

# JESUS EATS WITH A PHARISEE

Daily Bible Readings			
<b>M</b>	Aug. 28	Mark 7:1–8	Follow God, Not Human Traditions
<b>T</b>	Aug. 29	1 Sam. 1:19–23	Obedience, Not Sacrifice
<b>W</b>	Aug. 30	Ps. 6	Be Gracious to Me, O Lord
<b>Th</b>	Aug. 31	Luke 7:24–34	Jesus, a Friend of Sinners
<b>F</b>	Sept. 1	Luke 14:7–14	Humility Before God and Others
<b>Sa</b>	Sept. 2	Exod. 30:17–21	Come to God in Cleanliness and Holiness

## MAIN IDEA

Jesus demands heartfelt commitment to justice and love as demonstrations of true faith rather than mere outward adherence to the law.

## BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE

Luke 11:37–44

## A VERSE TO REMEMBER

The Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.” (Luke 11:39)

## PREPARING TO LEAD

- Pray for participants and for yourself as leader. Reflect on lesson 1, “Jesus Eats with a Pharisee” (Participant’s Book, p. 1).
- Familiarize yourself with the context of the Scripture. Luke’s Gospel, the first book of the two-volume work of Luke-Acts, is characterized by the theme of reversals, with a particular emphasis on the themes of poverty and responsibility toward those who were poor.
- Provide Bibles, Participant’s Books, Worship Leaflets for lesson 1, name tags, paper, and pens.
- Obtain a white pillar candle to serve as the Christ candle, as well as a means to light it.
- Step 6 offers additional options from which to choose.

# LEADING THE LESSON

## Opening Worship

### 1. Gathering

- Greet participants as they arrive, and provide name tags. Invite participants to introduce themselves, naming one fact about themselves that other participants may not know about them.
- Distribute Bibles, Participant's Books, and Worship Leaflets for lesson 1.
- Formulate and get consensus on some simple ground rules for the study (for example, welcoming diverse points of view, maintaining confidentiality, and so on).

### 2. Morning Prayer 1

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Light the candle, noting that it is a tangible reminder of the risen Christ.
- Encourage participants to settle into silence.
- Invite volunteers to lead portions of Morning Prayer from the Worship Leaflet, beginning with the Opening Sentences and ending after the Hymn.

Teaching Tip
In many groups that have been meeting together for some time, participants may know each other quite well, or think they do. Making introductions in which group members report some detail about their lives that others may not know is a good way to expand friendships. If the group includes newcomers in this first lesson, this provides a way for them to share something about themselves without feeling they are being singled out.

## SCRIPTURE

Luke 11:37–44

**11:37** While he was speaking, a Pharisee invited him to dine with him, so he went in and took his place at the table. <sup>38</sup>The Pharisee was amazed to see that he did not first wash before dinner. <sup>39</sup>Then the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. <sup>40</sup>You fools! Did not the one who made the outside make the inside also? <sup>41</sup>So give as alms those things that are within and then everything will be clean for you.

<sup>42</sup>“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and herbs of all kinds and neglect justice and the love of God; it is these you ought to have practiced, without neglecting the others. <sup>43</sup>Woe to you Pharisees! For you love to have the seat of honor in the synagogues and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces. <sup>44</sup>Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves on which people unknowingly walk.”

*Note:* Find Scripture Notes for this reading on the final page of the lesson.

## Bible Study

### 3. Scripture Reading

Participant’s Book, p. 2

- Point out that today’s Scripture is part of a section of the Gospel that could be called, “On the Way to Jerusalem” and that the words of Luke 9:51 are unique to Luke’s Gospel.
  1. Ask a volunteer to read aloud that verse. Then invite participants to read today’s Scripture passage aloud round-robin style, with each person reading one verse in turn.
- Option: Point out that in “Stepping into the Word” the writer suggests two possible motivations the Pharisee in this passage might have had for inviting Jesus to dinner:
  1. We might hypothesize that this particular Pharisee invited Jesus to dinner in order to get to know him better for the purposes of tripping him up or revealing a scandal about him.
  2. Perhaps the host wanted to learn more about how Jesus viewed faith. Perhaps the host was intrigued by the picture of faith that Jesus had been presenting in his teaching and healings.

Invite the group to listen as a volunteer reads the passage aloud. Following the reading, ask participants to speculate about these two possibilities for the Pharisee’s motivations. After hearing their thoughts, encourage them to continue to reflect on the question as the lesson proceeds.

#### 4. **Love That Comes from the Whole Self** Participant's Book, p. 3

- The writer points out that Jesus commits a religious faux pas before the meal even begins.
  1. What is it? Why is his Pharisee host offended?
- Ask someone to read verses 39–41 aloud again. Invite participants to suggest other metaphors with a similar meaning to Jesus' image of a cup that must be clean inside and out. Ask:
  1. What does Jesus assert is the remedy for greed and wickedness?
  2. How have some Christians interpreted these words?
- Call attention to how Jesus continues to criticize the Pharisees who must have also been guests at this meal. Ask:
  1. What does Jesus say about the Pharisees' priorities?
  2. What is the meaning of what Jesus has to say about graves?
- Invite the group to ponder the priorities we sometimes have in our own congregations.
  1. The Jewish leaders were concerned about externals, appearances, and easily measurable details. Where do you see this tendency in the church today?

Have we ever been guilty of putting more emphasis on the furnishings of our buildings, for example, than in focusing on the needs for affordable housing for persons in our cities?  
Where have you been guilty of this tendency in your own life?

#### 5. **Harmony Between the Inner and Outer Being** Participant's Book, p. 4

- Invite a volunteer to read aloud Matthew 23:25–28, Matthew's version of this meal with the Pharisees. Point out that, in this Gospel account, Jesus mentions hypocrisy or hypocrites three times, and hypocrisy is also one of the central themes of Luke 11:37–44. Ask a volunteer to describe the origins of the word *hypocrisy*. Discuss:
  1. What components of hypocrisy does the writer identify in this passage?
  2. The writer observes that hypocrisy can be present in all of us. What examples does she give? Where, if at all, have you observed hypocritical tendencies in the actions of religious leaders?
- We note that God can bring harmony between our interior and exterior lives. Discuss:
  1. How does God desire that we engage the world?
  2. In what ways do you experience harmony between your inner and outer self? In what ways would you like to?

## 6. Stepping into the World

Participant's Book, p. 5

- The writer notes that, in Jesus' interaction with the Jewish leaders, he indicates his desire that we be like solid wood furniture, the same inside and on the surface. She suggests that we nurture that consistency inside and out through many different faith-based actions. Invite the group to name the examples she gives, and jot them down on newsprint or a board. Encourage the group to add other examples of how they nourish the kind of consistency lifted up here.
- The writer also notes that, at any moment, these actions that help us love God with our whole selves can shift in the direction of trying to look good to others or striving to earn God's approval through measurable actions. Invite participants to reflect on the following and respond to one or more in their journals:
  1. When I examine my life, where have I played a role or tried to impress others?
  2. What motivations and desires can I identify that conflict with a wholehearted love of God?
  3. Which faith-based attitudes and actions help me grow in loving God with my whole heart? Which attitudes and actions help me grow in my love for others?
- Choose from the following optional activities to explore the Scripture:
  1. Point out that we sometimes imagine Jesus as a table guest in our own homes, even sometimes posting artwork with sentences such as "Jesus is the unseen guest at our table." Invite participants to describe Jesus' behavior as a guest in this passage. Discuss:
    - Would you really be willing to have a guest in your own home who ignored rituals or protocols about table service that are important to you? Why or why not?
    - How would you feel if Jesus proceeded to roundly criticize your actions and attitudes, or labeled you as a hypocrite?
  2. Consider the two characterizations of the Pharisee in this account presented in the optional Scripture reading activity. Ask participants to say which description of the host they think is more accurate. Ask:
    - If you think the host was trying to trip Jesus up, how do you think he might have reacted to Jesus' words?
    - If you believe the host was genuinely interested in learning more about Jesus' teachings, what might have been his response?

## Closing Worship

### 7. Morning Prayer 2

Worship Leaflet, lesson 1

- Begin with the Prayer of the Day, pray the Lord's Prayer, and end with the Dismissal.
- Bless participants as they leave, saying, “(Name), go forth, weighing your commitment to the work for peace and justice.”
- Extinguish the Christ candle.

## SCRIPTURE NOTES

*The following notes provide additional information about today's Scripture.*

1. Jesus develops this *inside/outside* theme by contrasting the outward cleanliness of the Pharisees' cups and platters with their internal corruption, implying that external ritual practice is no indicator of internal moral righteousness.
2. As commentator Joel Green remarks, “Jesus directs attention toward a purity that overcomes socio-religious barriers, in direct contrast to one that separates people from one another and keeps them separated.” The church today should strive for a purity that is inclusive and breaks down walls of separation.<sup>1</sup>
3. Jesus' concern is with giving to those in need (v. 41) and practicing “the justice of God” (v. 42). Possibly echoing Micah 6:8, this teaching defines true holiness, for rather than highlighting social boundaries, these sorts of activities break down the divisions between groups, particularly between social classes in the case of almsgiving.
4. Jesus adds an ironic twist to his critique. In comparing the Pharisees to unmarked graves that people walk over without recognizing it, he accuses the Pharisees of spreading impurity. Because corpses were ritually impure, Jewish law required that graves be marked clearly; otherwise, one might accidentally, and unknowingly, become impure. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees has become a threat to those with whom they come into contact.

## ENGAGE YOUR LEARNERS DURING THE WEEK

Send an email or a text:

1. Encouraging participants to add Psalm 51:10 to their devotional time as a meditative prayer phrase: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”
2. Suggesting that they take the writer's advice from the Participant's Book: In what ways do you experience harmony between your inner and outer self? In what ways would you like to? Bring those desires to God in prayer.

1. *The New International Bible Commentary: Gospel of Luke*, by Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishers), 471.