

Home Group Leaders Discussion Guide

Luke 18:31-43

On Friday night, November 10, we will be having our next “Secret Church” gathering. The topic for this time is “How to Study the Bible.” So in the spirit of that, we’re actually going to use this section of Luke as an exercise in Inductive Bible Study.

If this term is new to you, Inductive Bible Study is an investigative method of approaching Scripture that has 3 components: Observation, Interpretation, Application. This passage in Luke works well to get practice at this method. Observation is learning to SEE what is actually in the passage. We want to look for key words and ideas (What’s repeated? What’s unclear?). We want to ask all sorts of questions from the text. (Who, What, When, Where, Why, How). Look for compare/contrast. Imagine you are an investigative reporter or a researcher and really analyze the passage. No question is off limits. The Observation part of Inductive Bible Study really ought to be the most time consuming. It sets the foundation for accurate interpretation and correct application. Observation is an acquired skill.

With Interpretation we want to make sense out of what we previously observed. Context is key. And we want to let the Bible speak for itself, as opposed to imposing our preconceived ideas upon it. Don’t get stuck in minutia, but look for the main idea of the passage. Which of the questions that you asked earlier in the Observation phase are more important than others? Remember that the Bible is its own best commentary.

Lastly, with Application we want to figure out what God might be trying to tell us and what we need to do about it. The common temptation is to jump to this phase too quickly. Instead, really stew on the Word of God (Observation and Interpretation) and only then, prayerfully, figure out the application.

The reason this section of Luke is good for an exercise in Inductive Bible Study is because Matthew and Mark have parallel passages, which allows for some good observation (particularly some compare/contrast between the 3 accounts).

So let’s take a gander at Luke 18:31-43 and Matthew 20:17-19, 29-34, and Mark 10:32-34, 46-52

Probably the first thing we’ll notice is that Matthew and Mark have an additional section inserted that Luke doesn’t have. Since our focus is Luke, we’ll ignore that extra section; suffice it to say that even a cursory Observation will make note of this extra section.

All 3 accounts note that Jesus and the disciples were on their way to Jerusalem. In all 3 accounts Jesus predicts His coming torture, crucifixion and resurrection. (**Do you notice any subtle differences in His prediction?**) Luke, specifically, notes that the disciples didn’t understand.

**What is the significance of Jesus knowing ahead of time what was going to happen to Him?
What is the significance of Jesus proceeding even though He knew what would happen to Him?**

What is the significance that all this would take place in Jerusalem?

Good observation will notice that we see a couple of slight discrepancies between the 3 accounts. Matthew and Mark note that Jesus and His disciples were leaving Jericho, while Luke states that they were approaching Jericho. Also, Matthew states that there were 2 blind men sitting on the side of the road, while Mark and Luke only mention one (and Mark offers us a name for him, Bartimaeus).

**What do you think/feel when you encounter such discrepancies?
How do such discrepancies effect our understanding of the “inspiration” of Scripture? (And for that matter, the “inerrancy” and “infallibility” of Scripture?)**

A key detail that all 3 accounts share is that the blind man/men shouted, “*Son of David, have mercy on me/us!*”. **What is the significance of the title “*Son of David*”?** This harkens back to God’s promise to King David (see II Samuel 7, & I Chronicles 17) that David’s throne would be established forever. Much of the messianic expectation that the Jew’s held out hope for was connected to this promise. This is the first time in Mark’s and Luke’s accounts that this messianic title is ascribed to Jesus. (Matthew, which was written to a Jewish audience, used that title a little more.)

All 3 accounts tell that the crowd rebuked the blind man/men and tried to silence him/them. **Were they annoyed at the loud ruckus he/they were causing? Was the crowd offended at their use of the messianic title “Son of David”? What other reason might they have wanted him/them to pipe down?**

All 3 accounts have Jesus asking the question, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” **Why did He ask this? Wasn’t it obvious, especially considering that Jesus can evidently read the hearts and minds of people? What might this tell us about voicing requests to God?**

Matthew specifically mentioned that Jesus had compassion on him/them and touched their eyes. Mark and Luke would seem to indicate that Jesus simply willed their healing, as they do not specifically mention Jesus touching him/them. Regardless, the blind could now see.

All 3 accounts mention that he/they followed Jesus upon receiving sight, but only Luke specifically mentioned that he/they praised God, as did all the people who witnessed this miracle.

Praising God should be an obvious response when God does something wonderful for us. But are we as quick to praise Him when He does something wonderful for someone else?

We know from reading/studying Scripture that Jesus did many miracles of healing; opened the eyes of the blind, opened the ears of the deaf, loosened the tongues of the mute, healed the lame and crippled, and various other diseases/illnesses, and even raised the dead. We are rather accustomed to this within the ministry of Jesus. What we also need to remember is that for every person Jesus healed, there were dozens more who were not healed. It would seem that if Jesus' purpose/mission was to heal, He left the job largely undone. So in order to understand the healing nature of Jesus' ministry, we need to recognize that it wasn't the purpose of His ministry, but rather a sign pointing in the direction of a larger purpose. Jesus came to proclaim and inaugurate the Kingdom of God...which has far reaching implications beyond the healing of folks in need. But those miraculous signs did add credibility to His words. The healings we see are but a foretaste of what will happen when the Kingdom comes in all its fullness.

The section we are looking at in Luke is often broken up into 2 small sections: verses 31-34, where Jesus predicts/forewarns what will happen to Him in Jerusalem; and verses 35-43, and the healing of the blind man. But we need to be careful about separating them. Luke intends, it seems, to contrast the "blindness" of the disciples (them not understanding what Jesus was talking about, see verse 34), with the restored sight of the blind man. Additionally, Luke, in his masterful writing, is creating tension with the foreboding/impending crucifixion on the horizon on the one hand, with the light and life of the Kingdom and the accompanying wholeness that it brings on the other.

Verse 33, therefore, may be the most important verse in the entire section, "*On the third day He will rise again.*" Life will win out over death. The resurrection of Jesus will be the ultimate "sign" of that truth, but until then, these smaller healings/miracles are the glimmers of hope that the Kingdom will triumph over any doom and gloom.

Perhaps the faith of the blind man, and his resulting joy was a gift of encouragement to Jesus as He prepares for Jerusalem. Perhaps this was the reminder to Him of why He was doing this in the first place...so that His Father would be praised.

Have you ever experienced a time when a stranger brought you more encouragement than close friends?

How much effort do we exert in order to get praise for ourselves versus how much effort do we exert in order for God to receive praise?

Part of the reason Jesus' words were "hidden" from the disciples was because His prediction didn't meet their expectations. **What might be "hidden" from us (even though it's right in front of us) because of flawed/misplaced expectations?**

If Jesus were to ask you right now, "What do you want me to do for you?" what would you ask of Him?