

Can the Rich and the Poor Be Brought Together? — September 10 & 11, 2016
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: Isaiah 11:1-9

- In this messianic prophecy, what imagery describes Jesus (1)? What is his connection to the Holy Spirit (2)? Why is the Spirit described in this way? In what will Jesus delight (3)?
- Describe the way Jesus will *not* judge (3). Instead, how will he carry out judgment (4-5)? Contrast the way he judges the poor with the way he judges the wicked (4). Why do you think the prophet juxtaposes the poor with the wicked? Why is it good for a judge to possess righteousness and faithfulness?
- Verses 3-5 paint a powerful picture of Jesus' anti-favoritism. How does it make you feel? Like Jesus, can you look beyond the physical, such as people's looks and speech, to see what God sees? How? Ask the Lord for the gift to see people as he does.
- Describe the peace that will exist after Jesus issues his judgments (6-9). Which image moves you the most? Why? Why do you think a worldwide "knowledge of the Lord" will usher in this peace?

Day Two: Isaiah 53:1-3

- What question begins this chapter of Isaiah (1)? How would you answer it: "I" or "Not I"? Isaiah used the phrase "arm of the Lord" several times in his prophecies. Why do you think he did this? What feelings does it evoke?
- As in chapter 11, what imagery describes Jesus (2)? What did he look like (2)? How was he treated (3)? What was his societal rank (3)? Describe his physical and emotional hardships (3).
- Drawing inspiration from the text but using your own words, describe the world's assessment of Jesus. Contrast that with how you think God and those who have the Holy Spirit view Jesus. Favoritism based on appearance contradicts people's true value, even that of Jesus! Pray, asking God to banish favoritism from both your mind and your interactions with others.

Day Three: Luke 6:20-26

- Why are the poor blessed (20)? What about the hungry (21)? The weeping (21)? The despised (22)? Why would someone hate Jesus' followers (22)? Being hated for reasons other than loving Jesus is not blessed hatred. What do you think of this? Why would we ever rejoice when experiencing these hardships (23)?
- Re-read verses 20-23 alongside James 2:5. These texts put the spotlight on why we need the poor in our midst and in our church. How do both these words and seeing God's grace at work in the lives of the poor draw you closer to him? Ask the Lord to keep your eyes open to and your heart grateful for these moments.
- Why should the rich feel sorrow (24)? What about the well fed (25)? Those who laugh (25)? What about when someone speaks well of you (26)? Which of these "woe to" declarations make you the most uncomfortable? Why? Lift this up to the Lord. What response do you sense him speaking?

Day Four: Acts 19:23-41

- Set the scene of this text (23-24). What did Demetrius say to his peers (25-27)? How did they respond (28)? Describe the spread of this sentiment throughout the city (29). How would you describe Demetrius? In the midst of this, what did Paul want to do (30-31)?
- The beginning of James 2 commands us not to show favoritism toward the rich. This story in Acts gives us a sound reason to obey the command: very often it's the rich and

upper class persecuting the church. Consider any temptation you have to give the rich preferential treatment. Repent. How do you think God wants to reshape the way you treat the rich and the poor? Ask him for one practical idea and put it into practice this week.

- Describe the chaos in the theater (32-34). How did the city clerk diffuse the situation (35-41)? Though thousands of years ago, thank God for his actions. Contrast this clerk's demeanor with that of Demetrius. What do you think explains the difference?

Day Five: Romans 3:9-20

- What does Paul say about whether Jews have any advantage before God (9)? Summarize the ways people fail to be righteous (10-18). Which shortcoming do you find most unsettling? Why?
- Who is the recipient of the law's message (19)? What purpose does it serve (19)? While the law doesn't generate righteousness, what does it enable us to do (20)? What do you think of this?
- It's tempting to think of the rich's success as fulfillment of the law. They don't need Jesus because they've figured it out on their own. How quickly we forget that everything we have is due to God's grace! Where does this forgetfulness creep into your own life? To combat it, over the next week, offer up daily prayers of gratitude, thanking God for each and every grace in your life.
- In detailed fashion, Paul tells us why we all, whether rich or poor, fall short. This is not a warm and fuzzy passage. If you feel unmoved and uncooperative, talk to God. Ask him for supernatural insight and attuned responses to truths delivered in this fashion.