

ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

DEVOTIONAL READING: Isaiah 56:1–8

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Leviticus 13–14; Luke 5:12–16; 17:11–19

LEVITICUS 13:45–46

45 And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

46 All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

LUKE 17:11–19

11 And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

12 And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off:

13 And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

14 And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

15 And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16 And fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks: and he was a Samaritan.

17 And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?

18 There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

19 And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.



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KEY VERSE

*One of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.—
Luke 17:15*

CONFIDENT HOPE

Unit 1: Jesus Teaches About Faith LESSONS 1–5

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the relationship between the two texts of the lesson.
2. Distinguish between contexts that call for public thanks to God and those where private thanks are more appropriate.
3. State a plan for implementing lesson aim 2 in his or her witness.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Leprosariums
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Unclean (Leviticus 13:45–46)
 - A. Physical Indicators (v. 45)
 - B. Social Separation (v. 46)
- II. Cleansed (Luke 17:11–14)
 - A. Lepers' Request (vv. 11–13)
 - B. Jesus' Response (v. 14)
- III. Affirmed (Luke 17:15–19)
 - A. Return of One (vv. 15–16)
 - B. Absence of Nine (vv. 17–19) *Neglecting to Say Thank You*
A Complete Healing Conclusion
 - A. Thanks and Worship
 - B. Prayer
 - C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Galilee	Gal-uh-lee.
Judea	Joo-dee-uh.
leprosarium	lep-ruh- <i>sare</i> -ee-uhm.
Leviticus	Leh-vit-ih-kus.
Samaria	Suh-mare-ee-uh.
Samaritan	Suh-mare-uh-tun.

Introduction

A. Leprosariums

Nancy Brede was taken from her family at age 13 in 1936 after being diagnosed with leprosy. She was isolated with other youth and children at a leprosarium (the modern equivalent of a leper colony) in Hawaii. At best, leprosariums were places where patients could go for medical care; at worst these were places of exile. Nancy and others were quarantined in accordance with Hawaiian law that was in force at the time. Another leprosarium in the United States was located in Carville, Louisiana, from 1894 to 1999.

Due to the infectious nature of leprosy (Hansen's Disease), quarantine was deemed necessary until the advent of antibiotic drug therapies in the twentieth century. Even so, many leprosariums still exist in the

world. Leprosy was well known in the ancient world as well. Today's lesson tells of a band of 10 infected, quarantined men who had just one hope: Jesus.

B. Lesson Context

The two Scripture passages in this lesson were written more than 1,000 years apart. But the text from Leviticus gives important context for the account found in Luke. [Leviticus 13](#) is devoted to the identification and regulation of skin diseases as part of the legal code for Israel.

We might be surprised to see such rules, assuming that the Law of Moses covered only religious regulations, prohibitions against crimes such as murder and thievery, etc. However, what we would consider a medical problem was a religious and community issue for God's people. They saw physical afflictions as more than health issues; they understood them as punishment for sin (compare [John 9:1–2](#)).

Detection of certain skin conditions identified one as having leprosy; a person with leprosy was unclean. A skin disease was usually treated with washing and quarantine. If the disease did not go away, it was considered ongoing and therefore demanded banishment of the person from the community. This amounted to a sentence of lifelong shame and isolation (example: [2 Chronicles 26:19–21](#)). The appearance of leprosy was a lifealtering event that usually ended only with death.

Biblical descriptions of leprosy are not precise enough to narrow it to any single skin condition known today. The term *leprosy* today is identified with Hansen's Disease only—a slowly progressing bacterial infection that causes disfigurement and nerve damage. However, in both the Old and New Testaments, the word *leprosy* seems to describe skin diseases in a more general sense. Leprosy included a scaly skin appearance that could be described as being “white as snow” ([Numbers 12:10](#); compare [Exodus 4:6](#)), a condition that might be caused by several diseases.

Tension between Jews and Samaritans is an undercurrent in today's lesson. Jews and Samaritans were religious and ethnic cousins, sharing a common ancestry and both loyal to the Law of Moses (compare [John 4:5–26](#)). But events starting with the division of Israel into two kingdoms in about 930 BC, and exacerbated by the northern kingdom's exile in 722 BC, alienated the two groups. After the northern kingdom's exile, those remaining intermarried with the peoples that the conquerors resettled in the land. This mixture of different people and culture resulted in the Samaritans. The Old Testament traces the time line of these events from [2 Kings 17](#) through [Ezra 4](#) and [Nehemiah 4](#) (compare [Luke 9:51–56](#)).

I. Unclean

([LEVITICUS 13:45–46](#))

A. Physical Indicators (v. 45)

45. And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, Unclean, unclean.

It is hard to overestimate the fear the people of Israel had of leprosy or the sorrow of a family member or friend being diagnosed as a *leper*. Describing this disease as *the plague* suggests that it was considered a divine affliction (see [Exodus 11:1](#), where the same Hebrew word is used). Being dressed in torn *clothes*, a partial face *covering*, and uncovered *head* was associated with mourning (see [Genesis 37:34](#); [Ezekiel 24:17](#)). Incurable skin diseases led to a state of perpetual mourning for one's lost life.

Adding to this trauma, the Law of Moses required afflicted persons to announce their presence by shouting *unclean*. This was a warning to steer clear (contrast [Luke 17:13](#), below). This uncleanness

prevented persons with leprosy from participating in any of the communal religious activities or feasts (see next).

B. Social Separation (v. 46)

46. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be.

The *defiled* person had to be quarantined. In Moses' day, the Israelites walked through the wilderness on their way to the promised land ([Numbers 14:33–34](#)). So at the time the law was given, those with leprosy had to live outside *the camp*. As the Israelites settled into the promised land, the places of quarantine were outside the villages (compare [Luke 17:12](#), below).

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances should you keep your distance from those who are spiritually “unclean”? Why? *Digging Deeper*

How do you resolve the tensions among [Matthew 28:19–20](#); [Romans 16:17](#); [2 Thessalonians 3:14](#); and [2 John 10–11](#) in this regard?

Those afflicted with leprosy suffered not only from the illness itself but also from being ostracized socially. This meant no participation in weddings, funerals, synagogue meetings, and certainly not temple activities. The afflicted persons depended on the kindness and provisions of family members or friends for survival. While medical conditions presenting as skin diseases were not immediately fatal, their resulting exclusions likely caused lives to be shortened by misery.

II. Cleansed ([LUKE 17:11–14](#))

A. Lepers' Request (vv. 11–13)

11. And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.

The bulk of today's lesson comes from Jesus' final journey *to Jerusalem* ([Luke 9:51–19:44](#)). He chose a route that crossed areas where Samaritans might be encountered: through the central part of Palestine. This route began in *Galilee* and moved south through the region of *Samaria* (see [Luke 9:52](#)).

On a map, it is easy to see that the shortest route from a town in Galilee to Jerusalem in Judea would take one through Samaria. But Galilean Jews usually made the trip via the Jordan River valley, a longer route, in order to avoid Samaria. As Jesus traveled, He was in a transitional area between Samaritan and Jewish settlements. No geographical features separated the two areas in an obvious way. The distinction was determined by the makeup of the villages, with the Jewish villages of Galilee lying to the north of the Samaritan region (see also [Lesson Context](#)).

12. And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.

The social isolation and physical pain of having leprosy probably resulted in more relationships between afflicted Jews and Samaritans than would be the case otherwise. As Jesus reached the edge of *a*

certain village, a band of *ten men that were lepers* who lived banished lives was ready to meet Him. We are not told if this village was Jewish or Samaritan, so it may have been either.

The fact that the men *stood afar off* was in compliance with the Law of Moses (see [Leviticus 13:46](#), above; [Number 5:2](#)). They probably stayed near the village, where some of them may have had family members who provided food and clothing. But the men did not venture close. Those afflicted with leprosy who ignored the expectation of maintaining proper distance might be driven away by having rocks thrown at them by fearful people.

13. And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.

The lepers did not presume to approach *Jesus*, choosing instead to shout at Him from a distance. They addressed Jesus as *Master* rather than “rabbi” or “lord.” The underlying Greek word being translated in this address is found only in Luke’s Gospel in the New Testament (here and in [Luke 5:5](#); [8:24](#), [45](#); [9:33](#), [49](#)). It is a term of respect and deference, primarily found on the lips of Jesus’ disciples. Its use by the men with leprosy implies some existing knowledge of Jesus. The author gives the impression that they shouted in unison, indicating a plan formulated before Jesus’ visit.

The men are not recorded as having cried out the required, “Unclean!” (see [Leviticus 13:45](#), above). The focus, rather, is on their plea for *mercy*, divine favor (compare [Luke 18:38–39](#)). In the case at hand, such mercy would entail God’s healing. Requests for God’s mercy occur frequently in the psalms (examples: [Psalms 30:10](#); [51:1](#); [57:1](#)).

What Do You Think?

Contrasting [Luke 17:13](#) with [Matthew 9:21](#) in lesson 3, under what circumstances should you express your need publicly rather than silently? What about the reverse?

Digging Deeper

What other examples from Scripture support your conclusions?

The men with leprosy saw Jesus as a conduit of God’s grace and mercy. They apparently had heard of Jesus’ ministry of healing the sick. Such healing had already included cases of leprosy ([Luke 5:12–14](#); [7:22](#)). Friends or relatives who provided for these men likely had shared stories heard about Jesus as a healer. The preparedness of this band of desperate men indicates that Jesus’ arrival at this particular village was expected and eagerly anticipated.

B. Jesus’ Response (v. 14)

14a. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests.

Jesus’ immediate response was not to heal the men but to command an act that required faith (compare [2 Kings 5:10](#)). To be recognized as cleansed, they needed to be certified by a priest (see [Leviticus 13:17](#); compare [Luke 5:14](#)). Jesus instructed them to seek such certification before they were healed, though He spoke as though it had already been accomplished. The nearest *priests* might have been living in the village since priests, who were from the tribe of Levi, had no fixed territory in Israel or Samaria ([Numbers 18:20–24](#)).

14b. And it came to pass, that, as they went, they were cleansed.

The text indicates that the 10 men with leprosy were not healed until they began to make their way to the priests as Jesus commanded (contrast [Luke 5:12–13](#)). The men were thus rendered clean and free of disease when they obeyed in faith.

We assume that the fact *they were cleansed* means that all visible and invisible manifestations of their affliction disappeared. Hair that had become unnaturally white ([Leviticus 13:2–3](#)) returned to its natural color, etc. The men thus realized that their trip to the priests was not a fool’s errand, but rather the first step in reclaiming their lives. They would be able to resume their roles in family and village life.

A simple lesson here is that faith that resulted in obedience led to healing (again, compare [2 Kings 5](#)). For the 10 men of our text, this was physical healing. For us, it may be spiritual healing, a cleansing of our “unclean” hearts when we obediently follow Jesus ([Acts 2:38–41](#); etc.).

III. Affirmed ([LUKE 17:15–19](#))

A. Return of One (vv. 15–16)

15–16a. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks.

One man’s heart drove him to respond in ways that are not attributed to the other nine. First, he delayed his trip to a priest as he *turned back* to Jesus; the man’s burning desire to be declared clean by a priest was trumped by his desire to show gratitude. Second, in his loudest *voice* he *glorified God* (compare [Luke 5:26](#); [7:16](#)). His words are not recorded, but we can imagine something like our familiar, “To God be the glory, great things He has done!”



Visual for Lesson 5. Allow time while discussing verse 16a for each learner to share (as desired) one particular thanksgiving from the past week.

Third, the man *fell down ... at Jesus' feet*, which was the extreme posture of submission (compare [Luke 8:41](#)). The context indicates a posture appropriate only for worshipping God (see [Acts 10:25–26](#); [Revelation 19:10](#); [22:8–9](#)). The man's mourning for his wretched state (see [Leviticus 13:45](#), above) was transformed into spontaneous praise for the one who brought God's healing to him as he gave *thanks* to Jesus.

All this was the man's instinctive reaction to having been shown mercy. He may not have understood everything that had just happened, but one thing he knew: Jesus had been God's instrument in his healing (compare [John 9:25](#)). The man had been shown the mercy requested!

Putting these facts together helps us understand the nature of worship. We glorify God for who He is, extolling His revealed attributes (His transcendent holiness, etc.) We thank God for what He has done in providing the blessings we personally enjoy.

16b. And he was a Samaritan.

The author Luke now reveals the shocking plot twist: the one who thought it more important to return to Jesus before seeing a priest *was a Samaritan*. We assume that the man could be identified this way by some distinctive trait. Perhaps his accent gave him away (compare [Matthew 26:73](#)), or maybe it was the precise words he used to glorify God. Distinctive clothing is another possibility. The irony here is similar to that of Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan ([Luke 10:30–35](#)), given the hostility between Jews and Samaritans (see [Lesson Context](#)).

B. Absence of Nine (vv. 17–19)

17. And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?

Jesus' questions were rhetorical—not expected to be answered literally, but rather meant to grab the attention of those within earshot. The response Jesus sought was one of self-reflection, not one of determining the latitude and longitude location of the absent *nine* who were also healed.

Jesus' questions should serve the same function today as it rings in our ears. Why did only 1 of the 10 pause to first praise God and thank Jesus? When we are blessed, are we more like the 1 or the other 9? Jesus' healing miracles always function to serve a larger purpose than merely “being nice” to someone; miracles serve as teaching opportunities ([John 9](#); etc.).

What Do You Think?

What can you do to ensure that expressing gratitude for God's blessings is one of your regular practices?

Digging Deeper

What guardrails can you erect to ensure that such expressions do not become

18. There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.

Another curiosity is that the one who did come back was, of all people, a non-Jew—a *stranger*! This was a rebuke to Jews who, of all people, should have accepted Jesus and His mission (compare [Matthew](#)

10:5; 15:24; Luke 7:4–9; John 1:11; 4:22; etc.). In the end, relationship with God is demonstrated by one's faith, not by ancestral connections (see Luke 3:8).

NEGLECTING TO SAY THANK YOU

While visiting a science museum, my boys explored. At one point, my oldest was on a stationary bike, testing how fast he could pump his legs, while my 3-year-old stood next to me. When we were ready to move on, I looked down to take the little one's hand only to realize he was not there!

Panic seized me. I paced swiftly through the museum. Yelling out his name, I drew more than a little attention to myself. Almost immediately a museum employee asked how he could help. A two-way radio and several pairs of eyes helped reunite me with my son in short order. With my heart beating wildly, I hugged him tightly, scolded him gently, and moved on.

It wasn't until we were leaving that I realized I had neglected to thank the people who had helped me. My emotional state had resulted in thoughtlessness. Was it the same for the nine? How will you ensure that you do not let an opportunity slip by to thank Jesus for His blessings?

—A. B.

19. And he said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.

After posing His rhetorical questions for all to hear, Jesus turned to the Samaritan to address him personally. All the men were healed by *faith*, but only this singular Samaritan received the affirmation *thy faith hath made thee whole* (compare Luke 7:50; 18:42). This does not mean that the man had the power to heal himself all along (see Matthew 9:22, lesson 3). It does not mean that the power of his personal faith in and of itself brought about the healing. It means, rather, that the man's trusting expectation in God, as demonstrated by his initial act of obedience to seek out the priests, was pleasing to God, by whose power the leprosy was vanquished.

The word rendered *made ... whole* is often translated *saved* (see Matthew 8:25b [lesson 2]; 9:21 [lesson 3]). Jesus offered physical healing to some, and it had to be expected by faith. He offered salvation from sins to all, and it too had to be expected by faith.

The good news about Jesus was already moving beyond the confines of Judaism. The good news of Jesus was not limited to a Jewish audience, although there was initially a certain sequence in terms of evangelism priorities (Matthew 10:5; Romans 1:16; etc.).

In the larger picture of Luke-Acts, the Samaritans form a bridge group between Jews and Gentiles. Samaritans were despised by the Jews of Jesus' day, but the Roman world saw Samaritans and Jews as variations of the same religion. Luke's understanding of Jesus' plan for evangelism was for it to begin in Jerusalem and Judea, move to Samaria, and then expand worldwide (Acts 1:8). The incident in today's text is not an exception to that plan since the Samaritan with leprosy sought Jesus out, not the reverse.

What Do You Think?

Returning to a question from lesson 3, how has your view changed, if at all, regarding how to counsel someone who has been told that lack of healing was due to lack of faith?

Digging Deeper

What Scripture passages support your conclusion?

A COMPLETE HEALING

Several years ago a close friend of a relative was in a serious car accident. After having spent weeks hospitalized, he was sent home while still in extreme pain. Due to his spinal injuries, he spent months in rigorous physical therapy. It took over a year of exhausting therapies and time off work before he was physically well again.

Even after that, however, he was still injured emotionally and spiritually. He kept himself distant from his spiritual family. He was bitter and angry about his suffering, and he clearly needed a different kind of healing. After two or three years of gentle pushes, he was successfully encouraged to turn back to Christ. Only then was the man truly made well. As happened when the healed Samaritan fell at Jesus' feet, God blessed this friend with a deeper kind of well-being.

The reality of God's blessings is beyond dispute. What is open to question is our reaction when receiving them. What improvements do you need to make in this regard?

—A. B.

Conclusion

A. Thanks and Worship

Life doesn't get much worse than the fate of a person with leprosy in Jesus' day: excluded from the community, required to be self-degrading in word and appearance, and destined to live with a slowly fatal and painful disease. It was a living death.

Yet a heart of thankfulness survived in the Samaritan leper. He remains a worthy example of the biblical way to worship. He overcame the urgencies of his life to stop, turn around, and look at Jesus without being distracted. He let praise for God well up from his heart and be expressed in his words. He overcame tunnel vision of "what's next" to adopt a worshipful posture. He gave thanks to the one who has healed him, claiming no credit for himself.

God does not need our thanks. But He created us as beings who need to give thanks ([1 Thessalonians 5:18](#)). The unthankful life can become bitter and cold. The thankful heart will find peace and purpose in all circumstances.

May we learn from the man who returned that even in the humblest of circumstances, there is nothing to prevent us from giving praise and thanks to God—nothing except our own selfish and stubborn hearts. May we recognize our spiritual poverty, ask for God's mercy, and give praise and thanks when it arrives.

What Do You Think?

Which part of today's lesson do you have the most trouble with?

Why?

Digging Deeper

Other than a church staff member, who can you seek out for help in this regard?

B. Prayer

Lord God, may we worship You without distraction or impatience. We pray in the name of the one who heals and saves, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

Let us determine to give thanks to God.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with KJV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the KJV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Divide the class into groups, making sure that at least one person in each group has a smartphone with internet access. Ask groups to search for quotations that express gratitude and choose three they like best. After several minutes, reconvene and ask a group to share one quote with the class. After all groups have shared one, have each group share a second quote. Repeat for each group's third quote. (*Option.* Depending on the size of your class and time available, you may wish to request more or fewer quotes than three.)

Alternative. Research quotes yourself in advance and write them on slips of paper, one each. Distribute the slips to learners, ensuring that everyone has at least one. After each learner reads his or her quote, ask class members to give a thumbs-up for "like it," a thumbs-down for "objectionable," and a thumbs-across for "not sure." Encourage members to share why they reacted as they did, but don't let this drag out.

For a unit review and a transition to today's lesson, distribute copies of this matching quiz:

<u>Problem 1.</u>	<u>Key Verse(s) Solution</u>
Fear can vex!	A. Matthew 6:32b–33
2. Doubt can paralyze!	B. Matthew 8:26
3. Worry can distract!	C. Matthew 9:22
4. Faith can heal!	D. Matthew 14:31
5. Gratitude can reveal!	E. Luke 17:15

Have learners work individually to complete the quiz in no more than one minute. Allow use of Bibles to look up key verses; do not allow access to lesson titles. Have learners self-score their quizzes. (*Answers:* 1—B [lesson 2]; 2—D [lesson 4]; 3—A [lesson 1]; 4—C [lesson 3]; 5—E [lesson 5]).

Into the Word

After volunteers read aloud today's lesson texts from Leviticus and Luke, ask, "Without reading something from the notes in your study Bible, what do you know about leprosy in Bible times?" After several responses, fill in missing details from the Lesson Context. Then pose this true/false question for show-of-hands response: "Half the references to leprosy in the Bible occur in the book of Leviticus." (*Answer:* true; 34 of 68 occurrences in the *King James Version* of the word *leprosy* in its various forms) Then pose for discussion, either to the class as a whole or small groups, these questions:

- 1—Why did nine fail to express gratitude?
- 2—What can we learn from the Samaritan's response for guiding our own expressions of gratitude to God?
- 3—How do his expressions of gratitude compare or contrast with our own?

(*Teacher tips.* For whole-class discussions, don't ask all questions at once; instead, ask one and allow discussion to conclude on it before asking the next. For small groups, provide the questions on handouts that you prepare.)

Into Life

Form study pairs and provide each with handouts (you prepare) for the following two tasks:

- 1—What contexts call for public thanks to God as opposed to contexts where private thanks are more appropriate?
- 2—Suggest ways to implement that distinction personally.

Allow time for whole-class sharing.

Option. Distribute copies of the “Attitude Adjustment” exercise on the activity page, which you can download. Have learners pick one of the four statements to respond to, time limit of one minute.

Wrap up by asking students to identify which of the five lessons of the unit presents the biggest personal challenge. Ask volunteers to tell which they've chosen and why.

Option. Distribute copies of the “Depicting Gratitude” exercise on the activity page as a take-home.

ACTIVITY PAGE

[Click here to download the free reproducible pdf page](#)

