

## Study 5: Encounters

*May the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.*

Please prepare for our meeting by reading **Luke 7:1-8:3** and thinking about the following questions. If you haven't time for everything, just do whatever you can – no one will check up on you. If possible, please bring a Bible with you to the meeting.

In the last study [6:12-end] we looked at a key collection of Our Lord's teachings, chosen by St Luke to lay a firm foundation for *all* Our Lord's disciples. In contrast, he now shows us how Our Lord interacted with a number of very different *individuals*: a centurion; a bereaved mother; John the Baptist; a repentant woman; and other women who had needed his help in various ways.

### 1. The centurion (7:1-10)

- i) Is the centurion a very confident, authoritative person or a very humble one? Are confidence and humility incompatible?
- ii) What can we learn from this story about the attitudes of Jews and gentiles to each other at the time of Our Lord's ministry?
- iii) What messages does this story have for the gentiles and Jews for whom Luke was writing?

### 2. The bereaved mother (7:11-17)

- i) Our Lord's miracles are almost always a response to someone who asks for help and/or shows faith, but in this case he takes the initiative himself, simply because he is struck by the grief of a widow who is watching the body of her only son being taken for burial. Can you suggest any reasons why on this occasion he does not wait to be approached?

### 3. John the Baptist (7:18-35)

- i) Our Lord answers John's messengers by showing that he is healing the sick and proclaiming God's care to those whose lives are precarious. Does this remind you of any passages earlier in Luke's Gospel?
- ii) Our Lord compares John the Baptist with someone who lives in comfort and splendour and has power over John but is nevertheless "least in the Kingdom of God". Do you think he has any particular individual in mind? (See 3:19-20.)
- iii) Was it important for Our Lord to show everyone that he supported John the Baptist? Would it still have been important when St Luke was writing? If so, why?
- iv) Our Lord contrasts John's way of life with his own and that of his own disciples. Can we learn anything from this contrast?

### 4. The repentant woman (7:36-50)

- i) Do you find it strange that Our Lord does not seem to have reacted at all to the woman when she began to anoint him? Apparently he said and did nothing for a while, then dealt at length with Simon's suspicions and misunderstandings, and only then addressed the woman and comforted her.

Do you think she would have felt better or would have understood Our Lord's forgiveness better if he had welcomed her straight away?

- ii) If "he who is forgiven little loves little", should we sin more "that grace may abound"? (See Romans 6:1.)
- iii) How good are we at making clear that we know we have been in the wrong?
- iv) How do we treat people who are trying to show that they want our forgiveness?

### **5. Women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities (8:1-3)**

- i) Why does St Luke bother to name some of the women who accompanied Our Lord and to give a few details about them?
- ii) Do the Gospels suggest that Our Lord was accompanied on all his journeys by rich friends?