

Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Luke -- Lesson 7 – Jesus and the Lost –Rejoicing in Heaven – Part 1

Introduction:

In these lessons we are looking at the ministry of Jesus found in the Gospel of Luke. Simeon prophesied over baby Jesus that He would raise up many weak persons and bring down many proud persons (Luke 2:33-35). Luke 15 contains three parables. We will look at two of them this week. We will look at the rest of the chapter in the next two weeks.

Read this passage at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

NKJ **Luke 15:1** Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him to hear Him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, "This Man receives sinners and eats with them." ³ So He spoke this parable to them, saying:

⁴ "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost until he finds it? ⁵ "And when he has found *it*, he lays *it* on his shoulders, rejoicing. ⁶ "And when he comes home, he calls together *his* friends and neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!' ⁷ "I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

⁸ "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds *it*? ⁹ "And when she has found *it*, she calls *her* friends and neighbors together, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!'

¹⁰ "Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." (Luk 15:1-10 NKJ)

In Luke 15:1-2, who are the people to whom Jesus tells these parables?

One group is the tax collectors and sinners who were attracted to Jesus.

Tax collectors were Jews, but they worked for the Roman Government to collect taxes from the Jews. They were required to collect the required taxes asked for by Rome, but also had the authority to require more which would go into their pockets. They were hated and seen as the lowest and worst of people as they were considered traitors to the nation of Israel, but also they were extortionists and cheats. They would have been banished from the synagogue, not allowed to go to the temple, and shunned from any family that was also not in the tax collecting business.

The “sinners” were those known for their breaking all aspects of Moses’ law.

The other group is the Pharisees and scribes. The Pharisees were a Jewish religious group that taught the people and stressed to them the importance of keeping the law of Moses. To aid them on this, they followed something called the “tradition of the elders” (see Mark 7:1-13 for an example of the tradition of the elders). They believed that God gave Moses the Law, and that was written down for the children of Israel. But, they also believed that God gave an unwritten oral law which was passed down through faithful rabbis till their time. This oral law is the tradition of the elders. They referred to it as a “fence” around the law. So, if the law said you could not take 5 steps, the tradition would say you can’t take 3. The idea was then the actual law of God is never broken and thus is

protected. What the Pharisees did not consider is the heart. All they were concerned about was outward action and not the heart (See Mark 7:14-23).

The scribes were men who studied the Law of Moses. They were “lawyers” who were experts in the Law.

What is the complaint the Pharisees and scribes bring against Jesus? What does the complaint tell you about the Pharisees and scribes?

They complained that Jesus “receives and eats with sinners.” As they saw it, being with them says he approves of them and eating with them would, as they saw it, make him unclean. The Scribes and Pharisees thought that defilement and sin is passed through contact with external things. Sin for them was all outward. Surely it is true that uncleanliness in the law is transmitted through contact with unclean things. In fact, it was nearly impossible for the average Israelite to ever become unclean. Some of the most common things and important things in life made one unclean for a time (contact with a dead body, intimate contact with your spouse, birth of children, etc.) Becoming unclean was not necessarily sinful. But they equated that with actual transmission of sin. And so, if right actions could be done, and wrong contaminates avoided, then one could keep the law of Moses. But, as we saw in Mark 7:13-23, sin is not a matter of external forces, it is a matter of the heart. The Scribes and Pharisees did not focus nor take heed of the heart. And so, for Jesus to receive and eat with tax collectors and sinners meant to them that Jesus was just not holy enough and did not follow the tradition of the Elders, and so, did not follow the law of Moses.

Why does Jesus care about one sheep or one coin?

It does not seem like much -- only one. 99 percent of the sheep are still safe and accounted for; 90 percent of the money is still safe and accounted for. But Jesus notices that it is missing. He notices that it is missing because he cares for it. The one missing is His sheep; he belongs to him. He cares about the one coin, because it is His and He accounts for it all. Jesus is not willing to lose anyone that is His. Consider 2 Peter 3:9 and John 6:38-44. Jesus has paid for His people with his own blood (Acts 20:28). He notices the absence of His people and will search for His people and sweep His house clean to find all that is His.

What makes heaven rejoice? Why?

Heaven rejoices over sinners who repent. It is because every sinner who repents and comes to Jesus magnifies more and more the glory of God by magnifying God’s love, mercy, long-suffering, redeeming love, covenant faithfulness, magnifying the cross and the work of Christ, magnifying the power of the Holy Spirit, and countless other attributes and works of God. Our greatest need is the glory of God. In heaven, those around the throne have an unbroken view of the glory of God and receive all from Him. So, when a sinner repenting magnifies God’s glory, those in heaven rejoice in the Godhead, in their persons, and their work as repentance unto life comes from the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit.

Of the people mentioned in verses one and two, who is lost? Who is repentant? Over whom does heaven rejoice?

All of them are lost. Sinners, Tax Collectors, Pharisees, and Scribes (like all humanity) are all lost in their sins and trespasses and only deserving of the righteous judgment of God.

However, when someone repents and places their trust in Christ, they are found safe in Christ. In the context, it seems that the sinners and tax collectors were repenting and trusting in Christ, while the Pharisees and Scribes were not. Heaven is rejoicing over the sinners and Tax Collectors repenting and not over the Pharisees and Scribes who do not think they have any need for repentance or salvation in Christ.

Is heaven rejoicing over you? If yes, why? If no, is there a sin too great for heaven not to forgive?

Let them talk here. If they say heaven is not rejoicing over them, then explore why they think so. Perhaps it is because they really are in Christ, but still think that the presence of sin in their lives means God does not love them as much? Or do they think they are saved by their works? Do they think that heaven rejoices over them because of their works? Or do they have another objection that they claim is keeping them from repenting and trusting in Christ.

Take your time, listen, answer questions, and preach them the gospel. Remind them that there is no sin that Christ cannot save and that Jesus lived the life you could not live and died the death that sin deserves for all who repent and trust in Christ. Remind them that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.

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