

## Should Being a Christian Be Easy?

### Oops!

It was pretty easy this morning. It was pretty easy for me to get up so I could come to church and get ready for the service, for preaching. I'm not really a morning person, so it wasn't *that* easy to get up this morning and get ready for church. Maybe you had it a little harder than me. It isn't always so easy to get everyone in the house dressed and ready to go to church. But you've come to church. You made it. And it's good to see you all here. I hope it wasn't too difficult getting here.

It was pretty easy, really, yesterday, too. And the day before.

I *hope* that your life has been easy lately. If hard things come your way, I hope that they're temporary. I hope that school is challenging for you, and that your teachers are pushing you to learn, but that it's not too challenging. If you're working, I hope that you feel confident and accomplished by the work that you do. I hope that it was pretty easy for you to get up and come here to church this morning. That your fridge is full, that you're happy.

Right?

I hope life is easy. Do you feel the same way? I hope that life is easy. But how easy is it, really, to live like you and I live? The disciples wrestle with this question in Luke 17 today. Christ tells them a few things—he gives them a few different pictures—about what it's really like to live like you and I live.

Here's what Christ tells you today. He sets out some expectations, some duties—for you. And they make you think: Maybe this life isn't supposed to be easy. God's Word gives you a few different pictures to consider today. Maybe you know some of them already, or you're familiar with them. There's the millstone. There's the faith the size of a mustard seed. And they make you think! *How easy is it, really, to wake up each day and be a Christian? Should being a Christian be easy?*

### Ugh!

Christ gives you something to sit with and think about. He says: ***Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. So watch yourselves.***

Here's what it like to be a Christian: Don't cause other people to stumble. Don't cause other people to sin. It feels like Christ is starting off with a pretty easy one here. He's giving you this list of duties for a Christian, he's showing you what it's like to live like a Christian. You think: *Ok, I won't cause other people to sin. I won't be the bad influence. I'm not the bad guy. I already do this, Christ. Watch yourself!*

### ***Woe to anyone through whom they come.***

This is what it looks like to live like a Christian: You wake up, you go to school, you get dressed for work. And you step into a world where there are going to be things that cause people to stumble. It's impossible for people to avoid stuff that trips them up, but when was it *your* language that changed the way someone thought about you, thought about your Christian faith, and you caused them to stumble? When did the show that you're watching impact the way that others thought about what it means to be a Christian. When was it your bad attitude. A job poorly done. It's *work* to avoid these traps. It's *work* to guard your tongue. To watch what you say. To *not* be that stumbling block. How can you even know how many times you've been the stumbling block? It's tempting to think: *Isn't their sin their problem, not mine?* No, it's yours. ***It would be better for [you] to be thrown into the sea with a millstone—at least then you wouldn't be the one to cause someone to stumble, to sin. Woe to anyone [who causes someone to stumble].***

That's what it's like to be a Christian. When you wake up, Christ says: That's your job. *Don't be the reason people sin*, even though stumbling blocks pop up *everywhere you look*. And then Christ turns up the heat. Christ says: It's not *just* your job to keep people from sinning. It's also your job to call people out when they sin. To stop someone from doing what they're doing. From living like they're living. You have to do *that*. You have to be *that guy*. ***If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.***

Is being a Christian easy? These duties aren't easy. The disciples don't know if they can do it: ***"Increase our faith!" "Increase our faith!"*** They say, "We're not ready! We don't have the strength. We're not brave enough to call someone out on their sin." *You* think: What if I botch it. What if I call someone out and it turns ugly. How can anyone take me seriously when I call them out for their sin when I know—and they might know too—what kind of person I am, and the things I've said or the way I've acted—my past. ***"Increase our faith!"*** You think: *Then maybe I can do what Christ asks me to do. My faith needs to be bigger, better.*

### Aha!

Being a Christian isn't easy. I don't know what this looks like in your life. But you do. Maybe you wake up and you feel that others can't take you seriously because

of the way you've acted in your past. Maybe you wake up and your anger or your bad attitude comes out and makes your day difficult and makes other peoples' day difficult and you *feel* like a walking, talking stumbling block. The kind of stumbling block that Christ warns about. **"Increase our faith!" "Increase our faith!"** the disciples say.

But the disciples are wrong. Let's be clear about that. The disciples have it wrong.

But it's not about having *more faith*. Is being a Christian easy? No. But will having more faith—*stronger faith*—make being a Christian easier? Also, no. You don't need "more faith" before you can live as a Christian. Christ says something different. Don't worry about the strength of your faith. It's not about that. Christ says: Even the tiniest, newest faith *can already move mountains*, not because of how great the faith is, but because of *what that faith holds onto*. Because of *what God promises you*. What God does for you. To wake up and step out into the world and *live like a Christian...*

Christ says: **If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to [a] mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it will obey you.**

**Whee!**

If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to your past: *You don't bother me anymore*. Christ washed your past clean. Look to Christ. Look to what Christ did. You can say to your past: *You don't define me. I was baptized into Christ. He lived and died for me to make me God's very own child. That's who I am. God's child*. And you can be a Christian—God's child—to the people around you. If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to that bad attitude that you wake up with: *No more! Be uprooted and go sink into the sea. I don't want to be angry today*. You say: *I'll be Christ to someone else, now*.

**Yeah!**

You wake up every day knowing that you are who you are not because of some inner strength that you've conjured up for yourself. You are who you are because of Christ. So I hope that you woke up this morning and it wasn't too hard to get to church. I hope that you wake up every day and you're ready to meet those good challenges that you face at school and that you feel fulfilled at work. But my biggest hope is that you wake up today and tomorrow and the next day knowing that the reason you live and breathe is because God has called you into his service to love your neighbor, to keep her from sinning, to forgive your friend when they mess up. To show them Christ by what you say and what you do. To be like Christ, just like God made you when he gave you your faith!

That's you! Your faith, even that tiny-mustard-seed-faith throws trees into the ocean not because of how strong it is, but because of how strong Christ is. You're not relying on you. You're relying on Christ, who made the impossible look easy. *He* lived a perfect life. *He* washed everyone's past clean with his blood. *He* won salvation for you and for every person you run into. You get to show them that by the way that you walk, by the things you say, the love you show. That makes serving Christ, and serving the person next to you, possible. Being like Christ and serving people as Christ is a privilege. Being like Christ and serving people as *Christ himself* is a joy. You get to be like Christ. So it was pretty easy waking up this morning.