

TIT FOR TAT AIN'T WHERE IT'S AT

Once a group of soldiers were receiving instructions in hand-to-hand combat.

When the session was over the drill sergeant wanted to review. He asked one of the men, "Tell me again, what steps would you take if someone were coming at you with a large, sharp knife? The new recruit answered, "I'd take big steps!" Luke 7 opens with a soldier who takes some big steps – big steps to Jesus.

The Roman legion was the finest fighting force ever assembled. As a member of the Roman army, this sergeant had never been defeated in the field of battle... *until now!*

He meets a foe he can't conquer. His servant becomes terminally ill.

In verse 3 the centurion sends a dispatch of Jews to solicit the help of Jesus. And notice why? He's humble. He feels unworthy to come to Jesus himself. But that's not how the Jews portray him. They approach Jesus bragging on this man's good works.

We're told in verses 4-5, "they came to Jesus... saying the one for whom He should do this was deserving, "for he loves our nation, and has built us a synagogue." They start pointing to the man's good deeds.

They want to play tit-for-tat with God – *I've done this... so you do that.* God doesn't play that game.

As Jesus approaches the centurion's house his friends meet Him, and convey his true attitude. Verse 6, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for I

am not worthy that You should enter under my roof. Therefore I did not even think myself worthy to come to You." The man's attitude was opposite what the Jews conveyed.

He says verse 7, "But say the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man placed under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it."

Here is a man who understands authority – *how to give orders and take orders* – and He's confident Jesus has authority over illness. Jesus can just say the word and the disease will obey.

In verse 9, "When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around and said to the crowd that followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!" Jesus healed the man's servant... But not because of his good deeds... it was the result of his faith.

Faith is not bartering your goodness for God's blessing. God doesn't play tit-for-tat. Faith trusts God to give us what we can't earn. Mark Twain said, "Heaven goes by favor. If it went by merit, you would stay out and your dog would go in."

Rather than believe that Jesus will bless you because you are worthy, real faith believes that Jesus will bless us in spite of the fact you're unworthy. *Is your faith in a God of grace, or in your own good works?*

COLLISION IN THE GATE OF NAIN

Twenty-five miles from Capernaum was a city called Nain. Jesus and His band of merry men are entering the city – they're laughing and rejoicing – on the heels of a miracle. I doubt if anyone but Jesus noticed the freshly dug grave outside the city gate.

On the other hand, exiting the city are mourners escorting a widow and the corpse of her son. Get the picture: a 4th of July parade is about to run head-on into a funeral procession. A colossal collision is about to occur...

Here's the ultimate showdown. Death and life meet face to face. Life, light, and laughter collide head-on into death, darkness and despair. The grim reaper meets the Resurrection and the Life.

Jesus gives two impossible commands...

In verse 13 we're told, "When the Lord saw

her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." He's trying to stir up some faith, some hope. He says to the corpse, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the boy does. *Again, the Lord of life crashes a funeral, and spoils the spades of the gravediggers!*

I love what we're told in verse 15, "And (Jesus) presented him to his mother." Jesus gives back to a mom the son that death stole.

Perhaps you have a child who is lost and dead in his sins. He's a rebel. You lost him years ago. But Jesus has compassion on you, too. He has compassion on all moms and dads. He sees a parent's pain. If you trust Jesus, He can give you back your child.

Is your faith in a God of grace, or is it in your own good works?

Bible Scan - Luke 7-16

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A WOMAN'S PLACE

Guys, who says men have a monopoly on ministry? Luke 8 begins with a list of loyal ladies who were helping support Jesus' ministry.

Among these ladies was Mary Magdalene, who Luke says was delivered from 7 demons; Joanna, the wife of an important official in the court of King Herod. In Jewish culture it was a disgrace for a rabbi to be seen talking to a woman in public. Jesus, on the other hand, valued women and included them in His ministry. I definitely believe the Bible teaches strong male leadership in the Church, but that doesn't mean women can't also play a vital role in ministry as well.

Devotion Box - Thicker Than Blood

In 8:19 Jesus redefines the family. When Mary and Jesus' half-brothers pay Him a visit, He points to His followers, "My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it." In other words, *obedience is thicker than blood*.

Guys, spiritual bonds can become far stronger than even natural bonds.

TURNING HEADS

King Herod thought he'd silenced the voice of conviction when he killed John the Baptist. Now he's perplexed over Jesus. Has John been resurrected? Is this Elijah? Or one of the other Old Testament prophets? He wants an answer...

And so does Jesus... but He wants an answer from His disciples. After He feeds the 5000, He asks them in verse 20, "But who do you say that I am?" In fact, Jesus also wants you to answer that very same question. It's the question that determines a person's eternal destiny. Who is Jesus? Peter gives the right answer, "the Christ of God."... the Messiah.

It was a cold windy day to be riding a motorcycle, so the rider put his jacket on backwards to cut the wind. Tragically, he was in an accident. A rookie policeman was on the scene immediately, but the man still died. The policeman said, "I tried to save him, but by the time I got his head straightened around he was dead."

This encounter with His disciples is Jesus' attempt to turn some heads in a new direction. The disciples have figured out who Jesus is - *the Messiah*. But they have the wrong idea as to where He's headed... they think He'll be king. From this point onward, Jesus tries to explain He's headed to a *crucifixion*, not a *coronation*.

In 9:22 Jesus tells His disciples that a *cross*, not a *crown* is in His future... and a cross is in their future as well. He adds in verse 23, "Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." On the cross I have no will of my own. I'm vulnerable to the will of another. To take up my cross is to make myself just as susceptible to the will of God.

TAKE HEED HOW YOU HEAR

In Luke 8 Jesus re-emphasizes the parable of the sower. The Word of God is like a seed - it has the power to produce life. But a seed's effectiveness depends on the soil. And fertile soil is a humble, repentant heart.

Helen Keller was born deaf, dumb, and blind, yet when she was taught to communicate, and told of Jesus, she responded, "I always knew there was such a person." Even though her ears couldn't hear, her heart picked up God's message.

That's why Jesus says in verse 18, "Take heed how you hear." Are you just a connoisseur, a sampler, of Bible studies - you listen, then give them a grade? Or do you listen with an eagerness to learn and apply and obey what you hear?

Devotion Box - Low Key Your Miracles

In chapter 8, Jesus raises a little girl from her death bed.

Jesus could've shown off His miracles - taken pictures, and published the testimonies in a monthly newsletter - but He even tells the girl's parents to keep it quiet. His attitude is our example. Not even Jesus boasted of His achievements. God calls us to be faithful. Leave the press releases and fanfare to God.

Devotion Box - Revenge Gets Rebuked

In 9:49, James and John get a little trigger-happy. The Samaritans snub Jesus, and they want to call down fire from heaven... "How about a barbecue, Elijah style, and we'll use the Samaritans for spare ribs." Jesus rebukes their desire for revenge. He's into *life* not *death*, *deliverance* not *destruction*.

Devotion Box - Barriers To Discipleship

In Luke 9:57-62 Jesus encounters true barriers to discipleship... *Preoccupation with present comforts* - Jesus didn't even have a permanent address. *Preoccupation with future securities* - don't delay following Jesus for a worldly inheritance. *Preoccupation with past sentimentalism* - don't wait to follow Jesus in order to say good-bye to the past. There can be no looking back... To follow Jesus, He alone must become your yesterday, today, and forever.

Devotion Box - The Good Samaritan

In Luke 10:25 Jesus uses a parable to peer into our hearts.

A man is mugged on the road to Jericho. A priest and Levite, both religious types, refuse to get involved. But a Samaritan stops to offer help to the man. J. Vernon McGee humorously suggested the reason the priest and Levite passed by without stopping, is they saw that the man had already been robbed.

The Jews despised the Samaritans - a mixed breed of Jew and Gentile. But the true possessors of bad blood were the Jews... Jesus stuns His listeners by saying that the caring Samaritan was more a child of God than either the priest or Levite.

Guys, do we care about people in need, or are we too busy being religious to give a rip? Do we hurry to church and forget about the hurting people in our lives?

Devotion Box - Are You A Martha Or a Mary?

In 10:35-42, Mary and Martha are preparing for a special dinner guest. When Jesus arrives, Mary is so enthralled with Him that she abandons her tasks. Martha suggests to the Master that He rebuke her distracted sister. But Martha is the sister who Jesus rebukes... She's so busy serving Jesus she has no time to enjoy being with Him. Jesus says in verse 41, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her..." *Are you a Martha, running around serving a God you rarely spend time getting to know?*

JESUS ON PRAYER

The disciples witnessed most of Jesus' miracles, but they never asked Him, "Teach us how to walk on water, or heal the sick, or raise the dead, or multiply loaves and fish." Rather in 11:1, the disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray. Perhaps they sensed that His power came from His prayer life.

The model prayer Jesus taught His disciples is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. People constantly recite it, preach it, engrave, even cross-stitch it - but just remember, the model *prayer* was meant to be *prayed!*

This prayer pattern teaches us many lessons about prayer, but one particular thing it does is establish a progression. Prayer should begin with *worship* - hallow His name. Then *surrender* - seek His will. Followed by *petition, confession, and deliverance* - food, forgiveness, and freedom - or victory over temptation.

Lackluster, half-hearted prayers never make it off the launching pad. God answers desperate, heartfelt, persistent prayers. If you want God to answer your prayers don't just *say prayers - pray prayers.*

The parable Jesus tells about the neighbor pounding on the door isn't a commentary on God's desire to meet our needs, but on our desperation. Often God waits to meet our needs until our *desperation* exceeds our *sophistication* - until we get to the point where we're not too proud to ask.

And speaking of asking... if you want good gifts from God - even His best gift... the power of the Holy Spirit... then keep on asking, seeking, knocking...

YOUR SECURITIES

If you've invested in the stock market in recent years, right now you're probably asking, "Why do we refer to stocks as securities?" In 12:13-21 Jesus teaches us the insecurity of earthly riches. The quest for wealth is a short-sighted pursuit. Better to lay up spiritual treasure.

A rich man spends his life making money. He has to build bigger silos, but he does nothing to prepare to meet God. In verse 19, he boasts, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." Verse 20, "But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'"

When John D. Rockefeller died it was asked, *how much did he leave behind?* Someone answered, "All of it." The moral of the story is in verse 21, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Devotion Box - Covering Up Sin

Luke 12:3 teaches that it's impossible to cover-up sin. We're told, "What you have spoken in the ear in the inner rooms will be proclaimed on the housetops."

During allergy season my nose runs. It was doing so one night while I attended the Braves' game. I was sitting in my seat picking at my nose when I looked up and saw myself on the matrix board. My sins were exposed for all the world to see.

Heaven also has a matrix board for the sins not covered by the blood of Jesus.

Devotion Box - Guard The Gateway

Luke 11:34 teaches us that our eyes are the gateway to our souls. That's why we need to be careful where we focus our attention. You've heard the expression, "*a feast for the eyes*"... Be careful what you feast on... it could result in heartburn.

Devotion Box - When A Tower Falls

Luke 13:1-5 teach that a man's physical circumstance doesn't always reflect his spiritual condition.

Jesus gives an important analogy in light of the WTC tragedy... A tower collapses while you're in it - that doesn't mean you're a worse sinner than the guy who escapes - it means we're all guilty of producing a fallen world. Calamity in one man's life doesn't mean he's a worse sinner than the next guy... it means we're all sinners and deserving of the same calamity.

HEALING ON THE SABBATH

There was a woman who'd been hunchbacked for 18 years. Our text tells us the infirmity had been caused by Satan. Not all disease is demonic. Living in a fallen world subjects us to disease, but Satan can use a sickness to attack us.

Jesus lays hands on this woman, looses her from the oppression, and heals her body. We're told in 13:13, "she was made straight, and glorified God." A lot of people here tonight could say that's their testimony in a nutshell.

Devotion Box - Unselfish Living

Luke 14:7-11 tells us unselfish living involves hanging out with those who do nothing for your image. What merit is there in giving only to those people who can return the favor? What many people call *servicing* is really just *swapping*.

Jesus tells us if we give to people who can't give in return... God will see to it we're repaid.

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - November 25, 2001 - Pick up the new edition of LikeMinds...Pray for the trip to Haiti, December 1-6, Sandy and James will be hosting a pastors conference... Sunday Night Specials: December 2, speaker Tom Ice, and December 9, speaker Samy Tanagho... Ladies' Christmas Tea, Friday and Saturday December 7-8..."The Present", a Christmas Children's Program, December 16...The Brook, our bookstore and café is now open on Sunday, check it out after the service tonight. Next Bible Scan - January 6, 2002 - Luke 17-24

"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." - Luke 15:10

Bible Scan Memory Verse

PARABLES AND PRODIGALS

Devotion Box - Counting The Cost

The Pharisees were snobs. They looked down their noses at the sinners Jesus loved. The Pharisees lived to draw distinctions that would keep people out of the Kingdom, whereas, Jesus lived to build bridges that would woo them in. In Luke 15, Jesus takes aim at the prejudice of the Pharisees with 3 parables...

The first parable is about a shepherd who risks his neck to save the one sheep who wandered away. Saving sheep is risky business, but love takes risks... God loves each one of us as if there's only one of us to love.

The second parable is about a woman who loses a coin - but conducts a massive, nonstop search of her house until the coin is found. It's similar to the effort you spend when you're late for an appointment and can't find your keys. Sinners are God's car keys, and He'll postpone eternity until He finds them.

The third parable is about a forgiving father. God is the Father who forgives His wayward kids even after they've spent years in sin, and wasted His blessing.

When the prodigal son returns home the father kills the fatted calf and throws a party. In verse 10 Jesus tells us, "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." Heaven throws a party when a sinner repents. Sadly, the prideful Pharisees just pouted.

Once a Sunday School teacher asked the class, "Who was sorry when the prodigal son returned home?" Of course, the answer she was looking for was "the elder brother." - but one little boy raised his hand..."the fatted calf".

We know the lesson of the prodigal son, but what about the elder brother?

There are four lost objects in Luke 15 - the sheep, coin, prodigal son, and the elder brother. What makes his situation worse is the fact that he is the only one who doesn't know he's lost. Like the Pharisees, he's oblivious to his lostness. Do you have a hard time accepting sinners? We sing "Amazing Grace", and count on it in our relationship with God, but do we believe in grace for others? Do we rejoice - or grow resentful - when God blesses a person who doesn't deserve it? You may not be a prodigal son, but are you an elder brother?

Devotion Box - The Taming Of The Shrewd

You've heard of Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew"... Luke 16 begins with a parable I call "The Taming of the Shrewd". Jesus commends a man for his cunning, and encourages His servants to be just as sly as the sinners.

Jesus makes a sad observation in verse 8, "For the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light." In other words, Christians have a tendency to - at times - act stupid.

Because God lives in our hearts we turn off our heads. God guides through both *quiet times*, and *quick wits*. As you follow Jesus, don't leave common sense behind. Be as smart as sinners are, preferably smarter.

Before you decide to follow Jesus *count the cost*. There is a cross to carry. There is a price to pay. Commitment requires total devotion. It's been said, "It doesn't take much of a man to make a Christian, but it takes all there is of him."

Luke 14:29 tells us that Jesus would prefer you not start in the Christian life at all... than to start with no intention to finish. Count the cost and follow through.

AFTER-LIFE

Luke 16 ends with a scene from the other side of the grave...

In Old Testament times the afterlife was a duplex. One side of the duplex was a paradise - the other side was an oven. Those who trusted in God's promises followed Abraham into heaven's holding tank. The others paid with pain. Once Jesus put an end to sin, heaven's doors were opened.

Today, when a believer dies, he goes straight to heaven. For the unbeliever, hell still awaits.

HELL IS REAL

Hell is real! Just ask the rich man in Luke 16. There's no relief for his thirst - not even a drop. He wishes he could warn those he left behind, but he can't... Worse, he lives forever behind a one way mirror. Apparently, he can see heaven, but he'll never have it. All hope is lost... Imagine the torment...