

Parable of the Sheep & Goats (Matt. 25:31-46)

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 *Desire of Ages (DA)*, pp. 637-641
- "When the nations are gathered before Him [as the Second Coming], there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering" (DA 637).
- "In that day **Christ does not present before men the great work He has done for them** in giving His life for their redemption. **He presents the faithful work they have done for Him**" (DA 637).
- "Jesus had told His disciples that they were to be hated of all men, to be persecuted and afflicted. Many would be driven from their homes, and brought to poverty. Many would be in distress through disease and privation. Many would be cast into prison. To all who forsook friends or home for His sake He had promised in this life a hundredfold. Now He assured a special blessing to all who should minister to their brethren. **In all who suffer for My name, said Jesus, you are to recognize Me. As you would minister to Me, so you are to minister to them. This is the evidence that you are My disciples**" (DA 637).
- "**Those whom Christ commends in the judgment may have known little of theology**, but they have cherished His principles. Through the influence of the divine Spirit they have been a blessing to those about them. Even among the heathen are those who have cherished the spirit of kindness.... Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature, and have done the things that the law required. **Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God**" (DA 638).

- “[Christ’s] followers are not to feel themselves detached from the perishing world around them. They are a part of the great web of humanity; and Heaven looks upon them as brothers to sinners as well as to saints. The fallen, the erring, and the sinful, Christ's love embraces; and **every deed of kindness done to uplift a fallen soul, every act of mercy, is accepted as done to Him**” (DA 638).
- “As you open your door to Christ's needy and suffering ones, you are welcoming unseen angels. You invite the companionship of heavenly beings. They bring a sacred atmosphere of joy and peace.... **The Father from His throne numbers the unselfish workers among His most precious treasures**” (DA 639).
- “**To the rich, God has given wealth that they may relieve and comfort His suffering children; but too often they are indifferent to the wants of others....**They do not understand the temptations and struggles of the poor, and mercy dies out of their hearts. In costly dwellings and splendid churches, the rich shut themselves away from the poor; the means that God has given to bless the needy is spent in pampering pride and selfishness. The poor are robbed daily of the education they should have concerning the tender mercies of God; for He has made ample provision that they should be comforted with the necessities of life” (DA 639).
- “**Christ beholds [all the challenges of the poor], and ... says, It was I who was hungry and thirsty. It was I who was a stranger. It was I who was sick. It was I who was in prison.** While you were feasting at your bountifully spread table, I was famishing in the hovel or the empty street. While you were at ease in your luxurious home, I had not where to lay My head. **While you crowded your wardrobe with rich apparel, I was destitute. While you pursued your pleasures, I languished in prison. When you doled out the pittance of bread to the starving poor, when you gave those flimsy garments to shield them from the biting frost, did you remember that you were giving to the Lord of glory?** All the days of your life I was near you in the person of these afflicted ones, but you did not seek Me. You would not enter into fellowship with Me. I know you not” (DA 639-640).
- “Many feel that it would be a great privilege to visit the scenes of Christ's life on earth, to walk where He trod, to look upon the lake beside which He loved to teach, and the hills and valleys on which His eyes so often rested. But **we need not go to Nazareth, to Capernaum, or to Bethany, in order to walk in the steps of Jesus. We shall find His footprints beside the sickbed, in the hovels of poverty, in the crowded alleys of the great city, and in every place where there are human hearts in need of consolation.** In doing as Jesus did when on earth, we shall walk in His steps” (DA 640).
- “**The Saviour has given His precious life in order to establish a church capable of caring for sorrowful, tempted souls.... It is because this work is neglected that so many young disciples never advance beyond the mere alphabet of Christian experience.** The light which was glowing in their own hearts when Jesus spoke to them, “Thy sins be forgiven thee,” they might have kept alive by helping those in need. The restless energy that is so often a source of danger to the young might be directed into channels through which it would flow out in streams of blessing. Self would be forgotten in earnest work to do others good” (DA 640).
- “**Those who minister to others will be ministered unto by the Chief Shepherd.** They themselves will drink of the living water, and will be satisfied. They will not be longing for exciting amusements, or for some change in their lives. The great topic of interest will be, how to save the souls that are ready to perish” (DA 641).
- “Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, “Love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12); **when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished.** We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts” (DA 641).

- God is invisible. How do we love someone we cannot see? Do we throw money up into the sky and hope He catches it? Do we shout, “I love you” over and over again from a rooftop? No!! **God designed that we show love to Him by serving those around us.**
- *Read Matt. 25:31-46. 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 do people usually determine whether they will be nice to someone?
 - How would people’s behaviour change if they treated others as if they were personally serving Jesus?
 - How would you oppose the idea that the passage teaches salvation by good works?
 - How are the “sheep” and the “goats” in church both similar and different?
 - What do we learn from this passage about important things we should be doing while awaiting Christ’s return?
 - How are these things different from the worldly perspective of what is important?
 - Why do you think both groups are surprised at Jesus’ words (see vs 37-39 & 44)?
 - Which is a greater need to be addressed in the church: sins of commission (wrongs we do) or sins of omission (good we fail to do)? Elaborate.
 - What might be Jesus’ reason for telling this parable?
 - Share examples of individuals or churches that are serving “the least”? How does this encourage or inspire you? *(ask one question at a time)*
 - What is something this group can do to show love to an individual or organisation in need?
- **Application Questions** *(select a few depending on your time. One has to be the I WILL STATEMENT)*
 - If Jesus came in glory today, how might he evaluate your life based on this parable?
 - What aspect of the parable would you like to personally apply to your life?
 - What act of kindness can you, in the next week, do toward someone in need?
 - 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 commit to visiting a friend this week who is going through bereavement, and dropping off groceries to another needy family.”

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

Prepared by Shandrell Penniken / Northern Conference