

## Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

### Luke 13:10-21

(Discussion questions are at the end)

When you show up for Sunday worship gatherings, what's on your mind? *"Where am I going to sit?", "Who am I going to sit by?", "Can't wait to drop the kids off at class so I can engage in some adult time?", "I hope the preacher is not long-winded.", "I wonder what songs we'll sing today?", "I'm excited to see \_\_\_\_\_, we haven't touched base in a while.", "I hope I don't see \_\_\_\_\_, I'm not ready to deal with him/her.", "What are we doing for lunch afterward?", "It's been a rough week, I'm looking forward to this in order to recharge." "What volunteer responsibilities do I have today?"*

Our mindset/heart-set likely varies somewhat week to week. In this week's passage we'll see Jesus attending a synagogue service, which were somewhat like our Sunday gatherings. We're not told specifically what town this synagogue was in. It likely wasn't Jesus' home synagogue (you'll recall He got ran out of that one back in chapter 4). And He was on His way to Jerusalem, so this unnamed town and accompanying synagogue was somewhere headed in the direction of Jerusalem.

The text does mention that Jesus was teaching in this synagogue. As an up and coming rabbi, the people of the town were probably excited to have this young celebrity rabbi visiting and teaching that day. Notice that Jesus wasn't preoccupied with what He was going to teach. His attention was drawn to a woman *"who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years."* (13:11 NIV). It appears that Jesus' mindset/heart-set when He attended synagogue was *"Who can I bless today?"* That, in itself, is probably a good lesson for us. When we arrive on Sunday morning for worship, perhaps we should get in the habit of seeking who we can bless that day.

Now Jesus, because He's Jesus, could tell immediately what the cause/reason for this woman's infirmity. Verse 11 tells us that her condition was *"by a spirit"*, and verse 16 mentions that *"...this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound..."*. There was a spiritual dimension to her physical condition. We are not told how she initially got into such a condition, how Satan had bound her 18 years prior. But Jesus, upon seeing her condition had compassion and mercy (notice, not a "you get what you deserve" attitude), and moved to heal her, to set her free.

Upon her healing/release, she immediately praised God (which is an appropriate response, I'm sure we'd all agree). But not everyone was so pleased and excited about what had just taken place. The synagogue ruler (think pastor) was *"indignant"*...meaning he was very displeased. Why was the synagogue leader so upset? Well, there was his stated reason: because this healing had occurred on the Sabbath (which Jesus obliterated that line of thinking, see verses 15-17); and then there was the real reason: which isn't plainly stated, but which we can imply/infer. The dude just got shown up. There was an element of jealousy/envy, mixed with poor theology, mixed (likely) with some external peer pressure—notice verse 17 states, *"all His opponents were humiliated"*. This synagogue leader was not alone. There, apparently, were

other religious types (probably Pharisees) who were part of the community that made up this synagogue. *“But the people were delighted with all the wonderful things He was doing.”* (13:17 NIV). (“delighted” here is usually translated “rejoiced” in other places in the New Testament, and “wonderful” might be better translated as “glorious”).

Let’s go back to our original line of questions in regards to our mindset/heart-set when we show up for worship on Sunday mornings. When you show up, what do you hope for and expect? Perhaps for many of us who have been part of church for many years, we don’t hope or expect much...we’re just in the habit of attending as a matter of course. Maybe we hope/expect to gain some new, intriguing insight/understanding from the teaching. Maybe we hope/expect to be inspired through the musical worship. Maybe we hope/expect to be encouraged by being with other believers/friends. Do we hope/expect to have our socks blown off by seeing something wonderfully miraculous? (We’ve probably learned to guard our hearts from expecting too much, in order to spare ourselves disappointment.)

It’s safe to say that the attenders of the synagogue that day weren’t expecting to see the glorious, miraculous. And it’s a fair question, I suppose, to ask how much we should “expect” it? But I certainly think we should be open to it.

But what was the synagogue leader and his religious buddies hoping for/expecting? It’s probably safe to assume they expected to wield their influence over the people. This is a real danger and temptation for religious leader types. Do they want to be instruments in God’s hand to minister to God’s people, or do they want their own little kingdom in which they hold sway? The latter seems to have been the case in passage.

Regardless of what WE hope for and expect when we gather together for worship, regardless of what OUR mindset/heart-set is when we arrive, we do know that God desires us to gather together and worship Him; to submit ourselves to Him and to each other; to be open to Him and His will in our lives, as well as open to each other for encouragement and blessing.

It is interesting that Luke includes the parables of the mustard seed and the yeast (13:18-21) here in his gospel. The other gospel writers place it elsewhere. But Luke apparently wants his readers to connect/catch something between the healing of the crippled lady at the synagogue and these important parables about the Kingdom of God.

The point of the two parables is that the Kingdom of God is advanced in small, unexpected, almost imperceptible ways. Small, seemingly powerless things, end up having great impact/influence. Things easily deemed weak and worthless can, and actually do, affect great change. Instead of using the powerful, the influential, the “high and mighty” to affect change, God uses the weak, the marginalized, the seemingly insignificant—like a crippled woman—to impact an entire town. This passage highlights that acts of caring (which could be considered mustard seed/yeast) have far greater impact than keeping religious rules (and those acts of caring don’t need to be “miraculous” to have Kingdom impact).

We may be tempted to wonder what it really matters if we attend weekly worship together or not. Does it really make a difference? It would appear that everyone who attended this random synagogue on this random Sabbath was affected/changed on some level. The crippled woman was obviously the most significantly and positively affected/changed. The other synagogue attenders were blessed to see the hand of God at work which caused them much rejoicing that they likely never forgot and likely retold many times. Even the synagogue ruler and his cronies were impacted, albeit in a different sort of way. This is the principle of the mustard seed and the yeast. Seemingly small things...like simply showing up regularly...can, over time, have a huge impact. We typically don't recognize the shaping, molding, forming process we are undergoing while it's happening because it is usually such a slow process. But we can be confident that we are being shaped, formed, molded.

So perhaps the goal, the hope, the expectation isn't that God is going to do the big, miraculous thing every week, but rather that we are going to faithfully be open and available, looking toward the needs of others and how we might be used to bless them. Small acts and attitudes, over time, make a big impact. In so doing Satan's works are undone. In so doing God's Kingdom is advanced.

- Q. Are you more of a “rules-are-meant-to-be-broken” type of person, or a “play-it-by-the-book” type of person? Why? Give an example. (possible icebreaker)**
- Q. When you come to Sunday worship service (or Home Group for that matter) what is your usual mindset/heart-set? Why? Explain. (Be open and honest.)**
- Q. When you come to Sunday worship service (or Home Group) what are you hoping/expecting? Why? Explain. (Be open and honest.)**
- Q. Of the various people in this passage: the crippled woman, the townspeople, the synagogue ruler, Jesus; which can/do you relate to? (Or, how/in what ways do you relate to each of those various people?)**
- Q. What tensions have you experienced between *caring* for people and *keeping* religious rules? Which tend to get your attention, energy, effort?**
- Q. How have you seen keeping religious rules/expectations actually hinder loving/caring for people?**