



# Luke (evening series)



How does one get into the kingdom of God...



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## Luke 18 & 19

INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

## i

## How to get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies in the book of **Luke**. These Study Guides are designed in a three part format...

- 1 Opening questions to get you thinking are listed as **Appetisers**.
- 2 Those which get you to investigate the text are contained in the **Main Course**.
- 3 The **Take Away Value** section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.

**If you're using these Guides in a Small Group**, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

**If you're doing these studies individually**, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

We trust you'll find the guides helpful, and we welcome any feedback you can give us as you use them.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

## 1

**The Persistent Widow****Luke 18:1 – 8****Appetisers...**

- 1 If you are using these notes in a small group, start by getting everyone to relate an incident when they have had to hang around waiting for some event to happen. Eg it could have been for exam results, medical test feedback, for a potential employer to get back to you on a job interview, Christmas, a birthday or wedding day etc. Get people to relay the sort of feelings the waiting created and how they responded to it.
- 2 Is the promised return of the Son of Man (Jesus) a 'real' Christian truth for you? Is more than just a theoretical piece of information that you assent to. How would you know if it was or not?

**Main Course...**

- 3 Parables are prone to being interpreted in radically diverse ways. One reason is because they are 'stories' and therefore the reader is able to use quite a lot of licence/imagination as they read them. Generally parables emphasise one main point and this is often 'controlled' by the context in which the parable appears in the gospel account. It would be good to begin by reading from Luke 17:20-18:8. Having read the teaching of Jesus in Luke 17 how do you think the parable at the beginning of Luke 18 ties in?
- 4 In 18:1 why would Jesus' disciples be tempted to 'give up'? (give up what?) You may find it helpful to go back to the teaching of Jesus in Luke 9:23-26 and 9:51-62.

- 5 You may find it helpful to look up some OT references to pick up the way widows were meant to be treated eg Is. 1:17 and Jer. 22:3.
- 6 The widow is obviously portrayed as the 'weaker' and more vulnerable party. What is her chief weapon?
- 7 What is the motivation for the judge to finally give the widow justice? Do you think this parable is trying to teach us that we need to pray a lot for some things because God won't always answer straight away? Give your reasons for disagreeing or agreeing with this.

### Thinking Through the Application...

- 8 How does the background teaching of chapter 17 shape the way we interpret 18:1-8?
- 9 Popular Christian literature sometimes seems to suggest that the reason God doesn't answer more of our prayers is because we don't pray often enough or long enough or .... Do you think this parable is teaching this? Why, why not?
- 10 How is the portrait of God in Luke 15 such a contrast with the unrighteous judge here in Luke 18?
- 11 In verse 7 it says God will bring about justice for his chosen ones. When will this happen? In what circumstances will this occur? Can we always be confident that we will get justice when we go before the courts of our land because God will answer our prayers in this respect?

- 10 Romans 1:18-20 reveals that nature bears witness to our great God. In what variety of ways can we bear witness to all God has done for us?

### After Dinner Mints...

As we head towards Easter reflect on Jesus' position at this time, openly owning the title of Messiah King, and yet knowing how misunderstood it would be. Read verses 41-44 and sense his anguish in knowing this rejection by the people he was sent to save. Give thanks that Jesus came not just to Jerusalem, but to the world.

- 12 In the NIV, the translation of v7 reads 'Will he keep putting them off?' The RSV reads 'Will he delay long over them?' The Greek verb here is normally translated 'have patience, be forbearing, longsuffering'. In what sense would you say God is being forbearing by not sending his son? (may like to look up 2 Peter 3:9)
- 13 The parable finishes with a strong note of exhortation in v8. What do you think are the big threats to our faith and confidence in God as we await the return of the Lord Jesus? Personally what do you think are the dangerous challenges for you? (ie something that could find you not pressing on in your Christian walk at the return of Jesus)

## 2

**Humbling Exaltation****Luke 18:9 – 14**

The parable here in Luke has two parts:

Firstly, there are the words from Jesus that provide the framework for the parable itself. In v9, he describes the audience whom he is addressing. They are those who were ‘confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else’. At the end of the parable (v14) he will explain its purpose.

Secondly, there is the account of the characters in the parable. It appears from the way Jesus is describing the scenario that it is a real life situation being cited here. There are two men, one is a Pharisee, the other a tax-collector.

Having identified the characters and their attitudes towards coming before God in prayer, Jesus delivers his judgment. How will each man be seen in the sight of God?

In the conclusion of the parable Jesus speaks of the last day, when those who humble themselves will be exalted, and those who exalt themselves will be humbled. The final reversal is on view.

**Appetisers...**

- 1 “A person’s prayers can reveal a lot about themselves and their relationship to God”. Discuss this statement.
- 2 Discuss together what you have been praying about lately.
- 3 In CS Lewis’ chapter on pride in ‘Mere Christianity’, he says, “There is no fault which makes a person more unpopular and no fault which we are more unconscious of in ourselves”. Do you think this parable is ultimately about prayer or pride?

**Main Course...**

- 4 Read the whole passage, follow the movement and discuss what appears significant or unusual to you.
- 5 Jesus has been developing and displaying the kingdom and its values throughout his public ministry. Consider the last few chapters, how does Jesus’ ministry impact our expectations of the King and his kingdom?
- 6 Previously, Jesus sought anonymity with the title Messiah and King. Throughout the gospels Jesus asks those to whom he revealed himself, to keep their silence. Why does Jesus now openly acknowledge this title with the shouting crowds and the disapproving Pharisees all around?
- 7 The pharisees and their reproof represents the voice of the people. The feeling within Jerusalem is not one of welcome for their coming King. Far from being triumphant, he comes as their rejected king. How does the parable of 19:11 – 26 lend us an eternal perspective here?
- 8 ‘Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord’  
‘Peace in heaven and glory in the highest’  
Why does this phrase set the Pharisees teeth on edge? Check the OT references.

**Dessert...**

- 9 The Pharisees want the adulation to stop, Jesus answers them frankly, ‘If they don’t shout my praises then the rocks will!’ Jesus isn’t out to win friends and influence people. He is here to do his Father’s will. What can we learn from Christ’s example here?

## 5

**Jesus' Triumphal Entry?****Luke 19:28 – 40****Pray...**

Pray that God would grant you insight tonight into this part of Jesus' journey to the cross. Pray for a concentrated focus on this passage, to enable greater understanding.

Jesus has been drawing closer and closer to Jerusalem through this section of teaching on the kingdom of God and its principles. The journey is at its end, Jerusalem is in sight. The people, both Jesus' followers and his opponents can feel the tension mounting. There is as we read a tangible excitement and a sense of crowd frenzy as the Messiah King approaches, yet still there remains the misunderstanding of what that means. The people are expecting their Warrior King, in the mould of King David, arrived to conquer their oppressors, the Romans and bring Jerusalem and the Jews back to their Davidic glory. The Pharisees, who piously say they want the Messiah to come, are unable to accept him when he arrives.

**Appetisers...**

- 1 Have there been times when you have expected one thing and received another, or when your expectations have not been met on something desperately important to you? How did you react?
- 2 What is it about Jesus and his teachings on the coming kingdom that rubs the Pharisees up the wrong way?
- 3 Read Zechariah 9:9, and then read Luke 19: 28-35. What does it tell you about Jesus and his actions?

**Main Course...**

- 4 For whom is this parable told? What sort of a person would benefit from hearing this story of Jesus?
- 5 Read the parable again and try and examine key movements in the story using the table below. Where are similarities and where are the contrasts?

		Pharisee	Tax collector
1	How they approach God		
2	What they say to God		
3	How they leave		

- 6 Notice the positions, postures and gestures of the Pharisee and tax collector. What conclusions can you draw from these contrasts in body and language?
- 7 A Pharisee was a 'separated one'. In what ways do you find yourself living a 'separated life'? How can you unnecessarily cut yourself off from non-Christian friends.
- 8 Look at v11/12. There is a bit of Pharisee in all of us. In what areas might you be tempted to make comparisons for the purposes of self-justification.
- 9 Use a Bible Dictionary to tease out with the group the full impact of being a

tax collector. What does this man understand about himself?

10 Think of what times you most recognise you are a sinner?

### Take Away Value...

11 Read the Prayer of Humble Access from the Anglican communion services (p. 132 AAPB)

We do not presume  
to come to your table, merciful Lord,  
trusting in our own righteousness,  
but in your manifold and great mercies.  
We are not worthy  
So much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.  
But you are the same Lord  
whose nature is always to have mercy.  
Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord,  
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ,  
and to drink his blood,  
that we may evermore dwell in him,  
and he in us. Amen.

How might self perception change your prayers?

12 Look closely at the conclusion to this parable. V14b. What similarities does it have to the conclusion of the previous parable v8b?

13 Read v13 carefully and note the posture of this broken man. Compare his activity with that of Luke 23:48. It takes something of the magnitude of the cross to evoke a similar response. This man abandons all human apparatus, without money, deeds; he places himself in the mercy of God. He needs God to do something. Share with each other the change you wish to make to your prayer life after studying this parable.

5 Contrast the response of the disciples in v15 and v26. What does this reveal about the disciples' deficiencies in understanding the Kingdom of God?

6 In v29-30, Jesus promises that God will never be indebted to us. How has this occurred in your Christian life?

7 Why do you think Jesus takes the disciples aside at this point to talk about the cross? (vv31-34)

### Take Away Value...

8 In our church, we tend to be impressed with professional people...the influential, the executives, the so-called movers and shakers, while other less significant come and go - almost invisibly. There is a stark contrast between Jesus and the children and Jesus and a rich man. As a group, how can entry into your social circle at church better mirror Jesus' teaching on entry into His Kingdom?

9 Think of a friend who isn't a Christian, what is the barrier for them entering the Kingdom of God? Pray in pairs for these friends.

## 4

**Poor Little Rich Kid****Luke 18:18 – 34**

They say money isn't everything... but the reality is it sure helps! The encounter of an upwardly mobile person with Jesus produces devastating effects. The man leaves in the same condition he arrived – asset rich but, relationally poor when it comes to God.

This ruler has money to burn, he is a prime candidate for discipleship and yet Jesus sets up an unthinkable proposal in v21, which leaves the reader profoundly disturbed – not to mention the disciples! In fact, this situation must have left a deep impression on them, for three of the gospel writers record it.

**Appetisers...**

- 1 Ask someone to recap the key learnings from last week's story of Jesus' encounter with the children. Now examine closely vv18-30 and compare and contrast the numbers of differences between this encounter with Jesus and the previous one.

**Main Course...**

- 2 Look at v18. What is wrong with his question?

What is wrong with his answer? (v21)

- 3 On what issue do you think Jesus puts his finger on? v22 Are riches necessarily wrong? Compare Luke 10:38-42.
- 4 Why does Jesus only give him half of the ten commandments? (v20) What is the problem with trying to keep them?

## 3

**Receiving the Kingdom****Luke 18:15 – 17**

**These studies are designed to complement the sermon series rather than repeat it. Parts of each chapter will be dealt with in both study and sermon. Other parts will only be dealt with in one. The aim of these studies is primarily to help those who use them read God's word and consider what God is saying to us. With that in mind it is also hoped that in the study further thinking might be done on some of the issues that there was not time to cover in the sermon as well as a reminder of the sermon itself.**

**Appetisers...**

- 1 Luke continues in these verses to report Jesus' teachings about the Kingdom of God. Trace back through the Luke passages you have been studying and build on your understanding of the Kingdom of God as Jesus explains it. If you are part of a group share your thoughts and build on your group understanding.

**Main Course...**

Read the Passage: Luke 18:15-17

- 2 Imagine the scene, crowded streets, maybe it is at the steps leading to a place of worship and teaching, Jesus has been concentrating on teaching his disciples about the Kingdom of God. They can hardly hear their master for the wailing of babies being pushed towards Jesus, all wanting his special touch. What might be some of the reasons behind people bringing their children to be touched by Jesus?
- 3 Consider the disciples reaction, what do you think was the motivation and reasoning behind their rebuke of these parents?

- 4 The disciples had been living around the clock with Jesus for almost three years by this stage, it might have been reasonable to assume they were pretty insync with where Jesus was at. Yet his correction of their order/action would have come as a slap in the face. If you are able, share of a time when you have been humbled when you were feeling so righteous or perhaps put yourself in the disciples shoes and reflect on how you might have felt.
  
- 5 What is it about the nature and character of a child that Jesus uses them as role models for the Kingdom of God? Are they sinless, innocent, without blemish?
  
- 6 Thinking back to the picture you have been building of the Kingdom of God, how does this passage follow through on Jesus' teaching in the previous passage? Perhaps it would be helpful to write down the 'building blocks' of this Kingdom.

### Take Away Value...

- 7 In what ways is Jesus encouraging us to become like children, that we might receive the Kingdom of God and enter into it? Think of a way in which you can practically work this out in your life in the coming week. If you are part of a group study, tell each other and hold one another to account the following week.
  
- 8 Luke emphasises Jesus' ministry focus on the insignificant in society, the leper, the lame, women and children, those that were rarely heard and rarely considered. As we seek to grow more like Christ think about the people you're in contact with, is there someone out there that needs to know their value in the kingdom that you can impact?

### After Dinner Mints...

Your attitude is linked to your entry into the kingdom of God, become like a child. This is not a request for childish behaviour and the shirking of responsibility, but it is about adopting certain childlike characteristics when approaching the kingdom.

The very thing that defines children here is that they come to Jesus small, vulnerable, open, without any claim or merit. Children are dependent on the adults that care for them, Jesus is asking us to come and be wholly dependent on Him, trusting and knowing His care for us. He doesn't want our status, achievements, wealth, experience or independence. He doesn't want what we have, He longs to give to us, and until we accept our childlike state before him, we can never truly understand nor enter the kingdom of God. Take this classic 'children's' talk away with you this week and ponder its value as you walk through the week.