

LUKE 14-19

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# THE SAVIOUR OF THE LOST



9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS



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9 INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDIES FOR  
SMALL GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

DES SMITH

 **matthiasmedia**  
SYDNEY • YOUNGSTOWN

*The Saviour of the Lost*

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## » HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF THESE STUDIES

### 1. What is an Interactive Bible Study?

Interactive Bible Studies are a bit like a guided tour of a famous city. They take you through a particular part of the Bible, helping you to know where to start, pointing out things along the way, suggesting avenues for further exploration, and making sure that you know how to get home. Like any good tour, the real purpose is to allow you to go exploring for yourself—to dive in, have a good look around, and discover for yourself the riches that God's word has in store.

In other words, these studies aim to provide stimulation and input and point you in the right direction, while leaving you to do plenty of the exploration and discovery yourself.

We hope that these studies will stimulate lots of 'interaction'—interaction with the Bible, with the things we've written, with your own current thoughts and attitudes, with other people as you discuss them, and with God as you talk to him about it all.

## 2. The format

The studies contain four main components:

- sections of text that introduce, inform, summarize and challenge
- numbered questions that help you examine the passage and think through its meaning
- ‘Implications’ sections that help you think about what the passage means for you and your life today
- suggestions for thanksgiving and prayer as you close.

## 3. How to use these studies on your own

- Before you begin, pray that God would open your eyes to what he is saying in the Bible, and give you the spiritual strength to do something about it.
- Work through the study, reading the text and answering the questions about the Bible passage.
- Resist the temptation to skip over the ‘Implications’ and ‘Give thanks and pray’ sections at the end. It is important that we not only hear and understand God’s word, but also respond to it. These closing sections help us do that.
- Take what opportunities you can to talk to others about what you’ve learned.

## 4. How to use these studies in a small group

- Much of the above applies to group study as well. The studies are suitable for structured Bible study or cell groups, as well as for more informal pairs and triplets. Get together with a friend or friends and work through them at your own pace; use them as the basis for regular Bible study with your spouse. You don’t need the formal structure of a ‘group’ to gain maximum benefit.
- For small groups, it is *very useful* if group members can work through the study themselves *before* the group meets. The group discussion can take place

comfortably in an hour (depending on how side-tracked you get!) if all the members have done some work in advance.

- The role of the group leader is to direct the course of the discussion and to try to draw the threads together at the end. This will mean a little extra preparation—underlining the sections of text to emphasize and read out loud, working out which questions are worth concentrating on, and being sure of the main thrust of the study. Leaders will also probably want to work out approximately how long they'd like to spend on each part.
- If your group members usually don't work through the study in advance, it's extra important that the leader prepares which parts to concentrate on, and which parts to glide past more quickly. In particular, the leader will need to select which of the 'Implications' to focus on.
- We haven't included an 'answer guide' to the questions in the studies. This is a deliberate move. We want to give you a guided tour of the Bible, not a lecture. There is more than enough in the text we have written and the questions we have asked to point you in what we think is the right direction. The rest is up to you.

## 5. Bible translation

We quote from and refer to the English Standard Version, which we recommend. There should not generally be any problems, however, if you are using a different translation (though it might be useful to have an ESV on hand in case of any confusion).





## » STUDY 1

# GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

[LUKE 14:1–24]

### Hypocrisy exposed

THE 1967 MOVIE *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* is a classic story of a dinner guest who confronts his hosts. John Prentice and his new fiancée, Joanna, have fallen in love, and they are visiting her parents for dinner to tell them of their engagement. But there's an issue: John is black.

Even though Joanna's parents think of themselves as open-minded, they struggle to accept their prospective new family member. As the film progresses, John gently but firmly exposes their prejudices and uncovers how

they really think about life. It's a powerful film.

In this passage, Jesus has his own 'guess who's coming to dinner' moment. Invited to a meal with a leading Pharisee and his friends, Jesus uncovers their obsession with status and points them towards a better way to relate to God and to other people: humility. But will they accept his critique? And if not, who will be humble enough to accept the invitation to the best meal of all—the feast in the kingdom of God? Let's see.





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## A better reward

JESUS NOTICES THAT HIS FELLOW guests are jockeying for the best seats at the table. So he tells them a parable that explains the foolishness of this: if you go for the best seat in the house, you may be humiliated and sent to the worst one. Far better to start in the worst seat and then be invited to a better one, so winning the praise of those around you. He's not saying that winning the praise of others is important. He is just saying that, as a general principle—that is, the way God has set up the world—the way to be exalted is to be humble (v11). So, if you want to get the best seats in the house, that's the way to do it.

But whereas where you sit at a meal is insignificant, whether you make it to a much bigger feast—the resurrection of the righteous—is crucial.

With that, Jesus now leans over to speak with his host, telling him not just to invite those he knows to his parties. If he does, they'll only invite him back. Rather, he should also invite the lowly in his town, who will never be able to pay him back. That way, though *they*

will never be able to repay him, *God* will repay him, and with a far better reward—an eternal reward, one that he will receive at “the resurrection of the just” (v 14).

This is why Luke starts this section with Jesus healing the man with dropsy (also known as oedema, a swelling caused by fluid build-up in the body's tissue). Jesus tells his host to invite people like this man to meals (v 13), and in this way be kind and humble to people like him, as Jesus is kind and humble to him.

In short, Jesus teaches the guests and the host the same thing: be humble and you will be rewarded. Pick a humble place at the table and you'll be given a better place. Pick humble guests and you'll be given something even better: eternal life. But either way, only humble people will be rewarded.

This is important, because Jesus is about to tell them that none of them are humble, and that all of them are going to miss out on the best feast of all if they don't change.

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### Read Luke 14:15–24.

8. What does the guest say to Jesus?

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**9.** Jesus replies with a parable.

- A man is preparing a banquet (vv 16–17). What does he do?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What do his guests do (vv 18–20)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What does the man then do (vv 21–23)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What will be the result for the original guests (v 24)?

**10.** What point do you think Jesus is making?

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## Humility and exaltation

OVERHEARING JESUS' CONVERSATION with the host, another guest pipes up and says how good it will be for those who get to go to the feast in the kingdom of God (another way of referring to "the resurrection of the just"—eternal life).

Jesus responds with a story about some privileged people—they have new fields, new oxen and new wives—who refuse to come to a great feast because they are preoccupied with their privileges. The point is clear: Israel's elite are so proud that they're rejecting God's invitation, through Jesus, to eternal life. They care about status *now*: having the best seats in the house *now* (vv 7–11), eating with the best people *now* (vv 12–14). So, when the great eternal 'then' comes, they will be shut out (v24) and their seats instead given to the poor,

crippled, blind, and lame (vv 21–23).

Jesus' parable is at once a wonderful message of the expansive mercy of God and a warning not to presume on God's kindness. Those whom the master invites at the last minute—the poor, the lame, those in the streets and on the highways—represent Gentiles who are invited to enter the kingdom of God and receive eternal life. But at the same time, those who should have been the most excited and prepared to attend the banquet—the Pharisees, Israel's leaders—have assumed they are right with God. But they have failed to realize that Jesus, the true master of the banquet, is in their midst, and they face being excluded from eternal life. Yet again the principle holds true: *the humble will be rewarded*.

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### » Implications

- What are some of the ways you are tempted to boost your status in other people's eyes? In what ways are you tempted to ignore what is right because of what other people think?

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- How can a preoccupation with our status stop us from following Jesus and helping people who have lower status than us?

- What are some practical ways you can include people of lower status than you in your own life, and so show them the love of Jesus?

### » Give thanks and pray

- Thank God that, in Jesus, he is humble, and serves us when we don't deserve to be served.
- Pray that God will make us humbler, and therefore keener to serve him and those who are unimportant in the world's eyes.



