

THE GREAT COMMISSION

A *Vision 195* Series

STUDY SEVEN

The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

God is the God of limitless possibilities. Think about that. Perhaps for the first time in your life, think rightly about God. With Him there are no limitations. No restrictions. No boundaries. There is no stopping. There is no hindering. There is no impossibility. In fact, God has yet to experience a challenge. It's all as good as accomplished when He determines this will be done.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERY detail of Jesus' life shouts, "Impossible!" A virgin birth. Innumerable miraculous healings. A peasant carpenter crowned King of the universe. Consequently, many who hear the story of Jesus consider it nothing more than an ancient fairytale.

Luke foresaw this objection as he composed his gospel account. So in the very first chapter he recorded this declaration of the angelic messenger Gabriel: "Nothing will be impossible with God" (Luke 1:37 NASB). The rest of Luke's account of Jesus' life would ride on the undercurrent of this divine truth.

Did you catch Gabriel's emphasis? *Nothing* will be impossible with God. Not even raising to life the murdered Son of God . . . nor the impossible situation staring you down today.

This *Searching the Scriptures* study will wrestle with that statement from Gabriel. Is there *really* nothing impossible for God? By discussing stories of people in insurmountable situations, Jesus Himself reveals that "what is impossible for people is possible with God" (18:27).



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

One thing unites the people of God whose lives span centuries. They don't simply face their obstacles by their own grit and determination. *They trust that God can and will do the impossible.* Say your own prayer to God, showing your trust in Him and in His mighty power—that even during your study of His Word today, He might do the impossible in your life.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

As you prepare to mine this passage for its gems of theological truth, remember that the Bible is not a sandbox full of cute stories and catchy one-liners. Real, human authors wrote each book of the Bible under the divine guidance of God's Spirit. Each book presents its own unique purpose, theme, and message.

Luke 18:1–30 might read to you as though Luke threw together four random stories. However, the gospel writer arranged these stories intentionally. We may not see the unifying thread at first glance, but exercising the Bible study tools of observation and interpretation will reveal a profound truth about the God who created the universe.



Observation: Four Impossible Situations

The first step of Pastor Chuck's Bible study method is to observe the passage by simply reading it and focusing only on what it says.¹ Read the four stories preserved in *Luke 18:1–30*, keeping a careful eye out for each story's main *problem* and the sequence of events. Try not get too lost in the weeds of the finer details and miss the broader meadow of the major themes.

An Impossibly Stubborn Judge—Luke 18:1–8

What request did the widow make of the judge in *Luke 18:3*? According to *18:2*, what characteristics did the judge show that prevented him from granting her request?



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

According to [Luke 18:5](#), why did the judge ultimately yield to the widow's request?

An Impossibly Guilty Tax Collector—Luke 18:9–14

According to [Luke 18:11–12](#), what did the Pharisee say in the temple? What did the tax collector say in [18:13](#)?

According to [18:14](#), which of the two men walked away from the temple justified before God?

Impossibly Insignificant Children—Luke 18:15–17

According to [Luke 8:15](#), how did Jesus' disciples treat the parents who brought their children to Jesus? Why?



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

What did Jesus teach about the kingdom of God in *Luke 18:16–17* by using the example of these children?

An Impossibly Proud Ruler—Luke 18:18–30

According to *Luke 18:18*, what question brought this ruler to Jesus? How did Jesus answer his question in *18:22*?

How did the ruler respond in *18:23* to Jesus' answer?

This is about belief, humility, trusting Jesus. It's not about impressing and doing so that others will stand and take notice. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

At this point, these four isolated events may still seem totally unrelated to one another. However, they each have one major theme in common: Jesus made an *impossible* situation *possible*.



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18



Interpretation: Jesus Does the Impossible

With a basic understanding of the plot of each of the four stories recorded in Luke 18, let's look back to see the key theological *meaning* behind each account. As you review the passage, focus on how Jesus made possible an otherwise impossible circumstance.

Thankfully, biblical authors occasionally do much of the heavy lifting and interpret the text for us. Based on [Luke 18:1](#) and [7](#), what example does the persistent widow provide for those who believe in Jesus?

How did the dispositions of the Pharisee and the tax collector differ as they stood before God? What does this contrast reveal about what kind of attitude characterizes those in Jesus' kingdom? Look also at [18:14](#).

During Jesus' day, most children were at best ignored and at worst despised by adults because they couldn't contribute to society the way an adult could. In light of this reality, what does [18:15–17](#) reveal about how Jesus sees those whom society considers insignificant?



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

This entire chapter of Luke's gospel is a symphony about the power of God that gradually crescendos until its climax in [Luke 18:26–27](#). In light of the conversation with the rich ruler, what does Jesus' statement in [18:27](#) say about trying to earn salvation by human efforts? Based on this passage, what—or who—is the basis of salvation?

If you allow God to be God . . . you will have no difficulty with worry, or praying as you should, or thinking and living as He would be pleased for you to do.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Judah's Impossible Circumstances

People across time have faced impossible situations and consequently have needed reminders about the God of limitless possibilities—just as the disciples did in Jesus' day and just as we do today.

Jeremiah was a prophet during a time when Judah was on a fast downward slide into evil. Judah's kings worshiped false gods, and the threatening shadow of conquest by Babylon loomed ever larger with each passing day. This led many in Judah to question either God's faithfulness or His ability to save them . . . or both! Jeremiah tackled their concerns head-on.

Read the prayer recorded in [Jeremiah 32:17–25](#). What timeless truths does Jeremiah share about the Lord in [32:17](#)?



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

What impossible situations did Jeremiah describe in this prayer? How did he show that these circumstances weren't too difficult for God?

These truths penned by Jeremiah ring as true today as they did thousands of years ago. It may be easy to say nothing is too hard for God . . . but what does it look like for us to live in light of that truth?



Application: Facing Today's Impossibilities

Before we look at Pastor Chuck's application of these incredible truths of Scripture, take a few minutes to prayerfully reflect on your present circumstances. Have your actions shown a trust in the God of limitless possibilities? Or do you look at everything going on around you thinking, *mission impossible*?

For application, Pastor Chuck sees this passage asking each of us three challenging questions. Think about these questions and record your thoughts in the spaces below.

First, *how big is God in your mind*? Does your perspective jibe with the theological truth we discovered through this passage?



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18

Second, *what specific thing have you marked off as “impossible”?* Healing from a past wound? Overcoming a struggle or addiction? Restoring that broken relationship? Wading into the waters of the unknown and unfamiliar? Remember, God does the impossible all the time, and He can do it again in your life as well as in the lives of those you love.

Third, *if God is leading you in a whole new direction spiritually, will you say yes?* Perhaps He is nudging you to renew your prayer life, to switch careers, to leave your home and pursue ministry in a completely new way.

For God, there is no such thing as impossibilities. When people think, *mission impossible*, God declares, *mission possible!* No mountain is too tall for heaven to move. And no impossible situation you face today is too difficult for Him. Pray. Trust. **He is God!**



The God of Limitless Possibilities

Selections from Luke 18



A FINAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, I thank You that You are the all-powerful king and that You don't keep Your power to Yourself. Thank You for all those times You've met me in the valley of impossibility, taken my hand, and guided me out. I ask that You give me the faith to trust that You will do this again and again. I pray in Jesus' great name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."

