

LUKE—WEEK 7  
JESUS DOES THINGS DIFFERENTLY



F. Michael Slay  
*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*Luke 5:15–6:19 — Jesus Does Things Differently*

*The Cover Picture is The apostle Simon*

*by Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn (1606–1669) on display at Kunsthaus, Zurich*

Jesus eats with sinners, doesn't command his disciples to fast, heals on the Sabbath, and even claims to forgive sin. Then he prays all night before choosing his disciples. What's He up to?

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Thank you.

Luke 5:15–6:19 — Jesus Does Things Differently  
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1 Luke 5:15–26 (ESV)

*But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray. On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said, “Man, your sins are forgiven you.” And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, “Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?” When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, “Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Rise and walk’? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the man who was paralyzed—“I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home.” And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen extraordinary things today.”*

So, how come no one’s afraid this time? After catching a boatload of fish, Peter was terrified by Jesus’ holy presence. “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*” — Luke 5:8b

Somehow that “fear of holiness” effect doesn’t kick in this time—even though Jesus explicitly points out the holiness connection with, “*Man, your sins are forgiven you.*” Why?

This could just be due to the crowd size, but it feels like the sentiment has changed. Word got out about what Jesus can do, and people are getting used to it. “Ya seen one miracle, ya seen ’em all.”

If so, this is a dreadful development. The purpose of the miracles is to confirm Jesus’ authority. That’s why He said, “*But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.*” They still do, but no one seems all that impressed anymore. Only the Pharisees recognize the significance.

The greatest events in human history are happening right before everyone’s eyes, and they’re losing interest.

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Older Christians often lose the excitement they had when they were new. The terrible truth is that we get used to it. People often call this “complacency,” but it’s more like “boredom.” Everything becomes “been there; done that.”

If this is you, consider what new things God might be calling you to get involved in. Are you doing the same things for the kingdom that you were doing last year? Is there something you might be able to help with? Is there something that desperately needs someone’s help, but you don’t think you’re qualified?

Take the step. Just do it. God often challenges us to go beyond our limits.

2 Luke 5:27–32 (ESV)

*After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.*

*And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”*

Did Levi just walk away leaving the cash-box open? No; Luke 5:28 does not mean he did this sinfully. He did walk away though. Don't forget, Levi worked for Rome. Walking away from his job is still a bold move. Levi is abandoning a comfortable life to follow Jesus.

Next, we get another portrait of how the Pharisees just don't get it. They don't think Jesus should hang out at Levi's house. They think the Messiah should only associate with people like the Pharisees. In fact, they think the Messiah should **be** a Pharisee.

But give them credit for an honest question. At least they're wondering if Jesus is the Messiah. Their question makes no sense if Jesus is just some guy.

They're aware of his miracles and they're aware of his claims. Their baggage makes them almost totally blind to the truth, but they haven't totally rejected Him yet. So they ask, “*Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?*”

And Jesus gives them a straight answer. “*Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.*”

The Pharisees really should understand this. Prophets are all about repentance. Why would the Messiah be any different?

But the Pharisees can't think outside the box. They assume that the Messiah should be like them, and when Jesus doesn't fit the mold they can't adjust.

This can't end well.

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God is just as much the God of surprises today as He was back then. Just as the Pharisees couldn't adjust to the surprises, we struggle to adjust too.

Sure, some “surprises” are real setbacks, but we also struggle with meaningless changes in plans just because they aren't what we were planning on. That's sin. Sin is rebellion against God—refusing to let God be in charge. It's good to plan ahead, but getting ticked over God's redirections is wrong.

He's the Lord. We're supposed to humble ourselves before Him and let Him guide our lives.

3 Luke 5:33–39 (ESV)

*And they said to him, “The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink.” And Jesus said to them, “Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days.” He also told them a parable: “No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’”*

At first glance, Jesus’ response doesn’t seem to fit with what the Pharisees and their scribes have just asked about. But it does.

Notice that they don’t actually ask a question. They just point out that other disciples fast and pray while His disciples eat and drink. They are implying that Jesus’ disciples should be fasting and praying too.

Jesus’ response is all about time. Remember, Jesus fasted for 40 days not that long ago. He could bring that up, but He doesn’t want to play their game of one-upmanship.

Instead, He teaches. Now is not the time to fast; He (the bridegroom) is still with them. Jesus predicts that He will be *taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days*.

Jesus then tells two parables that illustrate how timing matters. In both cases, an attempt to do something good turns out badly because people ignore time factors. Lastly, He mentions that older wine is better simply because it is older. Again, time matters. This sounds like Ecclesiastes.

*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:* — Ecclesiastes 3:1 (ESV)

Most of the lesson is actually pretty obvious stuff, but implicit in all this is His claim that He is the central figure of His time. While He’s here everything is different.

And this time will be short. Fasting is good, but right now the immediate agenda takes precedence.

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How’s your time management? Many people say that they waste too much time on meaningless things. Are you like that? Are you taking the time necessary to allow the Lord to direct you?

Pray about your prayer life. That sounds circular but it isn’t. It’s just a kind of open ended prayer.

If you don’t think you have a problem, you might ask God to show you where you can do better. If you do have a problem, you might ask God to show you how to fix it. Who knows, you may ask for one thing and get another.

Don’t be inflexible. Nothing is more unpredictable than serious prayer.

4 Luke 6:1–11 (ESV)

*On a Sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands. But some of the Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath?” And Jesus answered them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and also gave it to those with him?” And he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”*

*On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, “Come and stand here.” And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?” And after looking around at them all he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” And he did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.*

Jesus’ response in the first paragraph must have really stunned the Pharisees. Only God Himself is “*lord of the Sabbath*.” Jesus is claiming something way beyond just being the Messiah.

Then Jesus performs a glorious miracle. Think how much harder it would be for modern doctors to fix a withered hand than, say, to cure someone of leprosy. Also, think how much harder this is to fake than, say, curing a paralytic. This miracle is spectacular; it makes everyone’s eyes pop out. No question, this counts as work—on the Sabbath, which is a real trip-wire for the Pharisees.

This isn’t about the interpretation of some esoteric detail in Leviticus; it’s one of the Ten Commandments. To violate this so blatantly, and to justify it by claiming to be God, gives them fits.

It’d be easy for the Pharisees to just write Jesus off as a nut or an agent of evil, but His miracles are impressive and they are **good** works. The whole thing really throws them for a loop.

Throughout the rest of Luke, we’ll watch their sinful nature block them from recognizing the truth. They will jump from theory to theory, always avoiding the one that would humble them.

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Garrison Keillor said of one of his characters, “Bob, like many successful people, is full of himself to an amazing extent.” This is the problem with the Pharisees; they think they’re better than everyone else. This aspect of sin infects us too.

Even though the gospel is inherently humbling, it doesn’t completely cure us of pride. Every good thing we do is an opportunity for self-congratulation. Every time God helps us out, we’re in danger of taking credit (even if just for asking for His help).

Of all the sins we need to work on, pride is number one. There is no better indicator of someone’s immaturity in Christ than their level of pride (especially how proud they are of their spiritual maturity).

5 Luke 6:12–19 (ESV)

*In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.*

*And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.*

Almost everyone has pulled an all-nighter at some point in their life. Think back. Why did you do it?

Other than crazy youth group events and such, all-nighters are generally times of crisis. You want to sleep but you can't, either because of deadline pressure or because you're involved in an emergency. The next time Luke records Jesus pulling an all-nighter, it's that kind of scenario—His arrest and trial.

That's what makes this passage so extraordinary. Jesus goes *out to the mountain to pray* and ends up praying all night. Then, apparently as a result of the prayers, He picks the twelve apostles. This is a major management decision, which sets the stage for everything that follows.

Luke doesn't mention the all-nighter by accident; it's a key part of the story. Jesus was dependent on prayer—significant prayer. On the night He was betrayed, He prayed for a long time too.

Jesus didn't just pick twelve apostles; He prayed all night and then did it.

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When I was young, as part of the Navigators “Design for Discipleship” series, I did their “Spend a Day in Prayer” exercise.

It changed my life. My career has been dominated by an idea I woke up with in the middle of the night after my day in prayer.

There's no way that was just a coincidence. Serious prayer is life changing. It's not easy to devote an entire day to prayer, but it's worth the effort. My chance came while I was on vacation in Bethany Beach, Delaware.

While a day in prayer is sure to cover lots of ground, be sure to spend part of it praying about yourself. Lay your future before the Lord and ask Him for guidance. What does God want you to do? Who does He want you to be?

Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the courage to act on what you learn. And be open to new directions.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. Is there something fantastic that you wish you could do for the Lord? Why do you think you can't?
2. Try to put yourself into the mindset of the Pharisees (and other Jewish scholars of that day). Why would they expect the Messiah to not eat with tax collectors?
3. What are your secrets to time management? When do you have your QT?
4. Christians are called to be humble. How do we do that?
5. Have you ever prayed for a long time in a single session? What happened?