

Study Guide for
Upside-Down Kingdom

by **Donald B. Kraybill**

Chapters 7 - 9

Chapter 7

Right-Side-Up Detours

Gathering

- Invite the class to join in the Lord's Prayer to begin the class session.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *The Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard* found in Matthew 20:1-16.

Sharing

- Think of all those pithy sayings you learned about money: "A penny saved is a penny earned" or "God helps those who help themselves." Using Kraybill's reasoning from the chapter, invite the class to brainstorm ways Jesus might have responded to these "proverbs."

Listening and Reflecting

- To shift into a discussion of *The Upside-Down Kingdom*, review the detours around Jesus' call for economic conversion.
- Discuss the questions Kraybill includes for Chapter Seven (found on page 259-260). Break into smaller discussion groups and divide the questions between the groups if the class size necessitates it.
- After allowing several minutes for discussion, reconvene as a large group to summarize the smaller group discussions.
- Ask a volunteer to read aloud from the chapter. Read the section "Upside-Down Giving" on pages 138-139.

- This chapter drives home a tough point about distractions to Kingdom living. What kind of a reaction does this chapter spark in your class? Enthusiasm? Anger? Guilt? Encourage class members to verbalize their strong emotions on this topic.

Sending

- End the session with a prayer encouraging one another to have changes in attitude to promote positive action in God's kingdom.
- Assign the eighth chapter of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (pages 140-166) for the next session.

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Chapter 8

Impious Piety

Gathering

- Invite a class member to open with prayer.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *The Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector* found in Luke 18:9-14.

Sharing

- For the Pharisees, living by the letter of the law only made the Sabbath into a complicated ritual. Have the class make a list of modern "church rules" that hamper celebration of the Sabbath (possibilities might include: wearing a suit and tie to church or having worship services on Sunday morning). Following in the tradition of social upheaval exemplified by Jesus, how might you elevate human need over religious dogma?

Listening and Reflecting

- Transition from thinking about your own church practices to thinking critically about Hebrew tradition in *The Upside-Down Kingdom*. As group leader, lead a short review of Chapters 1-8. Focus your discussion on Chapter 8 by sharing a section you found important from the text.
- Divide into smaller groups if necessary to discuss the questions Kraybill includes for Chapter Eight (found on page 260) for 8-10 minutes.
- Gather back into the large group and have a spokesperson from each small group give the highlights of their discussion.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the last two paragraphs of the chapter, beginning with "The church is always caught..." on page 166 and continuing to the end of the

chapter.

- Kraybill suggests that one way to keep religion from becoming empty ritual is by evaluating our church institutions and practices in the sabbatical year. How might your church implement such a plan for cleaning out its "white elephants"?

Sending

- End the session with a prayer encouraging one another to practice welcoming, forgiving compassion to enhance the new vision, values, and openness for God's kingdom.
- Assign the ninth chapter of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (pages 167-193) for the next session.

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Chapter 9

Lovable Enemies

Gathering

- Lead the group in an opening prayer.
- For the New Testament reading ask for a volunteer to read aloud *The Parable of the Good Samaritan* found in Luke 10:25-37.

Sharing

- Invite a class member or two to share their favorite section from the text. What was significant to them in the chapter? What questions do they have?

Listening and Reflecting

- For a brief review of the chapter, summarize the principles of agape or share a favorite section and the insight you have gained from it.
- After opening the conversation of the text, discuss Kraybill's questions for the ninth chapter (found on pages 260-261). Divide into smaller groups if the class size necessitates it. Reconvene after 8-10 minutes to summarize the discussions.
- Ask for a volunteer to read aloud the section entitled "A Vision of Shalom" on pages 191-193.
- Within the text, Kraybill poses a number of difficult questions about how Christians should respond to violence. How do we stay on the right path in the midst of detours around agape?

Sending

- Close with prayer encouraging one another to put agape love into action.

Assign the tenth chapter of *The Upside-Down Kingdom* (pages 194-217) for the next session.