

## *Gospels Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson Seven: Training of the Disciples, Part 2 – Matthew 18-20; Luke 12, 14, 16, 18*

Read Matthew 18:1 – 19:15.

- 1) Who would you identify as the “little ones” of Matthew 18:6, 10, and 14 (consider Matthew 10:42, 18:3, 25:40, 45)? **True disciples of Christ, but particularly those who are young in their faith, lowly, or vulnerable**
- 2) List the verses and truths in Matthew 18 that teach something about the God of these little ones (even where the “little ones” are not mentioned). **He is not willing that any of His true disciples be lost (verse 14). He is personally present when two or three believers gather in His name and will do what any two disciples who are in prayerful agreement ask of Him (verse 19). He forgives great debts (verse 27). He holds accountable those who refuse to forgive others (verse 35).**
- 3) According to the following verses, what qualities do members of the Kingdom of Heaven exhibit and which of these needs the most improvement in your own life?
  - a) 18:1-5? **Humility (humble, child-like individuals are the greatest in the Kingdom)**
  - b) 18:6-9 **Defense of other Kingdom members from stumbling and deep desire for personal holiness**
  - c) 18:10-14? **Pastoral care**
  - d) 18:15-17? **Respectful treatment of other members and passion for righteousness (willingness to confront those in sin)**
  - e) 18:18-20? **Unity (as displayed in prayer agreement)**
  - f) 18:21-35? **Mercy**
  - g) 19:1-12? **Faithfulness (in marriage)**
  - h) 19:13-15? **Child-likeness (trust and transparency)**

Read Matthew 19:16-30 with Matthew 8:18-22 and Luke 14:25-33.

- 4) What does Jesus demand of His disciples, according to each set of verses?
  - a) Matthew 19:21 (see Matthew 6:33 and Luke 12:33-34) **Prioritizing the Kingdom of God over all else, especially over material pursuits.**
  - b) Matthew 8:20 (see Philippians 3:20 and 1 Peter 1:1) **Viewing heaven as one’s true home and being willing to live as a stranger in this world**
  - c) Matthew 8:22 (see 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 and 2 Corinthians 6:1-2) **A sense of urgency and eagerness to follow Jesus**
  - d) Luke 14:26 (see 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 and Luke 14:31, 33) **Planning and sacrifice**
- 5) Reread Luke 14:27 with Matthew 16:24-26. What has it cost you to follow Christ? **Personal sharing**

Reconsider Matthew 19:16-30 and read Luke 12:13-21, 16:1-13.

- 6) What do you learn from these teachings of Jesus about the proper attitude toward wealth? **Wealth should be considered a resource to be wisely (shrewdly) used for Kingdom purposes. The Christian is to be generous toward God (Luke 12:21), ready at all times to give account for the use of all his or her resources (Luke 16:8-9), and aware that material goods can be a source of temptation (Matthew 19:21-23). Possessions themselves are neutral, but greed is very dangerous (Luke 12:15).**
- 7) How does the culture in which you live influence you with regard to these principles? **Platonic philosophy (which was prominent in Greek and Roman culture) continues to influence modern minds in many parts of the world, suggesting that those who have much are deserving of their wealth. Most twenty-first century westerners have grown so fat from luxury and excess that they no longer recognize their adultery with the gods of pleasure and comfort. The concepts of delayed gratification and self-denial are completely foreign. Personal sharing**

- 8) Do you have a resource that you have mismanaged or “wasted” (failed to use for the benefit of the Kingdom)? What step could you take to be a more faithful and wise manager of what God has given you?  
**Personal sharing**

Read Matthew 20:1-28.

- 9) Note Peter’s question and Jesus’ response in Matthew 19:27-30, which prompted the telling of the parable in Matthew 20:1-16. **Peter asked what those who left everything to follow Jesus would gain.**
- What is the main subject of the parable? **Rewards in the Kingdom of Heaven.**
  - How do the words that frame the parable (19:30 and 20:16) summarize it? **Jesus’ words, “The first will be last and the last will be first” (19:30, 20:16) reference rewards. Those who believe they are more deserving of reward in the future Kingdom of Heaven may be surprised to find they receive no more than those they perceive to be less worthy. The point of the parable is to challenge our sense of justice, since none of us is deserving of the Kingdom.**
  - How does the parable portray God (the Landowner)? **It portrays Him as very generous (verse 15).**
  - Were those hired last given a greater reward than those hired first? Explain your answer. **By our human standard of justice, those hired last should have received less and therefore, were rewarded more greatly. By God’s standard, all the workers were in need at the beginning of the day and His payment of equal amounts to each was generous, since none deserved to have been hired.**
  - How is Jesus’ parable intended to re-educate us? **Our natural sense of fairness and justice extends beyond punishment to rewards. With regard to others, we demand justice, but for ourselves, we want mercy. The parable teaches us to see rewards from God’s perspective. None of us deserves to be rewarded by Him. In God’s great mercy and generosity, He blesses all members of His Kingdom with rewards as He sees fit.**
- 10) What attitude do leaders in the cause of Christ need to adopt, according to Matthew 20:20-28, and what example of this is given in Matthew 20:17-19, 28 and Philippians 2:3-11? **Leaders should think of themselves as the servants of others. Jesus showed His willingness to serve by giving Himself over to death for our sake.**
- 11) Regarding what circumstance or relationship do you need to think differently in order to be the kind of disciple Jesus commends in Matthew 20:26-27? **Personal sharing**

Read Luke 18:1-8.

- 12) According to Luke 18:6-8, how does the parable in Luke 18:2-5 relate to the subject given in verse 1? **The parable is about an unjust and unkind judge who nevertheless relents to the request of a widow simply because she keeps badgering him. In verses 6-8, Jesus makes the statement that if an unjust judge gives what is asked of him because the one making the request is persistent, how much more will our good God reward perseverance in prayer.**
- 13) According to Luke 18:1-8...
- For what were Jesus’ disciples (verse 7) and the widow in the parable (verse 3) asking? **According to verse 3, an enemy was treating the widow unjustly. Verse 7 addresses God’s concern for His chosen ones when they cry out, due to injustice. Both wanted justice.**
  - Whose faithfulness is in question, according to verses 6-8, God’s or ours? **Our faithfulness in prayer is in question, not God’s faithfulness to hear and answer prayer.**
  - What is Jesus telling us about our heavenly Father? **God always hears our prayers and will always answer in His time and in the way He knows is best. Apparently, God’s heart is moved by persistence in prayer (particularly, prayer regarding injustice).**
- 14) Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17 and James 5:13a. What prayer have you continued to pray that currently seems unanswered? **Personal sharing**

15) The passages covered in this lesson emphasize various aspects of discipleship. Luke 14:27 summarizes our role, indicating that we are to carry our “cross” and follow Christ. How do the following passages further your understanding of discipleship and how will you respond (be specific)? Matthew 19:26, Romans 7:18-25a, Philippians 1:6, 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, and Hebrews 10:14 **We should be willing to lay down our rights and live out the principles of discipleship taught by Jesus. However, in so doing, we will find ourselves (as Paul did) continually battling against our flesh. We can never become holy by our effort alone. We are as incapable of sanctifying ourselves as we are of saving (redeeming) ourselves. God must do it, and according to these promises, He will complete that work in us. Our response should be one of praise and thanksgiving, but the promises should also prompt us to cooperate more fully with the work of God’s Spirit.**