

### Leader's Corner

Closing the Gap

Luke 16:19-31

One of the clearest indicators of spiritual maturity is not simply what we know about God, but how closely our hearts resemble His.

In this parable, Jesus reveals a troubling gap. The rich man knew about God, knew about Abraham, and knew the Scriptures. Yet his heart was disconnected from God's heart. Every day he walked past a man in desperate need and remained unchanged.

As leaders, it's possible to accumulate knowledge without growing in compassion. This week, invite your group to consider not merely what they believe, but whether their lives increasingly reflect the heart of God toward others.

**Main Idea:** The rich man and Lazarus reveal a sobering truth: it is possible to know about God while remaining far from His heart. Jesus exposes the gap between a worldly heart focused on self and a kingdom heart shaped by compassion, generosity, and mission.

**Main Practice:** The invitation of the Gospel is not simply to avoid judgment but to become people whose hearts increasingly align with God's heart.

### Prayer and Praise

**Guided Prayer:** "Lord, Align My Heart"

Take a few moments to become still before God.

**Gratitude**

Think of a way God has provided for you recently—physically, emotionally, spiritually, or relationally. Thank Him for His care.

Prayer: *Father, thank You for seeing me, providing for me, and caring for me. Every good gift comes from You. Help me never lose sight of Your goodness in my life.*

(Pause)

**Confession**

Ask God to reveal places where your heart has drifted from His. Who have you overlooked? Where have you become distracted, comfortable, or indifferent?

Prayer: *Lord, forgive me for the times I have been too busy, too focused on myself, or too comfortable to notice the needs around me. Soften my heart and make me attentive to what matters to You.*

(Pause)

**Compassion**

Bring to mind someone who may be struggling, lonely, overlooked, or in need. Pray for them by name.

Prayer: *Jesus, help me see people the way You see them. Give me eyes to notice, ears to listen, and courage to respond with love.*

(Pause)

**Surrender**

Offer yourself to God's mission this week.

Prayer: *Father, close the gap between my heart and Yours. Shape me into a person who loves what You love, sees what You see, and responds the way Jesus would. Use me this week for Your glory and for the good of others. Amen.*

**Worship Song Suggestions:**

1. Build My Life
2. The Blessing
3. God of This City

## Group Discussion

1. As you read the story, what contrasts between the rich man and Lazarus stand out most to you? Why do you think Jesus paints such a vivid picture?
2. What does the rich man's treatment of Lazarus reveal about his heart? How might indifference be just as dangerous as outright hostility?
3. The sermon highlighted the gap between a worldly heart and God's heart. How would you describe that gap in your own words?
4. Why do you think Jesus reminds us that death is unavoidable? How should the reality of death influence the way we live today?
5. Abraham tells the rich man there is no crossing the great chasm after death. What does this teach us about the urgency of responding to God now?
6. The rich man wanted a miraculous warning sent to his family, but Abraham pointed him back to Scripture. Why is God's Word sufficient to lead us toward repentance and faith?
7. Psalm 119:105 says, "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path." How has God's Word guided or corrected you recently?
8. Looking at passages such as Deuteronomy 10:18 and James 1:27, what do we learn about God's heart for vulnerable people? Why is caring for others so central to Christian discipleship?
9. The sermon asks: "Who do you walk past every day?" Who are the people God may be inviting you to notice more intentionally?
10. What is one practical way you can "close the gap" this week by aligning your heart more closely with God's?

# Practice

## Group Practice:

Together, make a list of people in your church, neighborhood, workplace, school, or community who may be struggling, isolated, or overlooked.

Choose one person or ministry need and make a concrete plan to respond this month through encouragement, service, generosity, or prayer.

## Individual Practice:

Each morning this week pray:

“Lord, help me see people through Your eyes today.”

As you move through your day, pay attention to:

- Someone who needs encouragement
- Someone who needs practical help
- Someone who may be lonely or overlooked
- Someone who needs to hear the hope of Jesus

Act on at least one opportunity each day.

At the end of the week, reflect:

- What did God show me?
- Who did I notice?
- How did I respond?
- How is God shaping my heart?

# Further Study

## God’s Heart for the Vulnerable

- Deuteronomy 10:18-19
- Psalm 68:5-6
- Psalm 146:7-9
- Zechariah 7:9-10
- James 1:27

## Wealth, Stewardship, and Compassion

- Luke 12:13-21
- Luke 16:13-15
- 1 Timothy 6:17-19

## The Urgency of Responding to God

- Hebrews 9:27
- 2 Corinthians 6:2
- Matthew 25:31-46

## The Power of God’s Word

- Psalm 119:105
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Hebrews 4:12

## Closing Reflection:

The rich man did not suffer from a lack of information. He suffered from a lack of transformation. He saw Lazarus but never truly noticed him.

The challenge Jesus places before us is simple and personal: Who do you walk past every day?

And perhaps the deeper question: What would happen if your heart became more aligned with God’s this week?