

International Bible Lessons Commentary
Luke 6:1-11

International Bible Lessons
Sunday, January 5, 2014

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, January 5, 2014**, is from **Luke 6:1-11**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary* below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, a study guide for teachers, discusses the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website. The weekly *International Bible Lesson* is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught.

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Luke 6:1-11

(Luke 6:1) One sabbath while Jesus was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked some heads of grain, rubbed them in their hands, and ate them.

As Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain" (Luke 6:20-49) indicates, many of Jesus' disciples and followers were from among the poor. Not all were poor from the beginning; some, such as Peter, were fishermen. Matthew was a tax collector. Jesus did not feed His disciples miraculously every day by multiplying loaves and fishes. Instead, they all lived with total dependence on God the Father to meet their daily needs (as Jesus taught them to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread"). As Jesus' hungry disciples walked through a grainfield, they plucked some heads of grain and rubbed away the chaff which would blow away in the wind and ate the grain.

(Luke 6:2) But some of the Pharisees said, "Why are you doing what is not lawful on the sabbath?"

"Some," not all of the Pharisees, condemned Jesus' disciples for doing something their traditions made unlawful as they interpreted the ceremonial law under the Old Covenant (the Old Testament ceremonial law; not the Old Testament moral law; which was summed up in the commands to love God and your neighbor). According to their interpretation of Moses' law, Jesus' disciples were committing a sin on the Sabbath.

(Luke 6:3) Jesus answered, "Have you not read what David did when he and his companions were hungry?"

Jesus explained that His companions (His disciples) were hungry and that justified their eating the grain in the

grainfield on the Sabbath. Some of the Pharisees interpreted the ceremonial law of Moses as forbidding any harvesting and threshing on the Sabbath, and that meant Jesus' disciples had broken the Sabbath by simply feeding themselves as they followed Jesus in a time of need. Jesus replied to these Pharisees that His disciples had done what they did because they were hungry, just as David fed his companions the ceremonial bread reserved for priests because they were hungry.

(Luke 6:4) He entered the house of God and took and ate the bread of the Presence, which it is not lawful for any but the priests to eat, and gave some to his companions?"

Jesus explained that He was allowing His hungry disciples to violate their interpretation of the ceremonial law of the Sabbath in order for Him to feed them. Jesus could have worked a miracle to feed them, but He chose not to do so, because He needed to show what His disciples (or anyone else) could do whenever they were hungry. Jesus explained that for David to feed his hungry companions in a time of real need, he had fed them ceremonial bread meant only for the priests to eat. The physical necessity of David's companions and Jesus' disciples made it appropriate to feed them bread set apart for ceremonial use. Jesus led His disciples through the grain field so they could eat, which met their physical necessity.

(Luke 6:5) Then he said to them, "The Son of Man is lord of the sabbath."

Because of David's honored position among all the Jews, the Pharisees could not condemn David for his actions; instead, they justified what David did. The Old Testament also shows that God did not condemn David for his actions when he needed to feed his companions. Then, Jesus must have startled them when He referred to himself using the Messianic title "Son of Man," and claimed before these Pharisees that He was "Lord of the Sabbath." Jesus claimed the right of God's Messiah to set aside the Old Covenant ceremonial laws and the Pharisees' interpretations of these ceremonial laws in order to achieve higher purposes and eventually fulfill the law of God. In Mark 2:27, Jesus also explained: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." God gave people the Sabbath for their benefit.

(Luke 6:6) On another sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

Jesus came into the world to save sinners and help people in a variety of ways. As Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus demonstrated the types of things He and His followers could lawfully do on the Sabbath. They could love their neighbors and meet their needs on the Sabbath whenever they had the opportunity. In many cases, they might be leaving a town or synagogue after a short visit and could not reasonably say to someone, "Wait until tomorrow to get the help you need today." The New Covenant in His blood opened the door for all of His followers to love and

serve God and others seven days a week without regard to the Old Covenant ceremonial laws, but Jesus never used His authority as Lord of the Sabbath to teach that people can use the Sabbath in selfish and self-centered ways that dishonor God or harm others or themselves.

(Luke 6:7) The scribes and the Pharisees watched him to see whether he would cure on the sabbath, so that they might find an accusation against him.

On this Sabbath day, the scribes and Pharisees watched Jesus for the sole purpose of finding some reason to accuse Him of disobeying their laws, traditions, and interpretations of God's law. They did not go to listen to Him to learn of God or to praise God on the Sabbath. They gathered in the synagogue to find a reason to harm Jesus, not to think about the truth of God.

(Luke 6:8) Even though he knew what they were thinking, he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come and stand here." He got up and stood there.

Jesus took every day seriously as a day for honoring God and helping others. He did not interpret the Sabbath ceremonial law as strictly as possible in order to be certain that He was obeying the Pharisees' "letter of the law" without consideration for the "spirit (or God's intention) of the law." As the Lord of the Sabbath, Jesus used the Sabbath as a day to truly love God and His neighbors. Jesus knew that these religious leaders were intent on

trapping Him so they could do away with Him and His followers; still, Jesus called the man with the withered hand forward so He could do good and heal him. Jesus did what was right even when others did not want Him to violate their traditions.

(Luke 6:9) Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to destroy it?”

Jesus knew that these religious leaders were gathered together and watching Him because they wanted “to do harm on the Sabbath.” They wanted to destroy His life or at least harm Him and stop His popular ministry among the crowds. Jesus knew that He wanted to do the right thing and save others no matter what the personal cost, even at a sacrificial personal cost. Jesus spoke to their conscience so they would need to choose who was right: themselves who wanted to harm Jesus or Jesus who wanted to heal those who were sick.

(Luke 6:10) After looking around at all of them, he said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was restored.

Of course, these religious leaders did not answer Jesus, but kept watching Him so they could accuse Him of some sinful behavior according to their interpretations of the Sabbath law. We do not know what type of look Jesus gave those who wanted to harm Him and who were looking for an excuse to stop His ministry. He knew that these leaders

or others like them would eventually seek to have Him crucified and succeed in crucifying Him. We can easily believe that He looked with compassion on the one He planned to heal and also on the family and friends of the man with the withered hand. Jesus did not need to touch the man or say any “magic words” to heal him. Jesus simply said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” Jesus’ method of healing the man demonstrated that he was healed by God when he believed and obeyed Jesus’ command. Jesus gave the religious leaders ample evidence that the man’s healing was an act of Almighty God through Jesus. If Jesus had violated God’s moral law, God the Father would not have approved of His actions and healed the man; therefore, by healing the man, Jesus did not violate God’s law and God approved what Jesus did on the Sabbath.

(Luke 6:11) But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

Though Jesus had spoken to their conscience and had given them reasons to reconsider their intentions and repent of their sins, these religious leaders had so hardened their conscience (or hearts) that they would not even consider the facts that Jesus’ teachings and miracles proved that He was the Son of Man, the promised Messiah, the Lord of the Sabbath, and a Prophet approved by God. Instead, Jesus’ good deeds and healing of the sick man so infuriated them that in their hearts they wanted to harm Jesus even more – even on the Sabbath.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. Whose law did Jesus' disciples break on the Sabbath?
2. What are some of the bad things that can happen when people make religious laws for people to obey that are not according to God's laws?
3. How did Jesus use the Bible when He replied to the Pharisees criticism of His disciples?
4. How did Jesus use common sense or logical reasoning when the Pharisees tried to find ways to accuse Him of violating their religious laws and traditions?
5. In what way did the Pharisees break God's law after Jesus healed the man with the withered hand?

Begin or close your class by reading the short weekly *International Bible Lesson*.

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