

Go Into the Highways and Hedges (Luke 14:1, 12-24)

A Small Group Outline



1. Praise *(Purpose: To worship God)*

- What are you thankful for this week? *(let the group's secretary write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Song Service
 - Sing a few songs of praise to God

2. Pray *(Purpose: To carry each others' burdens and to seek the Lord)*

- What challenges did you have this week? *(write these down in an A4 hardcover or some notebook)*
- Go into a season of prayer

3. Review *(Purpose: To learn accountability)*

- Tell us how it went with what you promised to do in last week's meeting? *(e.g. Who did your share your faith with this past week? Who did you minister to? How did actioning your I WILL STATEMENT go?)*
- Where people have failed to fulfil what they said they would, do not be harsh with them but gently encourage them to try again in the coming week. Give them more support by phoning or joining them in the week.

4. Give *(Purpose: To be good stewards of our monies)*

- This is the time to return tithes and offerings. If done electronically, kindly ensure that you get the bank account details of your local church from your treasurer. Don't forget to complete an envelope and to send the breakdown to him/her.

5. Discover *(Purpose: To learn to listen to God, and be obedient to His Word)*

- **Notes for the facilitator**
 - Read *Christ's Object Lessons (COL)*, pp. 219-237
 - "The Saviour was a guest at the feast of a Pharisee. **He accepted invitations from the rich as well as the poor**, and according to His custom He linked the scene before Him with His lessons of truth.... The great feast at which [the Jews] were to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, while the Gentiles stood without, and looked on with longing eyes, was a theme on which they delighted to dwell. The lesson of warning and instruction which Christ desired to give, He now illustrated by the parable of a great supper. **The blessings of God, both for the present and for the future life, the Jews thought to shut up to themselves.** They denied God's mercy to the Gentiles. By the parable Christ showed that they were themselves at that very time rejecting the invitation of mercy, the call to God's kingdom. **He showed that the invitation which they had slighted was to be sent to those whom they despised**, those from whom they had drawn away their garments as if they were lepers to be shunned" (COL 219)
 - "**None of the excuses [for rejecting the supper invitation] were founded on a real necessity.** The man who 'must needs go and see' his piece of ground, had already purchased it. His haste to go and see it was due to the fact that his interest was absorbed in his purchase. The oxen, too, had been bought. The proving of them was only to satisfy the interest of the buyer. The third excuse had no more semblance of reason. The fact that the intended guest had married a wife need not have prevented his presence at the feast. His wife also would have been made welcome. But he had his own plans for enjoyment, and these seemed to him more desirable than the feast he had promised to attend. He had learned to find pleasure in other society than that of the host. He did not ask to be excused, made not even a pretense of courtesy in his refusal. The 'I cannot' was only a veil for the truth—'I do not care to come'" (COL 222).

- **Excuse 1: Bought a piece of ground.** Even accepted at face value, the excuse was flimsy—the purchase had already been made. Without doubt the purchaser had examined the ground carefully before closing the deal (*SDA Bible Commentary*).
- **Excuse 2: Five yoke of oxen.** Again, the purchase had already been made. The purchaser was intent only on determining how good a bargain he had secured, a task that easily might have been postponed if he had really desired to attend the feast (*Ibid*).
- **Excuse 3: I cannot come:** The man who made this third excuse appears to have been even more rude than the others. Whereas they had, with a show of courtesy, asked to be excused, he simply informed the servant flatly, “I cannot come” (*Ibid*).
- **“By the great supper, Christ represents the blessings offered through the gospel.** The provision is nothing less than Christ Himself. He is the bread that comes down from heaven.... The Lord's messengers had proclaimed to the Jews the advent of the Saviour.... **In the feast He had provided, God offered to them the greatest gift that Heaven can bestow....** The love of God had furnished the costly banquet, and had provided inexhaustible resources” (COL 222).
- **“But in order to accept the invitation to the gospel feast, they must make their worldly interests subordinate to the one purpose of receiving Christ and His righteousness.** God gave all for man, and He asks him to place His service above every earthly and selfish consideration. He cannot accept a divided heart. The heart that is absorbed in earthly affections cannot be given up to God” (COL 223).
- “Around the family board, when breaking their daily bread, many in Christ's day repeated the words, ‘Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.’ But **Christ showed how difficult it was to find guests for the table provided at infinite cost.** Those who listened to His words knew that they had slighted the invitation of mercy. To them worldly possessions, riches, and pleasures were all-absorbing. With one consent they had made excuse” (COL 223).
- **“So it is now.... Men declare that they cannot imperil their worldly prospects by giving attention to the claims of the gospel.** They count their temporal interests as of more value than the things of eternity.... **Others urge the difficulties that would arise in their social relations should they obey the call of God. They say they cannot afford to be out of harmony with their relatives and acquaintances....** The man who said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,’ represents a large class. **Many there are who allow their wives or their husbands to prevent them from heeding the call of God.** The husband says, ‘I cannot obey my convictions of duty while my wife is opposed to it. Her influence would make it exceedingly hard for me to do so.’ The wife hears the gracious call, ‘Come; for all things are now ready,’ and she says, ‘I pray thee have me excused. My husband refuses the invitation of mercy. He says that his business stands in the way. I must go with my husband, and therefore I cannot come.’ The children’s hearts are impressed. They desire to come. But they love their father and mother, and since these do not heed the gospel call, the children think that they cannot be expected to come. They too say, ‘Have me excused’” (COL 224).
- **“The host turned from those who despised his bounty.... He invited those who were poor and hungry, and who would appreciate the bounties provided.** ‘The publicans and the harlots,’ Christ said, ‘go into the kingdom of God before you.’ Matthew 21:31. However wretched may be the specimens of humanity that men spurn and turn aside from, they are not too low, too wretched, for the notice and love of God” (COL 225).
- “The servant who brought in the poor and the blind reported to his master, ‘It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, **Go out into the highways and hedges,** and compel them to come in, that my house may be

- filled.’ **Here Christ pointed to the work of the gospel outside the pale of Judaism, in the highways and byways of the world** [see Acts 13:46-48]” (COL 226).
- **“The last message of warning and mercy is to lighten the whole earth with its glory.** It is to reach all classes of men, rich and poor, high and low. ‘Go out into the highways and hedges,’ Christ says, ‘and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled’” (COL 228).
 - **“The world is perishing for want of the gospel.** There is a famine for the word of God. **There are few who preach the word unmixed with human tradition.** Though men have the Bible in their hands, they do not receive the blessing that God has placed in it for them” (COL 228).
 - **“The Lord desires that His word of grace shall be brought home to every soul. To a great degree this must be accomplished by personal labor.** This was Christ's method. His work was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. Through that one soul the message was often extended to thousands” (COL 229).
 - **“We are not to wait for souls to come to us; we must seek them out where they are.** When the word has been preached in the pulpit, the work has but just begun. **There are multitudes who will never be reached by the gospel unless it is carried to them**” (COL 229).
 - Vs 21 – the poor, the maimed, the lame and the blind – a reference to publicans and sinners.
 - ‘Highways’ and ‘hedges’ refer to those outside the ‘city’ – i.e. the non-Jews.
 - **‘Highways’** can be seen as those in the upper levels of society who are influential, educated, wealthy, etc. If won to Christ, they can use their influence, abilities and resources in a powerful way to spread the gospel.
 - **‘Hedges’** appear to refer to the poorer classes, who are pressed with suffering, unbelief, despondency and disease. They have few opportunities in life, and often find themselves sunken in the depths of sin.
 - “The command given in the parable, to **‘compel them to come in,’** has often been misinterpreted. It has been regarded as teaching that we should force men to receive the gospel. But it **denotes rather the urgency of the invitation, and the effectiveness of the inducements presented**” (COL 235).
 - *Read Luke 14:1, 12-24. Preferably let one person read it. Let everyone then put down their Bibles and get the group to reconstruct the passage in their own words. This teaches the group to be careful in quotation Scripture correctly and to use it as the basis of their discussions.*
 - **Discussion Questions** (use only a few). *The notes in italics after some of the questions below are for the facilitator, and not to be read out to the group.*
 - How is the kingdom of heaven, and the gospel like a banquet?
 - In general, what are some reasons people might make excuses for not attending a social function?
 - Did those who rejected the invitation give valid reasons, or were they merely excuses? Why or why not?
 - What do these excuses tell us about the invited guests? About their relationship to the host? (*ask one question at a time*)
 - How can an absorbing interest in material things keep us from attending the supper [i.e. accepting the gospel]?
 - How can family members or relatives affect our acceptance or rejection of the gospel? Why will this excuse not count in the Judgement one day?
 - The term ‘highways’ appears to be a reference to those who influential, rich, educated, etc. What fears do we often have in sharing the gospel with such people? Why are they so important to reach? (*ask one question at a time*)

- 'Hedges' appears to refer to those who are poor, downtrodden, uneducated, spiritually weak, etc. Why is it so critical for them to hear the gospel?
- How do you think things would have been different if the gospel invitation was originally accepted by the Jews?
- According to the New King James Version, Luke 14:23 says those in the highways and hedges should be **compelled to come in**? Is this a reference to using force? How do you understand this phrase?
- Why is there such a great sense of urgency in the parable?
- **Application Questions** (*select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT*)
 - Have you personally accepted the invitation to the banquet? Briefly share when that took place.
 - Have you used excuses in the past in order to evade or delay accepting Christ? Elaborate.
 - What excuses do you feel you are currently using to bypass a Christian responsibility?
 - How are you personally involved in inviting people to the gospel banquet?
 - Whom can you invite to the kingdom banquet this week?
 - I WILL STATEMENT: Formulate an I will statement in response to what you have discovered in the Word. Let the group's secretary also record these in an A4 notebook. Ensure that everyone gets a chance to give their I WILL STATEMENT. You have to be specific. E.g. "I will visit a friend this week, who has recently shown interest in spiritual things, and see if I can encourage him to accept Christ's banquet invitation."

6. Share (*Purpose: To be witnesses of our faith*)

- Do you have anyone you could share today's lesson with this week? *Be specific.*

7. Closing prayer

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