

## CHAPTER 14

### Overview of Luke 14

In chapter 14, Jesus is invited to have dinner with a leader of the Pharisees. There, Jesus heals a man with “dropsy.” While the Pharisees continue using words to question Jesus about laws concerning the Sabbath, Jesus continues to counter the words of the Pharisees with acts of love and caring for the sick. In refuting the spiritual leaders, Jesus will ask a question similar to questions He has asked before concerning priorities and the value of a person’s life. To bring His point home, Jesus will give a parable about a man who wants to throw a banquet for his friends. This parable is not only an admonishment to the Pharisees, but it is full of prophecy about the future of the Jewish nation. Jesus will then tie together the events at dinner and the parable in a message concerning the cost of discipleship. It is a message worth acting on.

### What to look for in Luke 14

1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. You will read about Jesus’ fourth encounter with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. (See 6:1-11 and 10:13-17 for the other three.)
3. Jesus will be invited to the home of a leader of the Pharisees. Some issues will be raised about the poor. Look for the comparisons Jesus makes between the poor and the Pharisees.
4. Look for what Jesus tells His disciples regarding the cost of following Him.
5. Jesus will make an astounding statement about how family members might hold a person back from following Him.
6. Look for the comparison Jesus makes concerning discipleship and salt.
7. Look for the centralizing theme that characterizes this chapter.

1 It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the* Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.

2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.

3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”

4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away.

5 And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?”

6 And they could make no reply to this.

**14:1-6** Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, He is constantly being tested about His teaching and healings, particularly in regard to Sabbath laws. Remember that in 13:31, the Pharisees were warning Jesus not to come to Jerusalem, lest He be captured and killed by Herod. Jesus’ response is to ignore their warnings, which weren’t really given on His behalf anyway, and continue on His mission.

This fact alone has a great lesson to it: once you know God’s path and plan for your life, don’t let others try to talk you out of it, regardless of their intentions, good or bad. As Jesus warned in 9:62, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” The point is this: to enjoy the full blessings of the kingdom of God, *stick to God’s plan for your life*.

Now back to the text. Note that on this occasion, the Pharisee is a *leader* of the Pharisees; that is, one who was considered more righteous and knowledgeable about the law, and therefore put in charge of other Pharisees. The leader is inviting Jesus over to see for himself what his subordinates have

been reporting, and to judge for himself if Jesus is breaking Sabbath law.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the Jews enforced many laws of what did or did not constitute “work” on the Sabbath, an interpretation of the fourth commandment. The interpretation went something like this: if someone is having an emergency, healing is lawful. If someone is *not* having an emergency, such as in a chronic condition, this does not constitute an emergency, and to heal would be considered work.

Amongst those gathered at the Pharisee’s house is a man with “dropsy.” Dropsy is an old term meaning a collection of water in the extremities. Today, dropsy would be defined more specifically, such as congestive heart failure, cellulitis, or any medical condition resulting in fluid accumulation in the lower extremities. Whether the man with dropsy was an observer or an invited guest is unclear. Nevertheless, Jesus picks him out of the crowd purposefully—He intends to teach a lesson to the leader of the Pharisees. Jesus introduces the lesson with a question He has asked many times: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”

The question is a rhetorical one; that is, it has an obvious answer to the leader of the Pharisees. According to the Pharisees, it would *not* be lawful to heal the man with dropsy because he is not having an emergency. He can wait until the next day to visit a physician. But there is a subtle indictment in Jesus’ question—*according to whom is it lawful or unlawful?* In chapter 6, verse 9, when Jesus heals the man with the withered right hand, He asks, “...Is it lawful *to do good or to do harm* on the Sabbath...?” (Italics mine.) In the chapter 6 incident, Jesus compares “lawful” with doing good versus doing harm. In this incident at the home of the Pharisee, He simply asks, “*Is it lawful* to heal...?” The emphasis, therefore, is on their Sabbath laws. The rationalization of the Pharisees and scribes was this: the man with dropsy is not having an emergency, and his life is not in imminent danger. Therefore, waiting another day to be healed won’t hurt him, as he has had this problem for a long time. On the other hand, pulling a man or ox out of a well *does* constitute an emergency, therefore, it was okay to perform “work” on the Sabbath. The point that Jesus is making is that the rational of the Pharisees cannot be supported by a stand-alone reading of the fourth commandment, and in fact cannot be supported anywhere else in the entire Torah. Their definition of what is lawful or unlawful has been created by man.

Notice the response of the Pharisees: “But they kept silent.” The Pharisees are silent because Jesus has put them in a position to condemn themselves and their Sabbath laws, regardless of their response. If

they say “Yes, it is lawful on the Sabbath,” then they violate their own laws in front of their leader. If they say “No,” then they condemn themselves by showing they care more about their laws than the man with dropsy. For the Pharisees, it’s a lose-lose situation.

By healing the man with dropsy, Jesus has raised the issue that the Pharisees have completely overlooked in their zeal for Sabbath law—they have completely lost any sense of caring for others, and totally neglected any principle of biblical love. Their interpretations and definitions of “work” have eliminated the imperative to love by saying that loving their interpretation of God’s law is more important than loving one another. The intent of the fourth commandment was not for man to show love for God, but for God to show love for man by ensuring he doesn’t work himself to death, as was the case when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt. The ultimate purpose of the fourth commandment is to *bless* man, not oppress him. The fourth commandment, taken in its essence, is the only commandment in which God instructs man to look after himself, to care for himself, and, in effect, to love himself.

The irony of this should not be lost on the reader. By creating and imposing Sabbath laws, the religious authorities in Israel exchanged one type of bondage for another—from bondage in Egypt to bondage to the Sabbath laws. And, in so doing, the Pharisees turned God’s love for man into man’s love for the law, negating the entire intent—and blessing—of the fourth commandment.

7 And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor *at the table*, saying to them,

8 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,

9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give *your* place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.

10 “But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

**14:7-11** Dinner at the leader of the Pharisee’s house just gets better and better. Now Jesus is going to call out the Pharisees for their hunger for favoritism.

A Hebrew meal was taken, not at a table with chairs, but reclined on pillows, laying on their left side so as to handle food with the right (clean) hand. The “table” was an open semi-circle platform so that the servants could bring the food and drink up to the front, starting with the host and working down from there. Of course, the host placed himself at the center. Then, in order of importance or honor, the guests took positions closest to the host. In this instance, the Pharisees are not only playing musical cushions, but probably debating among themselves who should be positioned closest to the host, and in what order they should place themselves. To be facetious, this must have taken a lot of “work.”

Observing their jousting for position, Jesus teaches another lesson. On an obvious level, the lesson is one of common sense: better to be *promoted* in front of the crowd than *demoted*. But the deeper lesson, of course, is one of self-importance and humility. The apostle Paul will teach about this in

11 “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and *that* will be your repayment.

13 “But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,*

14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have *the means* to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor....” (Also, see Philippians 2:3-8). Jesus completes His lesson with verse 11: “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” The lesson is clear: the kingdom of God consists of a different standard of values than the kingdom of man. In God’s eyes, it is the humble who shall be exalted, and those who exalt themselves on earth among men will be humiliated before God.

For the Pharisees, Jesus’ lesson will make no sense, for in their way of thinking, those of high esteem before men have earned the right to find favor with God, and those who are low in esteem are worthy of their low estate. The Pharisees have missed the lessons of the Sermon on the Mount.

The reader (and writer) of this commentary should take note: seek not high estate or the esteem of men, but rather strive for that which the world considers lowly. God will raise up the humble and lowly, but for those who seek the favor of men, He will bring low.

**14:12-14** Jesus’ lesson does not end with an admonishment for the guests, but for the host himself. Instead of putting his energies and resources into his influential friends, the host should have put them into those for whom receptions and luncheons are never given. They are the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind. Why these? These four types of disability are named, not because these people just happened to be around, but because they are representative of types:

The *poor* are those who lack basic needs. They stand in contrast to the Pharisees and particularly the leader of the Pharisees who have much.

The *crippled* is symbolic of those who cannot walk; that is, they depend on others to take care of them and carry them around.

The *lame* represent those who are physically able, but, because of their imperfections, are excluded from offering temple sacrifices. (Note 1: the difference between someone who is crippled and someone who is lame is in degree. In the original language, “crippled” essentially means “maimed” to the degree that the individual is unable to walk, or is bedridden. A “lame” person can walk, but with a limp. Note 2: In Mosaic law, Levites who were lame were excluded from offering sacrifices. By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees excluded *anyone* who had a disability.)

The *blind*, also excluded from offering temple sacrifices, are those who must be led around by others.

Allegorically, these four examples have spiritual counterparts. The *poor* are symbolic of those who are “poor in spirit”; that is, they feel abandoned by God. The *crippled* represent those who are paralyzed by sin (cf. 5:17-26). The *lame* represent those whose spiritual “walk” is impaired, perhaps by Sabbath laws and by the traditions of the elders. The lame could also represent those who are outsiders, like tax collectors and prostitutes. The *blind* are symbolic of those who are spiritually blind, and perhaps even blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

Jesus’ instruction to the host here is not based solely on compassion; He is selecting those in society whom the religious leaders considered scorned and rejected by God because of some personal sin. In the eyes of the Pharisees, if a man or woman were poor, they were poor because they were getting what they deserved for some sin they had committed. If they were crippled, it is God Himself who had crippled them out of judgment. If they were lame, they were lame because they had offended God by not keeping such things as the Sabbath law, and God was punishing them. If they were blind, it was either because the blind person had sinned against God, or, if they were born blind, it was because their parents had sinned. Regardless of who is named or what affliction they suffered, the Pharisees taught that it was the result of sin and therefore they were under God’s judgment. Not only did they stand in judgment and suffer physical disabilities, but they were not allowed into the temple, and therefore were considered outcasts and unclean.

The contemporary lessons regarding favoritism here are too numerous to list, but here are a few. First, Christians should not direct their affections solely toward those who already have everything, who are esteemed or thought well of by the world, those who are famous or prestigious, or even those whom the evangelical world elevates as a “celebrity pastor.” The Christian is to direct his or her affection toward those who have nothing. Second, the follower of Jesus Christ should reach out to those whom no one else reaches out to. Third, the rewards in heaven are far greater than the rewards on earth for the one who takes Jesus’ words seriously. Fourth, when the disciple does something for others, he or she should do it without expecting anything in return. Fifth, following these principles puts one in the category of the righteous, which is based not on the law, but on loving one another, especially the poor. And last on this writer’s list: being righteous is not exclusively defined by keeping the Ten Commandments, but by keeping the “royal law,” as stated in James 2:8: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Pharisees had it all wrong: righteousness is not defined by keeping the Sabbath laws or by keeping any other

15 When one of those who were reclining *at the table* with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

16 But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;

17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’

18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’

19 “Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’

20 “Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’

21 “And the slave came *back* and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’

22 “And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

23 “And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel *them* to come in, so that my house may be filled.

24 ‘For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’ ”

law. Righteousness is defined by loving your neighbor as yourself. Therefore, those who love according to the truth will experience “the resurrection of the righteous.”

And a last note of irony: Jesus would have fit into either reception: a reception for the rich, or a reception for the poor. If the reception is for the rich who are proud and love favoritism, such as the Pharisees, they can expect to be admonished. However, if the reception is for the poor, those who hold the reception can expect nothing but good news from the One who came to set men free and to offer heavenly riches beyond all imagination.

**14:15-24** Jesus reinforces His teaching with a parable, prompted by an outburst of blessing by someone at the table, probably meant to quickly change the subject from Jesus’ admonishment of His host. The saying by the unknown guest was a common blessing meant for Jews only. The Jews saw themselves as the privileged chosen people of God who would one day sit at a banquet with the Messiah. Not only does the guest want to refocus the conversation, and perhaps protect his host from embarrassment, but his utterance is ironic, given the parable that follows.

The interpretation of the parable is this: through the prophets, God has lovingly warned His people to prepare for the coming Messiah, the “big dinner.” As was often the custom in Jewish celebrations, a pre-invitation was sent out to prepare people for the occasion (i.e., the prophets). Then, at the time of the event, the announcement was made that the time has come for the dinner (John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus). But, like the pre-invited guests in the parable, the Jews are making all kinds of lame excuses why they won’t come to the party. For example, if the man had already bought the land, wouldn’t he have looked at it ahead of time? Same for the oxen buyer. Surely he didn’t buy them without testing them. For the married man, he’s using his wife as an excuse not to attend the dinner. The Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were doing the same thing to Jesus. They are making excuses like, “He heals on the Sabbath,” and “He must be casting out demons through Beelzebul,” and “He’s telling us we should keep paying taxes to Caesar.” The religious leaders fail to comprehend that the kingdom of God is sitting right there in their midst!

Not accepting their excuses, the master (God) tells the slave (Jesus) to go out “into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.” The streets and lanes of the city are the equivalent of skid row or a ghetto. Though the poor are always large in number (“The poor you have with you always”), they are not so

many that others cannot also be invited. Therefore the master instructs the slave, “Go out into the highways and along the hedges...so that my house may be filled.” Highways and hedges are a euphemism for the Gentiles. Therefore, this parable is informing His audience that those Jews who do not respond to Jesus’ invitation to accept Him as Messiah will be left out of the banquet, and the “meal” will be offered to those who the Pharisees consider unrighteous, unclean, unworthy and undeserving. The last statement of Jesus in verse 24 is therefore a stunning rebuke to His audience.

There is a love message here that must not be overlooked. It was God’s show of love that He chose the Jews to be His people of promise. Through the Law and the Prophets, God’s love gave them hope for a coming Messiah. God’s love protected the seed line leading to the Messiah until He was born. All God asked in return is that His people love Him back by receiving the Messiah whom He sent. This isn’t happening. God’s love is being rejected by the very ones who believed they loved God more than others, and therefore deserved to “eat bread in the kingdom of God.” So God’s love is going to be taken to those who will appreciate it and receive it. God’s love will go to the poor, the blind, the lame and the cripple. God’s love will now be taken to the Gentiles as well. Of course, God has loved these all along, but His love for them was supposed to be demonstrated through God’s chosen people, the Jews, a task at which they have failed miserably. So now those who are the rejected will become those who are the accepted, and those who believe they are the accepted will become those who are rejected by God Himself. It is sad twist of irony for the Jews, and an eternal blessing for all those who have been told that they are beyond the love of God. How ironic are the words of the man, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Unfortunately, he will most likely not be one of them.

**25** Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

**26** “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

**27** “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

**28** “For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

**14:25-33** Verse 26 contains startling words to the Western mind. In the Hebrew context, to “hate” does not mean to be violently angry with or to bring harm to, as it does in English. Here, it means to reject in favor of another to the degree that, from the point of view of the one being rejected, the one doing the rejecting appears to be *hating* the one rejected. It involves a choice of where one is putting one’s affections, one’s greatest value, indeed, one’s greatest love. Jesus is therefore warning His disciples that in choosing Him as their Messiah, they will be seen as turning against Judaism, and even against their own loved ones. They will be seen as betraying the faith, as traitors to their own upbringing and families, and as infidels and outcasts. Jesus is telling

29 “Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him,

30 saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’

31 “Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand *men* to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand?

32 “Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

33 “So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.

His disciples that unless they are willing to go to that extreme, and be willing to follow Jesus at all costs, in spite of the threats and ostracism from their families, they are not a true disciple of Jesus. If you think these are difficult words to swallow, think of how Jesus’ Jewish audience felt.

This difficult passage can be understood by the opening words of the paragraph: “Now large crowds were going along with Him....” The large crowds are *followers* of Jesus, but they are not the same as the *disciples*. Three times in this paragraph Jesus refers to “My disciple.” Many followers of Jesus reap the benefits of His kingdom yet do not have to pay a price; that is, there will probably be little personal sacrifice on their part. Jesus’ disciples, on the other hand, must pay a great price. To be a true disciple of Jesus Christ means giving up everything; that is, all worldly possessions. (This is not just an interpretation on the part of the writer. He is only taking Jesus’ words in their simplest, literal meaning.)

In **verse 27**, we see a repeat of Jesus’ words, “...cannot be My disciple.” In this case, Jesus turns the subject from familial rejection to out-and-out persecution and suffering. Those who were condemned to Roman crucifixion were compelled to carry their own cross. Jesus’ statement for carrying one’s own cross is a euphemism for letting go of the world, for suffering and for death. That statement as well would have been a tough pill to swallow. It is probable that most of the followers who heard these words did not take them seriously or literally. Otherwise, most of the crowd would have dissipated. Only those who stuck around to the end would realize the true meaning of Jesus’ statements.

**Verses 28 through 32** are exercises in logic focusing on counting the cost of being a *disciple* of Jesus. In summary, Jesus is saying, “If you want to be My disciple, then you need to really give it some thought. Being My disciple is not going to be easy, but ridiculously difficult. You will gain nothing in this world, neither riches nor fame nor honor, and you will lose everything you worked so hard for. You will not be accepted and loved by those you care about, but instead you will be rejected, ostracized, disowned, disinherited and mocked. And, to top it off, you will most likely suffer, and the price may be your life. So, sit down and think long and hard before you decide you want to be My disciple and stay with Me till the end.” And, to cap the thought off in **verse 33**, “Plan on losing everything you own, and what you do have left over, you might as well give it away because you won’t have any place to keep it.”

These are hard words for the Western mind, for those who believe in capitalism and free enterprise, who work hard for what we possess, and who believe

in the American dream. The question is, “How does the American dream stack up against these words of Jesus?” That’s a question each Christian has to answer on his own.

Finally, there is the love message, which may be the most important of all. Jesus is actually asking a question about love: who do you love more, people or possessions? If you really care about the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, you will let nothing on earth hold you back from ministering to them in My name.

When Jesus left the presence of the Father to be born a man, He left everything. Consider these words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (2:5-7). In other words, Jesus left all heavenly “possessions” to come to minister to a lost world. As God so loved the world, so, too, did Jesus. As Jesus and the Father so loved a lost world, so, too, should we, letting nothing on earth keep us from emptying ourselves of our possessions on behalf of those who need the kingdom of God in their hearts.

**34** “Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?”

**35** “It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

**14:34-35** Verse 34 contains a rhetorical question because tasteless salt cannot be seasoned. That is, once it is polluted with other things, it becomes useless.

The relationship to the preceding verses cannot be missed: salt (the follower/disciple) becomes tasteless (polluted) with possessions.

The point Jesus is making is this: material possessions, money, property, security, and concern for such things hinders a person from becoming a true *disciple* of Jesus Christ. What we discover, then, is that there is a difference between being a *disciple* of Jesus Christ, and being a *follower* of Jesus Christ. Many are the followers (the “crowd”), but few are the disciples. The true disciple sacrifices all for the sake of the kingdom. The follower sacrifices what is convenient. The disciple forsakes family and friends; the follower appeases family and friends. The disciple’s offering is his life; the follower’s offering is his tithe and his time. Few are called to be disciples; many are satisfied being followers. Today’s follower is typically a good evangelical who believes all the right things, tithes, prays, attends a Bible study, serves faithfully in a church, and buys presents for the poor at Christmas. But this is not Luke’s definition of a disciple. A true disciple gives up *everything* for the kingdom of God, and lives with the knowledge that he or she may lose their life as a

result. They live with their cross strapped to their back.

The call to discipleship may include the decision of whether or not to settle down and raise a family. The early church recognized this, and therefore many early Christians abstained from marriage for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(One must be careful here. There is no judgment as to one state or the other. The evangelist Philip who led the Ethiopian eunuch to the Lord, was married, settled down in Caesarea, and “had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses” [Acts 21:8-9].)

Chapter 14, however, is perhaps the most difficult chapter in Luke for the Western Christian to reconcile, including this writer. Jesus’ teaching here is absolutely contrary to taking advantage of a capitalist system and fulfilling the American dream. There are a few evangelicals, missionaries, priests and nuns who get it and sacrificially accept Jesus’ words. They have given up all their possessions and are, indeed, true disciples. Most Christians, however, are quite satisfied being followers. Although most of us would like to think of ourselves as disciples, in truth, we are mere followers. We would love to see ourselves labeled as disciples, but in reality we are unwilling to make the sacrifices of one “who gives up all his own possessions.” We find countless ways to rationalize our way around Jesus’ teachings regarding possessions and the pursuit of happiness, and deceive ourselves into believing we can have it both ways. We sacrifice some things, believing we have sacrificed much, when in truth we have sacrificed little and gained less.

This is perhaps why the apostle Paul wrote in First Corinthians 7:7, “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am...”; that is, unmarried and free from the tether of family responsibilities. Later, he explains: “I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided” (7:32-34). (As noted above, Paul does not chastise those who are married as being undedicated to the Lord. However, he recommends that if they are single or should become single, they should remain in that state [7:9-17].) Unless the husband and wife are in complete agreement regarding possessions, Jesus’ teaching is difficult to follow, and virtually impossible once children arrive on the scene, for a godly wife will put her children first in her priorities. Once there is a family, possessions are necessary to survive and provide safety, health and security, and Paul understands this. Thus he writes, “Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called” (7:24).

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In terms of contemporary application for the American evangelical Christian, here are some guidelines that can be gleaned from Luke 14, especially verse 33.

First, in regard to chapter 14, the reader who earnestly heeds Jesus' teachings concerning possessions and the mandate to reach out to the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, should remain in his or her present state, but one that can be maintained according to "his own gift from God." (See 1 Cor. 7:7, 9 for the contingencies.)

Second, he who takes Luke 14 to heart must find contentment only with that which is needful. (Paul has instructions on this in First Timothy 6:6-10.)

Third, it is virtually impossible to fulfill the mandate to reach out to the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind without sacrifice. Such sacrifices may involve finances, time, energy, quest for the American dream, and the pursuit of happiness. The American dream can be sought for a lifetime and lost in an instant. The pursuit of happiness is a pursuit that has no end. But that which is "repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" can never be lost and has no end.

Fourth, if one is not able to give "all his own possessions," then he or she should give as much as they possibly can. They should give sacrificially. That often involves putting aside wants daily and pursuing only those things that are needs.

Lastly, one must be truthful with oneself and accept the fact that he or she is either a follower or a disciple. The follower should not deceive himself into believing he is a disciple when in fact he is a follower. The follower cannot become a true disciple unless he or she is willing to give up "all his own possessions." And the disciple must not pride himself on the fact that he has given all for the kingdom of God. He or she should, in fact, give glory to God and give thanks for grace, saying with the apostle Paul, "But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14).

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## Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 14, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?
2. How does this fourth healing on the Sabbath (as recorded by Luke) compare with the other healings on the Sabbath (cf. 6:1-11 and 10:13-17)? Where does this healing take place, and who is the special person to whom Jesus is demonstrating His love and compassion?
3. What is the spiritual lesson, as well as the common sense lesson, that Jesus teaches about seeking honor before men? Have you ever found yourself seeking the favor of others or wanting to be honored or esteemed by others?
4. What does Jesus teach about who should be the focus of one's generosity? How are we doing at that?
5. Repeat in your own words Jesus' parable about the man who invited his friends to a big dinner. First, recall the point of the message when it comes to future events in Jerusalem, then make a practical application concerning your own experiences. What lesson are you walking away with?
6. Jesus makes some critical statements about the cost of following Him. What are those costs, and are *you* paying them? (The question is not, "Are you *willing* to pay them?" but "Are you *paying* them?" There's an important, life-changing difference.)
7. How does "salt...become tasteless?" If you are the "salt of the earth," do you have a good flavor, or have you let the things of the world, or sin, make you tasteless? Would you describe yourself as a "disciple" of Jesus Christ, or as a "follower"?

**The Discippler's Commentary**  
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple  
Luke 14

14:1-24 takes place at a dinner held by a \_\_\_\_\_

14:1-6 – Jesus heals a man with “dropsy” on the Sabbath; He points out the Pharisees’ \_\_\_\_\_

14:7-11 – Jesus chastises the guests for seeking \_\_\_\_\_

14:12-14 – Jesus chastises the leader of the Pharisees for not reaching out to \_\_\_\_\_

- The *poor* are those who do not have basic needs; they also represent the \_\_\_\_\_

- The *crippled* are those who cannot walk; they also represent the \_\_\_\_\_

- The *lame* are those who can walk but have a limp; they also represent the \_\_\_\_\_

- The *blind* are those who depend on others to lead them around; also, the \_\_\_\_\_

14:15-24 – Jesus gives a parable that prophesies how the Jews will reject Him and Gentiles will \_\_\_\_\_

14:25-35 takes place after the dinner; He warns the crowd that is \_\_\_\_\_...

- to \_\_\_\_\_

- to \_\_\_\_\_

## The Discipler's Commentary

### Answer Outline for the Discipler

#### Luke 14

14:1-24 takes place at a dinner held by a leader of the Pharisees

- *The discipler will want to explain that this Pharisee is perhaps meeting Jesus for the first time.*
- *This Pharisee is a leader; therefore, he is of high prestige and someone the other Pharisees would want to get close to.*

14:1-6 – Jesus heals a man with “dropsy” on the Sabbath; He points out the Pharisees’ lack of caring (hypocrisy)

- *The discipler will want to explain what “dropsy” is, and that it is a chronic condition (something that has been going on a long time and normally will continue for quite some time).*
- *Help the disciple understand how the Pharisees interpreted “work” on the Sabbath.*
- *Explain to the disciple that Jesus is testing the Pharisees in regard to the legitimacy of their Sabbath laws.*
- *Explain to the disciple the uncomfortable position Jesus has put the Pharisees in, whether they answer “Yes” to His question, or “No.”*
- *Ask the disciple about the issue of “bondage” here; that is, from bondage in Egypt to bondage to the Law.*
- *Ask the disciple if he or she can think of any nonsense laws the church has put on Christians that have resulted in bondage.*

14:7-11 – Jesus chastises the guests for seeking positions of honor

- *Explain to the disciple how formal dinners were arranged—not in chairs, but laying on cushions. Explain that the person closest to the host would have been recognized as the more favored, the position of honor.*
- *See if the disciple can explain what Jesus means when He gives this teaching. See if the disciple can discern whether it is better to seek to be exalted, or to be exalted by another.*
- *Make sure the disciple understands what Jesus is teaching in regard to the whole concepts of “self-esteem,” “selfies,” and the culture of narcissism in which most Christians live.*
- *Ask the disciple if he or she is guilty of acting like the Pharisees who were “picking out the places of honor.” Ask them what their motive was, and why it was so important to be recognized as important. What is it they are lacking in their personality that causes them to act this way. The teaching moment should be this: if a person is to be exalted, it should be God who is doing it. And even at that, every believer should be more concerned about exalting Christ than exalting oneself.*

14:12-14 – Jesus chastises the leader of the Pharisees for not reaching out to the lower class

- *Inform the disciple that the context for Jesus’ next teaching is that the leader of the Pharisees was probably a fairly wealthy individual, and those whom he invited to dinner were wealthy as well.*
- *Ask the disciple if he or she thinks Jesus is being rude to His host? (The disciple may need to be reminded of why the leader of the Pharisees asked Jesus to dinner in the first place. It certainly wasn’t because he was being kind to Jesus or looking after His needs. The leader of the Pharisees has evil, ulterior motives. Most likely, because the novice Pharisees were not able to stump Jesus, he himself will be the one who will put Jesus in His place.)*

- The poor are those who do not have basic needs; they also represent the spiritually poor (poor in spirit)

- *Ask the disciple why it would have been better if the leader of the Pharisees had invited the poor instead of his wealthy friends.*
- *Ask the disciple what his or her attitude is toward the poor in society. Are they getting what they deserve, or have they dug their own pit? Inform the disciple that his or her attitude toward the poor will determine how they respond to the poor. Ask the disciple how they plan to respond to this teaching.*
- *See if the disciple can determine what is the comparison to being materially poor and spiritually poor? See if the disciple can think back to any passages in Luke that might answer the question. (E.g., Luke 6:20-26.)*

- The *crippled* are those who cannot walk; they also represent the spiritually paralyzed
  - Have the disciple describe someone who is “crippled.” What is it that they cannot do? What ramifications does that have to their quality of life?
  - Ask how being crippled represents a spiritual condition? Have the disciple review Luke 5:17-26 and how that healing by Jesus relates to the problem of sin.
  - See if the disciple can guess why it would be so difficult for a Pharisee to invite someone crippled to dinner (or lame, or blind, or poor). What was the prevailing view from the Pharisees’ point of view of why these individuals were in the condition they were in?
  
- The *lame* are those who can walk but have a limp; they also represent the spiritually hurting
  - Ask the disciple how a lame person differs from someone who is crippled. Ask how that would affect their ability to worship inside the temple compound. Ask how the Pharisees would tend to view those who were lame.
  - See if the disciple can figure out what the lame person represents spiritually. See if the disciple can make a connection between someone who is lame and someone who is spiritually oppressed by the oppressive Sabbath laws devised by man.
  - Most importantly, see if the disciple can relate this teaching to any current events and current attitudes in the church today.
  
- The *blind* are those who depend on others to lead them around; also, the spiritually blind
  - See if the disciple can figure out how a physically blind person represents someone who is spiritually blind. This particular physical disability is used often to describe all the hazards associated with spiritual blindness. Of course, the disciple must be asked what it means to be spiritually blind.
  - Ask what is the most important thing that a person can do to help someone who is physically blind. Then ask what is the most important thing a person can do to help someone who is spiritually blind.
  - At the end of this section, see if the disciple can determine what was the main point Jesus was making. Does it hinge on the question of “To whom do we offer our help, our resources, our time and our hospitality?”

14:15-24 – Jesus gives a parable that prophesies how the Jews will reject Him and Gentiles will receive Him

- This parable may need some explaining to the disciple, depending on how much they know about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. How Jews looked down on Gentiles may need to be reviewed.
- See if the disciple can pick up on the irony of this parable, and what one of the guest had to say that prompted Jesus’ giving this parable.
- What are some excuses people come up with today not to come to Jesus (the banquet)?
- There is an important lesson here concerning the contrast of those who think they are righteous (the Pharisees) and those who know they are unrighteous (the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, according to the teaching of the Pharisees). Who is most likely to believe they have a need? Who is most likely to feel that they do not deserve to experience God’s love? Who is most likely to respond to the invitation to have sins forgiven and eternal life rewarded? Of course, it will be those who have the greater need.

14:25-35 takes place after the dinner; He warns the crowd that is following Him...

- Have the disciple re-read this section and see if he or she can discern the difference between being a “follower” and a “disciple.”
- to count the cost
  - Ask the disciple what it means to count the costs, and what that implies for the person who truly desires to be a disciple and not a follower.
- to not be polluted by possessions
  - See if the disciple can determine why the accumulation of possessions—even legitimate ones—can interfere with doing the work of a true disciple.