

## Study Guide

Series: Who is this Man?  
“Building Your House on the Rock”

**Monday** – Read Luke 15:1-32. It was a familiar charge: “This man welcomes sinners.” With eagerly listening tax collectors and sinners all around him, Jesus couldn’t deny it. He embraced the “charge” with three vivid stories in which finding a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost boy set off a big celebration. He pointedly added an older brother who wouldn’t welcome the lost boy home. The Pharisees saw people as “good” or “bad”. Jesus saw all people as “lost” more than as “bad” (like the sheep, coin or boy). How does your view of God compare with Jesus’ picture of God celebrating each time a heart responds to God’s love? When have you lost your way spiritually and needed finding? The Pharisees, as “good” people, avoided “bad” people. Jesus’ stories ask: how can we help anyone find their way if we shun them? To what extent do you prefer to relate only (or mainly) to “good” people? If you tend to feel disdain (or envy) for the “tax collectors and sinners” you know, ask God to help you see them through Jesus’ eyes.

**Tuesday** – Read Luke 16:1-31. Jesus told of a swindler whose boss applauded him for his shrewdness in buying off “friends” to watch after him when he’d lost his job. Then Luke records another of his “status inversion” stories. A poor beggar got to enjoy heaven. The rich man who had ignored him in life begged him to send a message to save his brothers from his hellish fate. In a post-Bernie Madoff world, it’s vital to know that Jesus was not endorsing financial fraud! He was asking: if even a swindler can look down the road, wouldn’t you be wiser to use wealth for eternal purposes than for short-term earthly gain? Jesus said no one can serve two masters (verse 13). Which master has your deepest allegiance? Jesus’ next story used common views of heaven and Hades to say more about values. In verses 27-31, Jesus said Moses and the prophets could show the rich man’s brothers (and the Pharisees) a better way. As you daily choose your values (financial, social and spiritual), how are you “listening” to Moses and the prophets—and Jesus?

**Wednesday** – Read Luke 17:1-19. Jesus’ amazed his disciples by saying, “Forgive seven times in the same day,” if needed. (We usually hear the Matthew 18:21-22 “seventy times seven” version of this.) “Increase our faith!” the disciples said. But Jesus said faith isn’t measured by quantity. He healed ten lepers who showed just a little faith. Only one (a Samaritan) took time to say “thank you.” Have you ever felt that “I could be a good influence on others and offer forgiveness if I only had as much faith as so-and-so?” What hope and possibility does Jesus’ figure of speech about the power of faith like a tiny mustard seed open up for you? What small step of faith can you take today to live into God’s calling? On his way to Jerusalem, somewhere near the border between Galilee and Samaria, Jesus met the ten lepers. Only the one Samaritan praised God for the healing and deliverance Jesus had given him. What are the blocks to a more grateful spirit in your life? What have you forgotten or neglected to thank and praise God for?

**Thursday** – Read Luke 17:20-18:8. Asked when (in the future) the Kingdom would come, Jesus focused mainly on the need for his hearers’ to recognize and trust God every day. Then he contrasted God with an unjust human judge, and said the real issue was not whether God is trustworthy, but whether we are. “Will the Son of Man find faith on the earth?” he asked hauntingly. In 17:21, Luke uses the Greek words *entos humon*, which could mean that God’s

Kingdom is “among you” or “within you.” What different emphases and nuances do you find in the two possible meanings? To what extent does each of them ring true to your understanding of Jesus’ message of the Kingdom of God? In 18:1-8 Jesus uses a teaching device we find often in Luke: a “how much more” argument. “If even an unjust judge will do justice if pressed hard enough,” he asked, “how much more can we trust God to do justice?” Then he asked if he, the Son of Man, will find faith on the earth. How do you answer that question in your life?

**Friday** – Read Luke 18:9-30. Jesus lived in a culture that despised tax collectors and thought children were unimportant. Jesus taught that they were more likely to find favor with God than the self-satisfied Pharisee or the ruler who loved things more than God. “Who then can be saved?” his startled hearers asked. “Without God, nobody,” Jesus said. “But with God, everyone.” The story of the Pharisee and the tax collector did not glorify self-hatred, as some fear. It was about not looking down on others. William Barclay wrote of it, “The question is not, ‘Am I as good as my fellow men?’ The question is, ‘Am I as good as God?’” What helps you keep your eyes on God’s holiness and mercy, not on other people? Jesus didn’t ask everyone to sell all they had (e.g. the women who sustained his work - Luke 8:3). The issue the Ruler in verse 18 had to face was that his goods owned him. He couldn’t bear to think of living without them. Ask God to help you see whether you own your assets or they own you. What could you live without, if God asked you to?