Read Luke 16:19-31

Jesus addresses the Pharisees in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In Luke 16:14, the Pharisees are described as “lovers of money.”

1. *What does it mean to be a “lover of money?”*
2. *What is the danger of loving money?*

In the parable, Jesus describes a rich man who is dressed in the finest of clothing, including the color purple and fine linen. Every day is a bountiful feast. Yet, outside his gate lies a poor man covered with sores. This poor man is willing to eat the crumbs and leftovers from the rich man’s daily feast. Instead of being filled with food, this poor man is ignored. The only care the poor man receives is from dogs which care for him by licking his sores.

3. *How do you envision this scene? Describe it.*
4. *Why might the rich man ignore the poor man?*
5. *Is it easier to ignore a poor person with no name, story, or information? How so?*

This is the only parable to have names for the characters. But note the rich man is left nameless. This is a reversal of the common practice for the rich and famous to have their names well-known, but the poor to remain nameless. Here, the poor man is identified as Lazarus meaning “God is my help.”

6. *Why is it helpful to have a name associated with the poor man?*
7. *How important is it to be known by someone by name?*

When Lazarus dies, he is carried away by angels to be with Abraham. The rich man dies and ends up in Hades, a place of torment. Part of the torment includes being able to see poor Lazarus with Abraham. In pain, the rich man calls for Abraham to send Lazarus to give him comfort as if Lazarus is his servant. Instead of providing comfort, Abraham offers a lesson about the chasm between heaven and hell.

Abraham reminds the rich man of all the good he had in life, but now he would suffer for eternity. Although this reversal of fortune is not favorable to the rich man, it is very good for the poor man who suffered greatly on earth. What shocking news! The Pharisees and others believed prosperity on this earth is an indicator of God’s blessing. Yet what good news for the poor to hear their bad fortune on earth might not continue after death?

8. *What surprises you about this story?*
9. *Jesus often tells troubling parables for his listeners. How is this parable troubling?*

For the first time in the parable, the rich man shows compassion and wants Lazarus to warn his five brothers. He does not want them to experience his pain. Abraham is quite practical in his response. If the pain and hunger of Lazarus was ignored when he was outside their home, why would anyone in the family pay attention to him – even if he came back from the dead?

10. *By the end of the parable, what feelings do you have?*

## word among us

*Today. . .It is a gift.*

*Today. . .It is not forever.*

It is tempting to believe our life on this earth will continue forever. It is easy to mistake today for eternity.

1. *As you ponder eternity, what aspects of this life do you hope are part of heaven?*
2. *How often do you think about life beyond the grave?*
3. *What are your questions about heaven?*

The parable told by Jesus to the Pharisees would have been a wake-up call. The rich man's sin was not his wealth but his lack of compassion for those in need. He was so consumed with himself, he could not see anything beyond himself. Yet, he is nameless on this earth and left to be tormented forever.

4. *To whom do you relate in this parable?*
5. *Is it fair for the wealthy to automatically get prosperity in heaven?*
6. *Is it fair for the poor to automatically get a spot in heaven near Abraham?*

Once more, Jesus turns things upside down. Prosperity on this earth does not guarantee eternal life nor does it prevent it. Jesus wants people in relationships – with God, himself, others, and especially the poor. The love of money can blind people of all ages to the hurts of those in need. This parable pulls people from complacency and challenges the status quo.

7. *What helps us to hear and respond to the poor?*
8. *Why don't we do more to extend compassion to those in need?*
9. *What is the responsibility of the rich to the poor?*

The rich man hopes by sending Lazarus to his family, they will hear the message about God and justice. Hopefully, their lives will be transformed. It is possible for a resurrected man to draw some attention, but for how long? There is a certain irony in this, seeing Jesus will rise from the dead, but not all will listen to him.

10. *What person who has died would you like to have a conversation with?*
11. *What would you ask?*
12. *What person would you want to come back and talk to our country at this time?*
13. *How can we better listen to Jesus?*
14. *How can we better listen to the poor?*

### Prayer

Jesus, open our eyes and ears to the poor. Show us ways to walk with those who have less and be open to your lessons as we serve. Fill us with humility and grace. Amen

### Dig Deeper

Amos 6:1-7

### *last word*

This week, find time to go  
through your closets  
and donate from your abundance.  
to those in need.



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**October 5, 2025**  
**Living In Abundance: Transforming Faith (Commitment)**

A little faith goes a long way is Jesus' point in the gospel. A mustard seed's-worth of faith has miraculous potential. The patience, tenacity, and endurance required for the life of faith are the blessings received in holy baptism, holy communion, and the word read and proclaimed in this assembly. Anticipate them. Receive them with thanksgiving.

God has blessed us with an abundance of resources. How might we celebrate the abundance that God has entrusted to our care, as well as the ways that God is calling us to share this abundance with our neighbors?

**Opening Prayer:** Benevolent, merciful God: When we are empty, fill us. When we are weak in faith, strengthen us. When we are cold in love, warm us, that with fervor we may love our neighbors and serve them for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen

**Sermon Reflection:**

As you reflect on the sermon, what stands out as being particularly helpful, insightful, or difficult to grasp?

**2 Timothy 1:1-14** Guard the treasure entrusted to you: faith and love in Christ. This letter, written to Timothy, is a personal message of encouragement. In the face of hardship and persecution, Timothy is reminded that his faith is a gift of God. He is encouraged to exercise that faith with the help of the Holy Spirit.

**Gospel Reading: Luke 17:5-10** Faith the size of a mustard seed.

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus instructs his followers about the power of faith and the duties of discipleship. He calls his disciples to adopt the attitude of servants whose actions are responses to their identity rather than works seeking reward.

**Notes:**

# Daily Discipleship

**Sunday, October 2-8, Luke 17:5-10**

**Discipleship:** *A New Response*

**Focus Question:** *How is Jesus calling you to respond in new ways?*

## word of life

“The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” Luke 17:5 (NRSV)

Read Luke 17:5-10

Luke 16 concludes with Jesus’ parable about Lazarus and the rich man. Jesus is convinced if people will not listen and believe the words of Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced by someone who rises from the dead. *Where is their faith?*

Luke 17 begins with a series of teachings by Jesus. (Take a moment to read Luke 17:1-4 to understand the context for the assigned lesson.) He sternly warns his listeners against becoming a stumbling block to those new in the faith. The image of a heavy millstone being placed around the neck of any person who tempts another to sin and being thrown into the sea is both vivid and troubling.

1. *What might be an example of causing someone to stumble?*
2. *What responsibility do mature Christians have towards those new to the faith?*

Next, Jesus adds some challenging words about life in the Christian community by instructing people to confront those who have sinned against them. The clear desired outcome of this confrontation is one of repentance and reconciliation. “Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, ‘I repent’ you must forgive.” (Luke 17:1-4 NRSV) If the person repents, Jesus instructs disciples to forgive them.

Is it any wonder the apostles respond by requesting their own faith be increased? (Luke 17:5)

3. *What does it mean to increase one’s faith?*
4. *Can a person increase his or her own faith?*
5. *Or is increasing faith a job for the Holy Spirit? How so?*

But Jesus affirms their faith—even if it small. It does not take much faith to do much. Nothing is impossible with God who desires to be at work in our lives. “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.” (Luke 17:6) Mustard seeds are the smallest of seeds. Imagine if you had the faith of an oak tree or a mountain.

6. *What do the words of Jesus mean to you?*
7. *How much faith do you have – more than a mustard seed?*
8. *What can you accomplish because of your faith?*

Jesus continues his teachings with an example of a master who asks a servant to prepare a meal for the master rather than permitting the servant to eat first, before the master is served. The servant has been hired to serve the master whether in the field, house, or both. That is his job. So, he does not need special rewards for doing his job. The servant is fulfilling the tasks of his job. In the same manner, disciples are called to serve and to do the work of God with whatever faith has been given.

9. *What point is Jesus trying to make with this example of the worker?*



## **word among us**

Mary sat quietly beside her husband's hospital bed and watched as the dawn light gently caressed the room. She pondered the news from the physician given to her in the early hours of the day. As a nurse, she knew what was ahead for her husband and herself. Her prayer was a simple one, "Increase my faith."

Jacob was confused by the actions of his teenage daughter. She used to be loving, cooperative, and a delight. Now it was like a stranger had taken over her body. His prayer for wisdom was captured by a simple prayer, "Increase my faith."

The world of Chris had been turned upside down again. How much more could be handled? Life seemed so overwhelmingly unfair. Chris was sliding into depression and despair. Yet, in a final cry to God, Chris offered, "Increase my faith."

1. *When have you asked for God to increase your faith? What would that mean?*
2. *When have you experienced a boost in faith?*

Our faith can increase as we are blessed by the love of Christian community, inspired by God's word, moved through worship, as well as other many ways. Yet our faith can increase as we experience the trials and tragedies of life. In the process of being stripped down, we can become open to God in new ways.

3. *Reflect back on your own faith journey. How has your faith increased over the years?*
4. *How does God seem to be developing and forming your faith?*
5. *In what ways can our faith grow when we face challenges?*
6. *Is it ok to doubt and question God? How so?*

After the disciples hear about the expectations of Jesus, the disciples want their faith increased. They fear the millstone around their neck. They question if they can confront those who offend and whether they can forgive the repentant. Jesus expects them to respond as he would. They doubt if they are capable of responding in such new ways.

7. *What is so new and challenging about the expectations of Jesus?*
8. *Why do you believe the disciples want their faith increased?*
9. *What do you say today to disciples who are unsure if they can handle the problems before them?*

Jesus reminds the disciples that they already have enough faith. It doesn't matter if their faith is small like a mustard seed. Ultimately, the new response is not about them as humans and their own human ability to live as Jesus describes. Instead, it is all about God. Whether a disciple has a little or a lot of faith, God is at work. God is blessing. God is bringing the fruit. It also means the outcome is not under the control of a disciple, but of God.

10. *How do you respond to this news?*
11. *What do you hope to remember from this lesson?*

### **Prayer**

Mighty and powerful God, increase my faith. Amen

### **Dig Deeper**

Psalms 37:1-10



*Daily Discipleship*

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## **last word**

Offer a daily prayer,  
"Increase my faith."



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