

I. Read Luke 14:1-11

- A. In vs. 1-6, there is a restatement of the Sabbath principle discussed in Luke 13:10-16. In this instance, a man was healed from “dropsy” (NAS). Jesus explained to the Pharisees and lawyers that *works of necessity and mercy* were permitted on the Sabbath. What illustration did He use to make His point?

An accident involving a son or an ox in which an immediate rescue is necessary.

- B. Do you think the Pharisees were really interested in obedience to the law, or did they have other motives in their concern for Jesus' Sabbath healings?

They were truly confused about the purpose of the law; hence, they would have had questions about the proper observance of the Sabbath. They probably had mixed motives. Jesus was a genuine threat to their way of life and their view of themselves. Any natural curiosity they had would have been combined with anger and envy. Most of the interaction between the Pharisees and Jesus amounted to attempts to entrap or accuse Him.

- C. What mistake do all legalistic folks make?

They mistake *form for substance*. They insist on the letter of the law while *ignoring the spirit (true intent) of the law*. They *strain at a gnat, yet swallow a camel*. They also seek *their own justification* by their own works.

- D. In vs. 7-11, Jesus explains a common sense principle regarding proper social relations, while at the same time pointing to a deeper spiritual principle. What common sense principle does he explain?

It is unwise to be presumptuous or pushy in social settings. Those who presume upon others may be embarrassed when their presumption backfires.

What spiritual principle is being described and in what instance does Jesus teach this to His disciples? (Read Mark 10:35-41.)

Greatness in the kingdom of heaven is not gained through self-promotion or assertiveness training. It is gained through the genuine expression of a servant's heart — through service to others. This begins by being willing to do the unpleasant and unnoticed tasks in the church. Through faithfulness and good stewardship, greater responsibilities are given. Progressively, over a period of time, others notice the Christian character and the servant's heart and the *higher place at the table is offered*. Those who seek to circumvent this process, as James and John attempted in Mark 10, have misunderstood the nature of the kingdom of God.

- E. In what ways might someone in church make the same error as James and John?

Anytime the world's values or methods are adopted over biblical ones, this can happen. The true servant looks for opportunities to serve rather than titles or offices. Holding a title or office will only be important to God's servant insofar as it makes him or her more effective or useful to the kingdom of God. Those who seek an office or position in the church to achieve status or a place of honor are going dangerously backward in the kingdom. God's economy is simply different from the world's economy in regard to notions of success and value.

- F. Correlate the Apostle Paul's statement in 1 Timothy 3:1 with Luke 14:7-11 and Mark 10:35-41.

In 1 Timothy, Paul is expressing the idea that those who desire to serve God are on the right track and the recognition that those holding an office (that of Elder for example) will have greater opportunities to serve. He is *not* encouraging ambition or self-aggrandizement but

rather the desire to be useful to the church. This is important. Officers and prospective officers in the church should examine their motivations. Simply holding an office for status while refusing the opportunities the office gives to serve the church is a shame rather than an honor. It would be better not to hold office rather than use it for ego gratification.

- G. How should young Christians approach their roles in church?
With great humility and with a mixture of reluctance and enthusiasm. The *humility* results from an inner awareness of our inadequacy. *Reluctance* comes from a healthy bit of self-doubt and an understanding of the awesome responsibility of leading God's people. *Enthusiasm* comes from the proper recognition that there is no greater honor than serving almighty God faithfully.

Is there a practical approach?

Be willing to do the small things that make others successful in ministry. This ensures against selfish motives in doing God's work. Aggressively seek out opportunities to serve. Move up the ladder slowly.

- H. Where does Paul describe Jesus setting the proper example for us in our service to the church? How did Jesus begin His role as a servant? (Read Philippians 2:2-8.)
In Philippians 2, Paul describes Jesus emptying Himself of His right to be worshipped and served as the Son of God in order to serve others. Jesus began by giving us what He was entitled to receive.

Is there another Scripture that expresses this as well?

Read 1 Timothy 2:6; Mark 10:45; and Matthew 20:28.

- I. What will happen in a church in which leaders with selfish motives rule? (1 Corinth. 1:10-11)
Quarrelling and divisiveness will result. The service that is rendered will be for all the wrong reasons.

What is the remedy in such a church? (Read 1 Corinth. 1:26-31.)

An assertion of genuine humility in which Christ is our only reason to boast.

When people want the spotlight on themselves in the church, should there be any reason for concern?

Yes. Whether out of spiritual immaturity or ignorance, those seeking acclamation and attention can become dangerous to the fellowship and work of the church.

Does Scripture give us examples of these kinds of folks? (Read Acts 5:1-11; 8:9-22.)

Ananias and Sapphira and Simon were clear examples of misdirected individuals within the church.