



GOSPEL

- O F -

LUKE

ACCOMPLISHED AMONG US

Study Guide & Devotional

Citylight Church | citylightomaha.org


CITYLIGHT
CHURCH

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Preface	5
Introduction	6
Small Group Questions	9
Week 1: Luke 3	10
Week 2: Luke 4	22
Week 3: Luke 5	34
Week 4: Luke 6	46
Week 5: Luke 7	58
Week 6: Luke 8	70
Week 7: Luke 9	82
Week 8: Luke 10	94
Week 9: Luke 11	106
Week 10: Luke 12	118
Week 11: Luke 13	130
Week 12: Luke 14	142
Week 13: Luke 15	154
Week 14: Luke 24	166

Acknowledgements

INTRODUCTION

Nick Wackerhagen

DEVOTIONAL WRITERS

Angela Johnson

Jenifer Conkright

Karen Busselman

Sarah Buettenback

Jeff Nix

Micah Yost

Jasmine Mccain

Russ Mancino

Megan Weaver

Mark Linder

Jerri Royer

Anne Rutten Backer

Andrew Rutten

Dave Price

EDITORS

Matt Vanepps

Peggy Schlieker

Todd Conkright

Jenifer Conkright

INDUCTIVE STUDY QUESTIONS

Tyler Zach

LAYOUT DESIGN

Phil Smith

PRODUCTION ASSISTANT

Jenae Haman

All Scripture is taken from:

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®)

Copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

All rights reserved. ESV Text Edition: 2011

©All rights reserved. Do not copy or distribute without express permission from the authors.

Preface

Citylight Family,

Our church can't get enough of Jesus. Last year we studied the life of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark, which shaped our church in significant ways. The theme was "Follow Jesus." Guess what? People followed Jesus! Coming out of that sermon series we baptized 70 people last summer. We are confident that God will accomplish his will in the life of our church during this upcoming series.

From now until Easter Sunday we will be reading, discussing, and preaching on the Gospel of Luke chapters 3-15. Because the Gospel of Luke is a lengthy book that takes up 25% of the New Testament, we will go back next January and preach through the second half of the book. Let me give you a quick preview of our series:

Luke, a well-educated doctor and historian, set out to prepare for us an orderly account of the life of Jesus. In order to help us be certain of the things we've been taught, Luke spent a significant amount of time compiling critical eyewitness testimony from a variety of sources. His purpose was to proclaim all that Jesus "accomplished among us" (Luke 1:1). What did Jesus accomplish? He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). Being the only non-Jewish writer of the entire New Testament, Luke labored to show that Jesus is for everyone! He sought out the religious and irreligious, the morally astute and astray, the rich and poor, the popular and marginalized. If you think that you aren't good enough for God or aren't sure that you are the kind of person God is interested in, Luke reminds us that Jesus is the Savior of all. He didn't come for "someone else" but for people like you and me.

I'd invite you to use this study guide not only for personal study and reflection, but with a small group as well. I've provided some small group discussion questions at the beginning of this study guide for you to use as often as your group meets. Carry this around with you, always encouraging, confessing, and sharing what you are learning from God!

Tyler Zach, Pastor of Leadership Development & Communication

Introduction

FORM AND GENRE

Luke describes his Gospel as an “orderly account” with the expressed intent to give certainty to what has been taught about Jesus. The Gospel of Luke is not a biography or history textbook as we know them. The Gospel of Luke is not an embellished story or telling of past events to make them impressive or legendary. No, the Gospel of Luke is actually a proclamation of true events in the life of Jesus and what he accomplished among us, written in such a way that Theophilus and the rest of his readers would believe.

AUTHOR

To find out who wrote the Gospel of Luke, we must take a look at both Luke and Acts since they were undeniably written by the same author. It is likely that the author was with Paul on his journeys since Acts has first-person accounts (See Acts 16 ff.), which are rather unlikely to be included for literary effect. Combine this fact with Colossians 4 and 2 Timothy 4, where Paul includes Luke in the closings of those letters, and signs point to Luke being the author. While many other people are mentioned who travel with Paul, the well written Greek of Luke and Acts suggest an educated Gentile. Luke fits the bill as a physician. Some passages, at the very least, fit with a Lucan authorship view when they show signs of an “outlook of a doctor” and use medical terminology.

The internal evidence is strong for pointing us in the direction of Luke. Other documents from Church history and manuscripts of the Gospel leave no doubt; Luke is the author. Irenaeus and Tertullian, (mid- to late AD 100) as well as a list of Biblical books from 170, all ascribe the book to Luke. The earliest known manuscript of the Gospel (AD 175-225) connects it with Luke. There are also some possible quotations or Luke-inspired phrases in very early Christian writings (AD 90-200). By AD 200, Lucan authorship “had become firmly fixed without any hint of contrary opinion.”

As mentioned, Luke was a physician and ministry partner with Paul. Antioch, where Paul and Barnabas were sent out on ministry in Acts 13, is traditionally considered his hometown. Luke could be described as educated, well spoken, thorough, and accurate. Above all that, he had a pastor’s heart. From addressing Theophilus and his certainty in Luke 1:3-4, to highlighting the marginalized in society throughout his works, Luke’s writing reveals a man who loves people and cares for their struggles. Luke saw the Gospel not as a new movement in Judaism, but as good news for the entire world that could save everybody who believed in Jesus and what He accomplished.

THEMES AND DISTINCTIVES

Luke was the only non-Jewish author in the New Testament and he wrote 25% of it. Luke was more than likely a Gentile, making him rare as a writer of the Bible. What better person to write about a Gospel for all who hear and the expansion of Gospel into the Gentile world than a Gentile who has been transformed by Jesus and has been on the front line of spreading the Gospel with Paul to the non-Jewish world?

Luke-Acts makes a point to show the Gentile's inclusion in the Gospel. It seems fitting as a Gentile to ensure that his non-Jewish recipient, Theophilus, knows that the Gentiles are included in the Gospel, not just Jews.

Luke highlights the place of the marginalized in the ministry of Jesus, His new community, and the spread of the Gospel. The amount of detail and number of passages that deal with the poor, sick, marginalized, and especially women suggests that Luke was concerned with sharing their part in the events of his book and God's plan, and exhorting his readers to show compassion. It runs counter-cultural to the time period, but not to the eternal Kingdom of God.

Theme of God's Plan. This is a major theme in Luke. He makes abundantly clear what God's plan is through multiple events, teachings, and proclamations outlining His plan's promise, progression, and fulfillment.

Theme of Jesus, Salvation, and Response. Luke ensures that his readers know who Jesus is and what salvation through Him means. Then Luke calls his readers to respond.

DESTINATION AND SETTING

The explicit target for the Gospel was Theophilus, who was likely a respectable Gentile believer or seeking unbeliever with some issue of certainty in what he was taught about Jesus and the life of the Church. Yet, understanding the rocky Jew-Gentile relations and the unfulfilled return of Jesus, anybody trying to understand their place in the Church could benefit. After that, there are many suggestions as to what Luke's purpose for writing actually is with how many issues and emphases are covered in his Gospel. Overall, Luke's structure, theology, and content point toward a desire to center "on God's role in Salvation and his new community" in the midst of everything else.

DATE

Dating the writing of the Gospel is also tied closely with Acts. It helps that Luke was writing historical events in Acts, and the last events he wrote about took place in 62 AD. This means he also left out two very large events in history and the life of the church. First, there is no mention of the persecutions that began in 64 AD under the Roman emperor Nero during which both Paul and Peter were executed. Second, the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 is absent. It seems rather improbable that Luke would exclude these events, and even the rest of Paul's journey, had he not finished his work. Taking this evidence into account, a good time frame for Luke to have finished both Luke and Acts by would be the mid 60s.

TEXT AND RECEPTION

A lineage of faithful scribal work has given us confidence in the text of Luke. Many of the omissions and additions in some manuscripts are easily identifiable when compared with the oldest manuscripts from the 2nd century and the manuscripts that were in their textual family. This gives us a reliable argument that the words in the book of Luke are actually what Luke wrote. Furthermore, the Church has recognized the Scriptural authority of the Gospel of Luke since very early on. The author seems to have been able to get eyewitness accounts and likely used a good portion of Mark's Gospel to form his own. The recognition of Luke as Scripture is supported by use of Lucan phrases used in early Christian writings from the late 1st century, into and beyond the 2nd century. They recognized the Gospel's authority and employed it as the Word of God. Even through Church history, the Gospel of Luke never lacked universal acceptance as authoritative Scripture.

RESOURCES

"Gospel of Luke" in the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* by Darrell L. Bock
Luke 1:1-9:50 from the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Series by Darrell L. Bock

Luke from the NIV Application Commentary Series by Darrell L. Bock

"The Gospel of Luke" in *An Introduction to the New Testament* by D.A. Carson and
Douglas J. Moo

The Gospel of Luke from the New International Commentary on the New
Testament Series by Joel B. Green

Luke from the New American Commentary Series by Robert H. Stein

Small Group Questions

FOR DISCUSSION

We want to be a church that grows together in community. You'll get so much more out of the book of Luke if you learn, ask questions, and process what God has said with other people.

Therefore, we'd encourage you to use these small group discussion questions with your family members, roommates, discipleship huddle, or City Group! You can flip back to the questions on this page once a week or however often you meet as a group.

1. What was the biggest insight you gained this week?
2. What questions do you have that are still unanswered?
3. How do you want to apply what you learned this week to your life?
4. What do you need prayer for this week?

LUKE 3:1-6

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness. And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,

“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

*‘Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.*

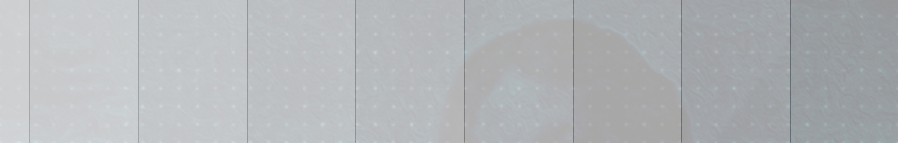
Every valley shall be filled,

*and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall become straight,*

*and the rough places shall become level ways,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”*

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE VOICE

"As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be made low, and the crooked shall become straight, and the rough places shall become level ways, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.'" Luke 3:4-6

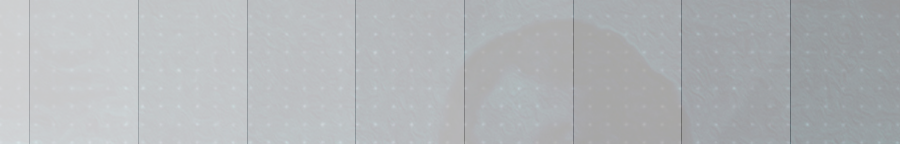
Imagine this thirty year old distant cousin of Jesus emerging from the wilderness eating locusts and honey, sporting camel skins accented with a leather belt and most likely a beard that would rival any man on Duck Dynasty. We don't know how long John (the Baptist) has been there, but we do know why. four hundred years earlier, Isaiah prophesied about "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord...'"

John and Jesus go way back... to the womb. Angels visited their parents, foretold their births and gave them their names. Both mothers miraculously conceived six months apart; Elizabeth as a senior citizen, and Mary as a young virgin. When Mary visited Elizabeth early in her pregnancy, John leaped in Elizabeth's womb. John was born to prepare the way for Jesus, and he would eventually die for this.

He prepares the way by boldly calling for repentance. He does not mince words nor shy away from what God is leading him to say. His words are full of strong warnings. "Brood of Vipers! ... Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)

Yet, John is humble. He attracted such large crowds that the Jewish authorities came to investigate. When questioned if he was the Christ, Elijah, or the Prophet, he said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness... After me, comes He who is mightier than I, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." (Mark 1) Only the lowliest of servants would stoop down to remove someone's sandal. Not Christ... just the voice.

Lord, help me to listen to Your voice today, humbly realizing I am not worthy to stoop down and untie Your shoe. Then, may I speak Your words with boldness and humility.



NOTES

LUKE 3:7-14

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: DRY FRUIT

"Bear fruits in keeping with repentance... Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." Luke 3:8-9

Recently, I bought a bag of discount oranges. Later, in anticipation, I cut into the bright fruit and was disappointed to find it old and dry. They were disconnected from the branch for too long. Like oranges, repentance fruit has sections.

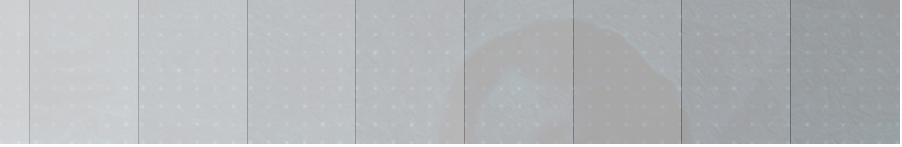
Weeping: Tears are often associated with repentance in the Bible. Job, Isaiah, Jeremiah, David, and Paul all speak about their tears and weeping. How do we experience this grieving, broken, sorrowing, repentant heart? We begin by asking. We simply cannot make heart repentance happen, it is a gift from God.

Confession: We acknowledge our sin, leaving no room for excuses, and honestly admit to God and to others what we have done, or not done. When we confess to Him, He promises us forgiveness, and when we confess to safe people, we get to experience God "with skin on." When our confession is not met with judgment, but with grace, we experience forgiveness in an almost tangible way.

Obedience: True repentance results in obedience. It means we do a 180 and walk away. What is the quality of your fruit? Is it dry? When was the last time you were in God's presence with eyes brimming with tears? Are you totally honest with Him and others? Does your repentance result in a 180?

What happened to my big bag of discount oranges? I regretfully threw them away. No one wanted dry fruit.

"Gracious Jesus, it is easier for me to approach you with my mind than with my tears... I repent of my callous and insensitive ways. Break my stony heart with the things that break your heart. Jesus, you went through your greatest trial in unashamed agony and wept tears of deep, deep sorrow. In remembrance of your sorrow help me to weep over my sin..." —Richard Foster



NOTES

LUKE 3:15-22

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

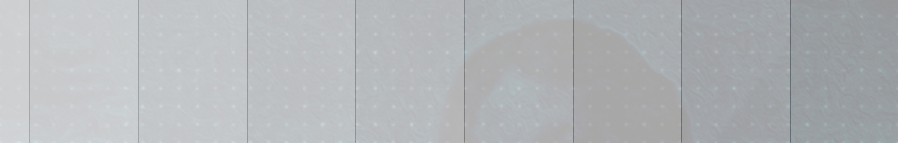
As the people were in expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Christ, John answered them all, saying, "I baptize you with water, but he who is mightier than I is coming, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

So with many other exhortations he preached good news to the people. But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reproved by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison.

Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THREE IN ONE

"When all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, 'You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.'" Luke 3:21-22

Join me for a moment at the water's edge of the Jordan River. John is waist deep in admissions of sin and surrounded by a multitude of repentance. I imagine he is weary, and hoarse from bold proclamations with fingers shriveled like raisins. He looks up to see perfection walking his way. Suddenly overcome by his own unworthiness, he says, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replies, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." (Matthew 3:14-15)

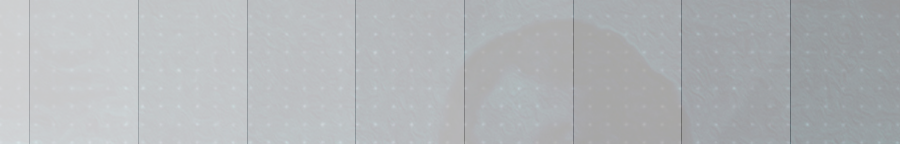
John is nearing the end of ministry, but oh what an ending! He baptizes the One who has absolutely nothing to confess. Jesus responds with prayer, and (picture this) the heavens were actually opened. The Spirit descends in dove-like form, and God the Father speaks affirmation to His beloved Son. The triune God manifested bodily and audibly at this momentous commission to ministry.

John leaves the wilderness to prepare the way and now heads toward certain death. Jesus is going to the wilderness to fast, resist temptation from Satan himself, and ultimately die for us. Whether John grew up knowing Jesus' true identity or not, we don't know. We do know that upon seeing Jesus, he declared, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! ... this is the Son of God." (John 1:29)

Father, thank You for giving Your beloved Son.

Jesus, thank You for becoming flesh and dwelling among us. You're with me in the garden and desert, at work and play, when sleeping and rising, and in sickness and health. You are with me always... even to the end of the age!

Spirit, I surrender to Your indwelling presence today. Melt me... mold me... fill me... use me.



NOTES _____

LUKE 4:1-15

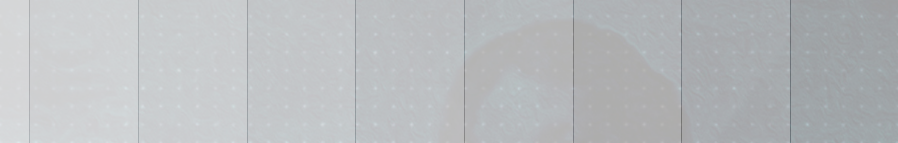
Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

He said therefore to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

And the crowds asked him, "What then shall we do?" And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise." Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, "Teacher, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Collect no more than you are authorized to do." Soldiers also asked him, "And we, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEOVTIONAL: WILL POWER OR WORD POWER?

"And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil.

...And Jesus answered him, 'It is written...'

...And Jesus answered him, 'It is written...'

...And Jesus answered him, 'It is said...'

...And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time." Luke 4:1-2, 4a, 8a, 12a, 13

Jesus knows the pain of temptation. He knows the ache of need, loneliness and weakness. He knows that we have an enemy that appears at the opportune time to tempt us to doubt, fear and give in to the luring calls to sin that constantly bombard us.

He also knows how easily we fall into the trap of believing that we just have to try harder, be stronger, and develop more self control. Jesus knows that we will be tempted to rely on our own will power. And He knows that it is not our "will" that frees us from temptation's grasp.

Jesus knows our great need and gives us a great example to follow. When Satan appeared at the opportune moment, Jesus showed us the way. He pointed us to a weapon that will wield mighty power against the devil and his lies. He showed us the power of God's Word. He didn't pretend the temptation didn't exist; He faced it and spoke truth against it. He fought back with the strength and authority of God's Word. It was not just the repetition of the words that were powerful, but His belief in the truth of those words.

And that is the key to defeating the temptations we face each day. It is not relying on our own will power. It is not a simple repetition of our favorite Bible verses. Unimaginable power is unleashed in our lives when we place our belief in the truth of the Word of God. Store it in your heart and mind. Speak it out loud. Release the frustrations and failures of will power to grasp and gain the victory of Word power.

"I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you."

Psalms 119:11



NOTES

LUKE 4:16-30

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. And as was his custom, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and he stood up to read. And the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written,

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

And he rolled up the scroll and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” And he said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself.’ What we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.” And he said, “Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away.



OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He's done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: TODAY IS THE DAY

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." ... And he began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Luke 4:18-19, 21

The "today" in these verses was hundreds of years in the making; years of suffering, praying, and waiting for a Savior. The people longed for a victor, a healer and a king. God heard their cries and He also waited. He waited until the perfect time to send His perfect Son.

At last, the waiting ended for the heavens and the earth. Jesus had come! He stood amongst His people, looked into their eyes and announced, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Imagine the angels poised and ready to join in the long-awaited celebrations of mankind.

Man's celebration of the Savior did not happen. The holy, passionate, loving Son of God had come at last to bring liberty, healing, and redemption. He stood in their midst, offering the answer to their deepest needs, and He was often doubted and dismissed. The people He came to save for all of eternity chose instead to focus on the business of living day-to-day.

What is your need today? Will you choose to live in the hope of these verses? The Victor, Healer and King is with you today! "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8) He still performs miracles of healing and release. He may be waiting for His perfect timing to reveal the answers to your prayers, but you can know and believe that He is at work in your life today.

What will be your response today? Will you focus on living day-to-day or will you lift your eyes and join with the angels in celebrating your Savior? Because of Jesus, your "ordinary" day is a miracle in the making.

"This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!" (Psalm 118:23)



NOTES

LUKE 4:38-44

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

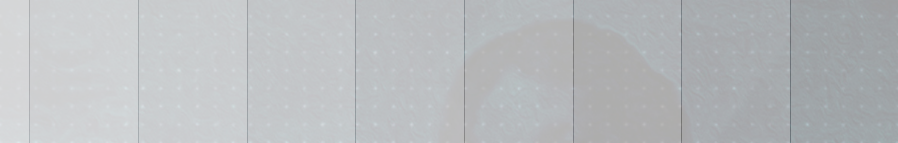
And he arose and left the synagogue and entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was ill with a high fever, and they appealed to him on her behalf. And he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her, and immediately she rose and began to serve them.

Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ.

And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." And he was preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: ON PURPOSE

"And when it was day, he departed and went into a desolate place. And the people sought him and came to him, and would have kept him from leaving them, but he said to them, "I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns as well; for I was sent for this purpose." Luke 4:42-43

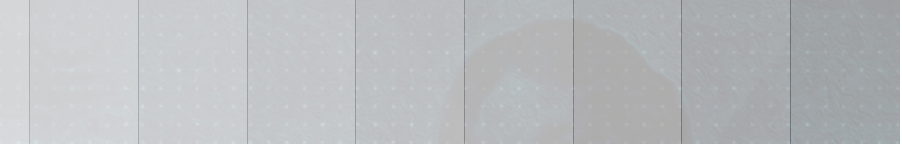
It must have been confusing to watch Jesus leave and it may have been difficult for Him to walk away. It is tempting to stay where God was at work yesterday, but holding on to the good may keep us from pursuing God's best. It can be challenging to let go of the familiar to walk forward with Jesus.

Walking with Jesus transforms our life. Somehow the word "transformation" sounds so much safer than the word "change." When life is hard and nothing is working, change is our greatest hope. When success is happening and the stress of life is easing, change becomes a threatening prospect. When our purpose is familiarity, pleasing others, or success, it is easy to develop a steely grip upon the good.

Walking with Jesus transforms our purpose. When our purpose becomes following Jesus and sharing of the good news of the kingdom of God, we trade our will for God's best will for our lives. Fear tells us to stay and maintain; faith tells us to go and make disciples. Fear tells us that our idea of "good" is enough; faith tells us that God's best exceeds all.

Is Jesus calling you to walk forward with Him? Perhaps someone in your life is urging you to remain the same or to return to your former self. Are you willing to place less importance on other's opinions in order to obey His purpose for your life?

Do you need to loosen your grip on the good? Make the choice to believe that following God's purpose will bring God's best. Commit to walking forward with Jesus. Live on purpose.



NOTES

LUKE 5:1-11

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: BUT BECAUSE YOU SAY SO, I WILL

“Simon answered, ‘Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break.” Luke 5:5-6

At times fatigue, disappointment or raw emotions lead us to faithless words and actions. Can you relate to Simon Peter’s words to Jesus, “Master, we’ve tried... and... nothing?” These words may seem to emerge from disbelief; however they are honest words from a man who was exhausted, had fished all night, and caught nothing. He had not yet experienced Jesus’ power, yet His response was one of simple obedience: “But because You say so, I will...”

Obedience is not a popular word, especially in America. We value our independent free choice. However, when Jesus tells us to do something, we need to remember that Jesus’ loving presence and power are available to us at all times. Regardless of whether we feel happy or sad, strong or vulnerable, we need to hear His words with an attitude of quick obedience, even when it seems pointless or hopeless.

We know that in kingdom reality—where we are invited to live—what we are being asked to do cannot be hopeless because we know who says it; and if He tells us to do it, He will bless it. When Christ blessed these fishermen’s work, and was with them in the midst of their effort, and they responded with simple obedience, they had a miraculous catch. Shortly thereafter, Jesus called them to follow Him and, without hesitation, they left their livelihood and assets behind to follow Him.

As you approach Scripture, come with honesty and willingness to obey. Invite the ever-present Holy Spirit to reveal what He has for you. Stay with the word, phrase or part that most draws your attention. Ask God for opportunities and empowerment in your life and relationships to practice responding, “But because you say so, Lord, I will...”



NOTES

LUKE 5:27-32

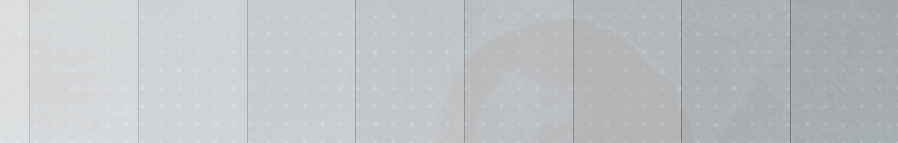
Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: ARE YOU SICK?

"And Jesus answered them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.'" Luke 5:31-32

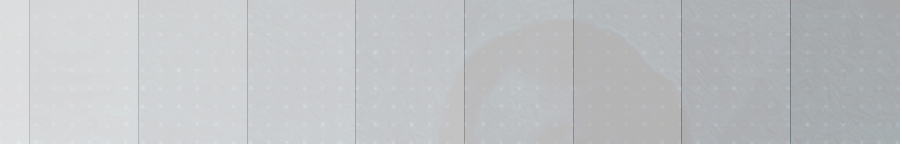
The Pharisees knew with ultimate certainty they were the most righteous. They were 'well' by their own definition, and they were proud. They certainly didn't need anyone telling them spiritual truths. We humans easily fall into this kind of thinking. In Matthew 7, Jesus described it as a log in our eye. Self-righteousness is just one of many logs, and like most of them, it keeps us from knowing just how desperate (sick) we are for a Savior.

Maybe you know someone like the Pharisees. I did: my brother. He was really something. He and his wife had upper executive jobs, and lived in a high status neighborhood in a large metropolitan city. They didn't have any apparent needs at all, certainly not for spiritual things. For years I prayed for him to come to know Jesus. At a concert I attended the musician shared a prayer I adopted: "Lord, break him where he needs to be broken, and build him up whole in you." At first it felt wrong to pray that for someone else, as if I were praying for bad times to come.

As I have experienced more of life I now know that pain and bad times often open me to receive Jesus' words and love. Years later, my brother did experience significant brokenness and loss in almost every arena of his life, and guess what? He began to ask spiritual questions and seek truth, and eventually did see his need for Christ. The only way he could receive him was to be open to him because he knew he was 'sick' (verse 31), and in need.

Today, would you pray that prayer for yourself? For a loved one?

"Lord, break me where I need to be broken, and build me up whole in you."



NOTES

LUKE 5:33-39

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

And they said to him, "The disciples of John fast often and offer prayers, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours eat and drink." And Jesus said to them, "Can you make wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in those days." He also told them a parable: "No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'"

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: OPEN TO NEW

“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. ... And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, ‘The old is good.’” Luke 5:37, 39

We are often open to anything that is hip or current—anything, that is, except what we consider “old.” It’s all relative. Some of us have parents that fought in WWI, while many among us have parents that grew up in the 1970s. What is recent to one of us is antiquated or vintage to the other. Yet each could describe what to us is ‘old wine’ for many sorts of things, and what is ‘new wine.’

In some arenas of life, the familiar, or “old”, is the only way that we believe is right or comfortable. Church or religion can top this list. There are so many ways we Christians want to hang on to the old wine and aren’t open to trying the new, even in small things. Style of worship, routines surrounding sacraments like communion, or old beliefs never tested for oneself might all be desperately clung to out of family tradition or other loyalties.

This type of legalism interferes with our openness to God’s Spirit moving in, through, and among us. In one case from a real church, members argued over whether the “M” in the title of an older chorus, “Majesty,” is capitalized or not, and actually resulted in the church’s split over what each party believed was correct. Sounds ridiculous, right?

Commentator Bruce Larson exhorts, “We can be predictable religious folk or we can be radical like Jesus Himself, associating with the wrong people, praying for the wrong miracles, refusing to conform to the heavy, joyless attitudes of the legalists. We can be radical saints filled with the Spirit of this radical Lord.”

Lord, may it be so in us.



NOTES

LUKE 6:6-11

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

On another Sabbath, he entered the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and the Pharisees watched him, to see whether he would heal on the Sabbath, so that they might find a reason to accuse him. But he knew their thoughts, and he said to the man with the withered hand, "Come and stand here." And he rose and stood there. And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?" And after looking around at them all he said to him, "Stretch out your hand." And he did so, and his hand was restored. But they were filled with fury and discussed with one another what they might do to Jesus.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

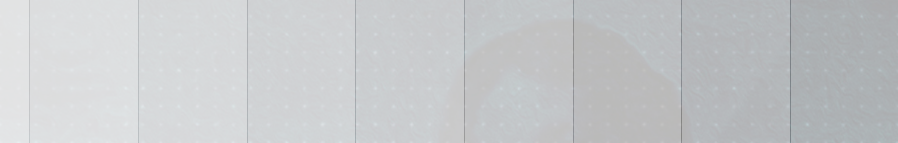
DEVOTIONAL: SABBATH STORIES

“And Jesus said to them, ‘I ask you, is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to destroy it?’” Luke 6:9

Luke tells us back-to-back stories about Jesus being accused of Sabbath breaking. The first one has to do with His disciples grabbing a little snack on their way through a field, but since they had to “harvest” the grain in order to eat it, the Pharisees cried foul. The second story is about Jesus healing a man in the synagogue. The Pharisees actually watched to see what Jesus would do with this man, hoping that Jesus would heal him. Why? Not because they cared about the man’s healing, but because they wanted to accuse Jesus of breaking the rules. Jesus doesn’t fall for it and instead reminds them of God’s heart behind His commands: to do good and save lives.

In our Sabbath breaking culture, it’s hard for us to see the point. We gave up those old Sabbath “rules” generations ago; we’re not Pharisees. But are we like Jesus when we encounter a Pharisee? Jesus refused to give in to legalism, and He wasn’t afraid of what the Pharisees thought of Him for breaking their rules. Does Christian legalism and what people think of you ever stop you from following the heart of God’s commandments?

I think of my friend who ministers to women in strip clubs. A legalist might say, “Don’t go anywhere near that place.” But my friend sees the hurting women inside, trapped in a lifestyle that will eventually kill them and goes in anyway. Another friend invites a hurting person to City Group who doesn’t fit the mold and is bound to make everyone uncomfortable. She is more concerned for her friend than keeping our group “tidy.” I’m so grateful that they are not afraid to follow God’s heart for doing good and saving lives.



NOTES

LUKE 6:27-36

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: IMPOSSIBLE LOVE

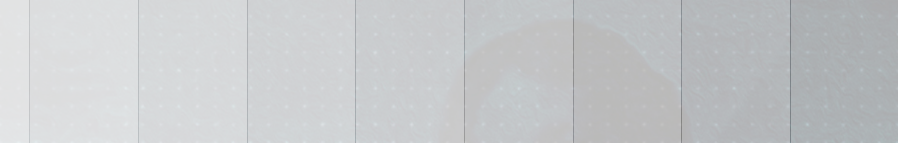
“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” Luke 6:35-36

Jesus drops a bomb on us with this command to love our enemies. I don't even have enemies that I know of, but I have a hard time loving people who make bad choices, “don't get it”, disagree with my point of view, or might take advantage of me.

Jesus points out that to love people who love us and help us, and to lend to people who will pay us back, is the world's version of love. But God's version of love goes way beyond human comprehension. It means loving people who we already know hate us. It means doing good to people who have no benefit to us. It means lending to someone without expecting him to pay us back. That's impossible!

There is no way we can obey Jesus until we realize that we are the enemies who hated Him, and that we have no benefit to God, and that we are borrowers who can never pay God back for the gift that He gave to us on the cross. He loves us because of who He is, not because we deserve it.

When we realize that we are loved like that and accept His gift, we no longer have to protect ourselves from people who would take advantage of us. The words “expecting” and “return” both mean the same thing—to hope. Jesus is saying that when you love someone, don't put your hope in him. Our hope rests in our position in God's family and in the rewards He promises. We no longer ask if people are useful to us, but instead we think of how we can be useful to them. This is the kind of impossible love that we have access to as children of God with the Spirit of God.



NOTES

LUKE 6:37-42

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: JUDGE NOT

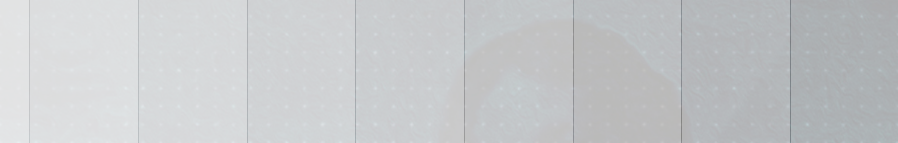
| *“Judge not, and you will not be judged...” Luke 6:37a*

Jesus clearly instructs us not to judge, but what exactly does that mean? Does it mean we can never call anything sin? Does it mean we lay down like doormats and let abusive people walk all over us? Just a few verses later, Jesus says that we will know people by their fruit, so surely He doesn't mean that we give up all discernment.

One of the most helpful definitions of judgment that I've heard comes from a book called *How to Stop the Pain* by Dr. James B. Richards. He says, “Identifying what someone did is not judgment; that is merely observation. It is when we assume to know why a person did what he did that we have entered into judgment.” Moreover, Dr. Richards attributes much of our emotional pain to judgments that we make.

When I was a kid, I made a judgment that I must not be valuable because my mom “chose” my step-dad over me. I acted out of that judgment in all kinds of self-destructive ways. It wasn't until I could recognize that my mom's decisions had nothing to do with my value that I could be free from the pain of my perceived rejection. As I processed this with my mom, she was surprised that her actions had such an effect on me.

The truth is, we have no idea why people do what they do, and sometimes we don't even know why we do what we do. Only God knows, and judgment is His job! We must resist the temptation to make our own judgments. We can tell someone what he or she did and how it affected us. We can forgive when someone repents and set boundaries when necessary, but we cannot presume to know someone's motives.



NOTES

LUKE 7:11-17

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Soon afterward he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a great crowd went with him. As he drew near to the gate of the town, behold, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and a considerable crowd from the town was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep." Then he came up and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, "Young man, I say to you, arise." And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has arisen among us!" and "God has visited his people!" And this report about him spread through the whole of Judea and all the surrounding country.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?



INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: RESURRECTING A DEAD SITUATION

"Then He came up and touched the bier (coffin), and the bearers stood still. And He said, 'Young man, I say to you, arise.' And the dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother." Luke 7:15-16

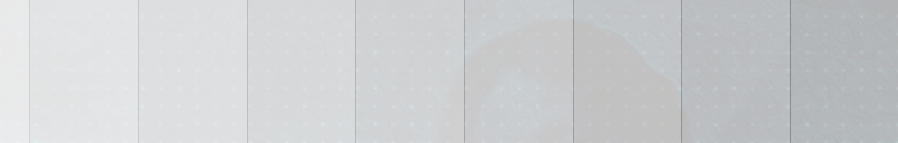
A funeral. A crying mother. An only son. Death.

Jesus walks right into a funeral, touches a coffin and a dead boy is brought back to life. This is awesome! Jesus is a miraculous God! The mom experiences joy. But right now you may be experiencing your own personal "funeral." Life can seem like more of a downer than a blessing. Overwhelming pressures at work, relationship break downs, worries about finances, worries about children, struggles obtaining work, loneliness, boredom, physical pain or deep emotional pain... all of these can bring you to a low place.

In your pain, think about this for a moment. The same Jesus who has the power to bring the dead back to life, the same Jesus who cared enough to be at the funeral, is the same Jesus who made you and knows exactly why you are hurting.

Let's be real. People who believe in God, and who are experiencing pain, really struggle with understanding God's timing and can feel like giving up. Also, experience teaches us that the above passages do not guarantee God will always extend the earthly lives of those who have physically died. That timeline is in God's good hands and judgment.

But the "Jesus at the funeral" story tells you that God, in His own way, will be there for you when you are mourning or feel like the person in the coffin. Jesus gently walks into your "funeral." He will touch the "coffin" that represents your suffering. He will bring the blessing that you need. He will provide the healing that only He can provide. And, yes, He will do it in His own timing (notice that death occurred before there was a resurrection). Can you trust Jesus?



NOTES

LUKE 7:18-35

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, "Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?" And when the men had come to him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?'" In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."

When John's messengers had gone, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who are dressed in splendid clothing and live in luxury are in kings' courts. What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, "'Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you.'

I tell you, among those born of women none is greater than John. Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." (When all the people heard this, and the tax collectors too, they declared God just, having been baptized with the baptism of John, but the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected the purpose of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.)

"To what then shall I compare the people of this generation, and what are they like? They are like children sitting in the marketplace and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.'

For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look at him! A glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is justified by all her children."



OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: WHO IS JESUS

"And when the men had come to him, they said, 'John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?' And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them. And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.'" John 7: 20 & 22

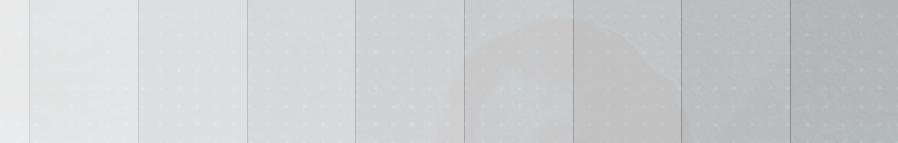
John the Baptist (a radical follower of God) sent some envoys to find out if Jesus was, in fact, the long awaited Messiah who would deliver God's people from misery, bondage and humiliation. Jesus told them about the many miracles He was performing. There was no doubt the miracles demonstrated that Jesus was God because only God had the power to heal the sick and bring people back to life with a touch or prayer.

People today are still looking "for another." Let's face it, when things aren't going well, when we feel lonely or rejected, when we are convinced God has been "too slow" or doesn't care about our needs and sufferings, we can easily look for fulfillment in so many different ways.

If you are looking for ultimate love, peace and purpose in someone, or something, other than Jesus, you are making the same mistake all of us have made at different times and for different reasons. Don't put yourself down if you are at the "end of the road" and feel awful about the results of your search. To get back on track you may want to say this simple prayer:

"Jesus, forgive me for not trusting You. I am worn out, hurting and lonely. Please take my life and lead me to a healthy place. Please help me to hear You tell me the good plans You have for my life."

Praying this prayer may not give you an instant feeling of relief, but you will be allowing God to keep you on the path of healing. Pain and suffering (as well as joy) will still be a part of your life, but God will never let pain and suffering be the ultimate destination of your life.



NOTES

LUKE 7:36-50

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."



OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN

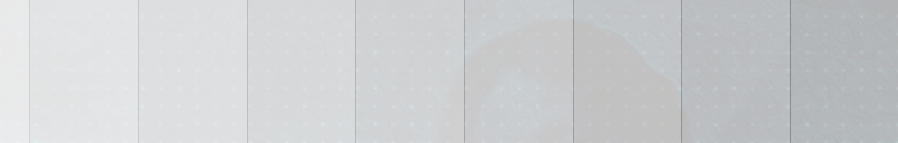
"And He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this, who even forgives sins?'" Luke 7:48-49

All of us fall below God's standard of righteousness. This is called sin. It is what makes us sinners.

A woman who was also a sinner was trying her best to honor Jesus. She cleaned and perfumed His feet while He was a guest at the house of a "righteous religious leader," called a Pharisee. The Pharisee, however, looked down on the woman and was unimpressed with her actions. He also thought Jesus lacked spiritual perception in failing to realize she was a sinner.

Sin is something that can make us feel terrible about ourselves and guilty about those we have hurt. These feelings can sometimes overwhelm us and convince us that God will not forgive our sins.

Here is something to cling to: Although God knows our failings much better than anyone else ever will, He is more eager and ready to forgive us our sins than anyone else. It is natural to be skeptical about God wanting to restore our lives. But the great thing about your reality is this – God loves you so much there is NO DOUBT in God's mind that He wants to forgive you right now. Therefore, confess your sins before your caring God and let the healing begin!



NOTES

LUKE 8:1-15

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

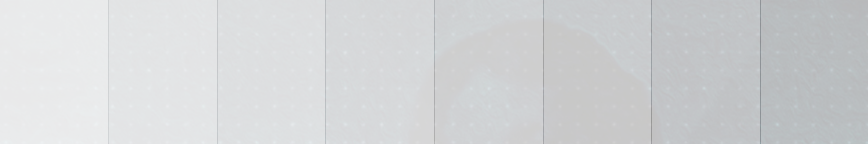
DEVOTIONAL: LESSON FROM THREE LEADING LADIES

"...and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Chuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means." Luke 8:2-3

When you read the Bible with any intent, you'll find it's impossible to overlook the important roles women play. From Old Testament heroes to New Testament leaders, women are prominent in Scripture. Consider why Luke might mention Joanna, Mary, and Susanna. There would be no reason to mention their contributions if they weren't significant. It appears their service and sacrifice for the ministry was so substantial that Luke felt compelled to note it. Joanna, Susanna, and Mary were sustaining forces that God was using for this ministry effort. With their time, talent, and resources, these women were supporting, caring for, and encouraging Jesus and His disciples.

Has anyone ever listed you as a reason behind their success? Have you taken the opportunity to support and encourage a friend or colleague? God set up the Church to work through each of us supporting one another. Jesus, being fully God, didn't need the support of anyone. Yet this is how God designed the relationship. He set up the Church to need each other's support, encouragement, time, and resources. He set it up to operate as one body, working together out of our unique talents and gifts. None of us, no matter our individual talents, resources, or positions, can do ministry alone. By God's design, the Church operates most effectively when we are all contributing.

What ministry are you supporting? Could anyone describe you as "helping to support them out of their own means?" Let's take some cues from these great women and actively look to support the ministry happening around us.



NOTES _____

LUKE 8:16-21

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

"No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a jar or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light. Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away."

Then his mother and his brothers came to him, but they could not reach him because of the crowd. And he was told, "Your mother and your brothers are standing outside, desiring to see you." But he answered them, "My mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: LIVING A LIFE ON MISSION

“Someone told him, ‘Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you.’” He replied, ‘My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s word and put it into practice.’” Luke 8:19-21

It’s hard when the people we care about don’t understand what God is asking us to do. Have you ever experienced that? It seems Jesus had this exact issue with His family. When we look at the whole of chapter 8 for context, we get an idea of what is happening in Jesus’ ministry. He is casting out demons, drawing huge crowds, changing the weather and frustrating some very powerful people. Even His disciples are getting a little weirded out.

It’s important to read verses 19-21 within the context that Luke provides. At this time, people didn’t know what to make of Jesus. Some are following Him, but many are afraid. What does Jesus’ family think? The Gospel of Mark tells us in chapter 3 that His family thought He was losing His mind! In our verses, it’s likely Jesus’ family doesn’t want to say “hello.” They likely wanted to ask that He stop causing so much commotion. Surely people were approaching them about Jesus, which was probably embarrassing, or even dangerous.

It seems this is the reason Jesus doesn’t go talk with His mother and brothers. He’s not about to back off His ministry because His family is uncomfortable. He knows what God has called Him to do. Jesus isn’t concerned with what His family or friends think about the commotion He’s causing. He’s only concerned with the mission God has given Him. There will be times in our lives when those around us won’t understand what God has called us to do. They won’t understand why we want to talk about Jesus, share the gospel, or go on a mission trip. Be encouraged that Jesus experienced this as well. He knows what it’s like. Stay strong in following God’s calling for you.

NOTES _____

LUKE 8:49-56

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

While he was still speaking, someone from the ruler's house came and said, "Your daughter is dead; do not trouble the Teacher any more." But Jesus on hearing this answered him, "Do not fear; only believe, and she will be well." And when he came to the house, he allowed no one to enter with him, except Peter and John and James, and the father and mother of the child. And all were weeping and mourning for her, but he said, "Do not weep, for she is not dead but sleeping." And they laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise." And her spirit returned, and she got up at once. And he directed that something should be given her to eat. And her parents were amazed, but he charged them to tell no one what had happened.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: DEMONS, DEATH & THE POWER OF JESUS

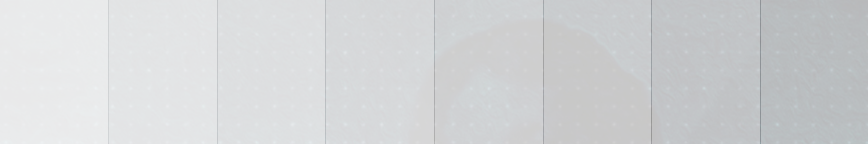
"They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. But he took her by the hand and said, 'My child, get up!' Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat." Luke 8:53-55

The second half of chapter 8 in Luke's gospel is a compelling whirlwind of miracles. The chapter concludes with Jesus bringing a young girl back from the dead. He literally raised her back to life. This miracle takes place after Jesus cast a demon out of a man who lived in the graveyard and rebuked a storm. Luke clearly shows us the amazing power Jesus possesses. Storms, demons, and death are probably the most powerful forces we can encounter that no human can control. Jesus, though, clearly displays His divine power over all of these.

How should we respond to this amazing power? When He controlled a storm, His disciples were afraid asking, "Who is this?" When Jesus cast out demons, the community asked Him to leave. They didn't understand. When He claimed He could raise a young girl to life, friends and family laughed at Him, doubting who He truly was. Responses to the power of Jesus can vary greatly. For some, it's fear. For others, it's disbelief. Most of our responses come from who we believe Jesus to be.

As children of God, one of our primary responses to the power of Jesus is worship. If we are clear about who Jesus is, worship is the natural response to witnessing these miracles. At first, people were confused about Jesus so they feared Him or doubted Him. Once they knew Him, their response changed. In the second "boat incident" with His disciples (Matthew 14:33), Jesus walks on water, and the disciples respond in worship. After His resurrection, upon fully realizing Jesus was the Christ, the women "clasped his feet and worshiped him." (Matthew 28:9)

Luke clearly shows us the power of Jesus. Our response should not be disbelief. It should not be fear. It should always be worship.



NOTES _____

Week 7

LUKE 9:10-17

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing. Now the day began to wear away, and the twelve came and said to him, "Send the crowd away to go into the surrounding villages and countryside to find lodging and get provisions, for we are here in a desolate place." But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish—unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." And they did so, and had them all sit down. And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven and said a blessing over them. Then he broke the loaves and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. And they all ate and were satisfied. And what was left over was picked up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: RESPONDING TO INTERRUPTION

"On their return the apostles told him all that they had done. And he took them and withdrew apart to a town called Bethsaida. When the crowds learned it, they followed him, and he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing." Luke 9:10-11

Luke records a depiction of the perfect response to interruption. If only we would react as Jesus did to changes in our schedules.

If you're anything like me, your response does not quite live up to the standard Jesus has set. Do you react with impatience to interruptions? Or see as nuisances those who disrupt the flow of your day? Do you see change as a wrench in your plans, a disturbance, a burden?

Jesus' response is starkly different, undoubtedly effective, and beautifully patient. Luke tells us that Jesus had every intention of slipping quietly away from the crowds that day. The people, however, caught onto his scheme and followed Him. Instead of responding with an extended hand, Jesus welcomes with loving arms.

As if Jesus were not making it challenging enough, He then takes it a step further and responds with great hospitality and blessings. He meets the physical needs of the crowd by healing those in need and helping the disciples feed the group of 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish. Jesus even provides for the spiritual needs of the people by preaching that they did not have to wait to taste the kingdom of God, for it lives within those who believe. (Luke 17:21)

How easy it would be to try this approach. If we're already distracted, why not make the interruption to our plans mean something? Will we put the people who need us on hold because we're busy completing our to-do lists, or resolve to bless them as Jesus did?

NOTES

Week 7

LUKE 9:28-36

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now about eight days after these sayings he took with him Peter and John and James and went up on the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. And behold, two men were talking with him, Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his departure, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him. And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. As he was saying these things, a cloud came and overshadowed them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One; listen to him!" And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent and told no one in those days anything of what they had seen.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He's done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: STAYING ON THE MOUNTAINTOP

“And as the men were parting from him, Peter said to him, ‘Master it is good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah’— not knowing what he said.” Luke 9:33

In this section, Jesus has brought His disciples Peter, John, and James to the mountaintop. While they are sleeping, Jesus appears in glorious splendor accompanied by Elijah and Moses. When the three disciples awake and are heading down the mountain, Peter suggests that they stay and build tents for the prophets.

This story may not seem especially relevant or practical for our everyday lives, but Peter’s suggestion to stay up on the mountain with Jesus actually says quite a bit about human nature. The disciples had turned away to leave, but decided that they wanted to stay and take part in this glorious gathering. Like Peter, we too want to build tents and get comfortable on the mountaintop of our lives.

My mountaintop is daydreaming. For you, it might be a spa treatment or watching football in the “man cave.” Sure, those activities are great, but not if we never want to leave. Similar to the disciples’ inspiring experience, we often have exciting or relaxing events and activities that make us want to stay on the mountaintop and escape from reality.

This seems to be what Peter was suggesting. Can you blame him? Just before this passage, Jesus predicted his death for the first time, and He drives out a demon in the next section. No wonder Peter wasn’t ready to leave! Do you have a similar response? Do you linger a moment longer on the mountaintop because you’re aware that real-life challenges and hardships may await you in the valley? There’s a time for rest and renewal, but we will have overstayed our welcome if our time on the mountain has convinced us to never come down to earthly duties such as ministering to others.

NOTES

Week 7

LUKE 9:46-50

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

An argument arose among them as to which of them was the greatest. But Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a child and put him by his side and said to them, "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

John answered, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he does not follow with us." But Jesus said to him, "Do not stop him, for the one who is not against you is for you."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: JEALOUSY FOR KINGDOM WINS

“Master,’ said John, ‘we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us.’ ‘Do not stop him,’ Jesus said, ‘for whoever is not against you is for you.’” Luke 9:49-50

I’ll be honest: I’m not such a great sport when I fail, especially when the next person in line fares well. This was clear to me as I was co-leading a small group in my dorm with another RA. We both attempted to recruit residents from our floors to attend our weekly meetings. I began a discipleship relationship with one of the girls, but I was not great at follow-up because I let my own discomfort get in the way. When my co-leader swooped in and started regularly studying the Word and spending time with her, I became green with envy. Even though I knew her Catholic background would be beneficial in leading my resident, I just couldn’t be happy for her success.

Luke describes a similar experience for the disciples in this passage. Their pride was hit when a believer outside of their group was able to drive out demons, when just a few verses earlier, they had failed to rid a young boy of an evil spirit. In their jealousy, the disciples told the man never to use Jesus’ name, instead of building him up and encouraging his ministry. They tattled to Jesus, instead of rejoicing with him in the good news of healing.

Jesus’ response makes all the difference: whoever is not against us is for us. There’s no room for jealousy when others are successful, especially when we’re all striving to advance the kingdom. My co-leader had a more relevant testimony that made her relatable to my student. Although I wasn’t responsible for leading my resident spiritually, I should have counted it a win for the kingdom.

NOTES

Week 8

LUKE 10:1-20

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them on ahead of him, two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go. And he said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go your way; behold, I am sending you out as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace be to this house!' And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house. Whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' But whenever you enter a town and they do not receive you, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades.

"The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me."

The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!" And he said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you. Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: A LASTING REASON TO REJOICE

“Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.” Luke 10:20

Jesus’s disciples had just experienced something amazing... something supernatural... something unlike anything else they had ever known. God’s power flowed through them to drive out demons, freeing suffering souls from spiritual bondage as they spoke in the authority of Jesus’s name. Such empowerment! What a sense of joy to be agents of the power of God! Imagine receiving “divine superpowers” and you get some idea of what they must have felt. They were doing heroic stuff!

Yet in their amazement, Jesus gives them perspective. True, it is a wonderful thing that I am enabling you to do. In my Name you are exercising life-giving spiritual authority. You are now active participants in God’s forcefully advancing Kingdom – I understand why you are rejoicing in this! But here is a more lasting reason for you to rejoice: your names are written in heaven. You have been adopted into God’s family. You are mine. Jesus redirects their thoughts from the temporal to the eternal. From the place they are now to the place they will be forever. From what they are doing through God, to what God has done for them.

How about you? What are you rejoicing in today? It may be something as good as God’s current work in your life. Or you may be at a point where you are finding it hard to rejoice at all. But know this: If you are united to Christ by faith your name is written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). God gives you the assurance that He will receive you to Himself and that you will enjoy life with Him forever. He has made your eternal happiness secure! Take some time now to praise Jesus for this awesome truth.

NOTES

Week 8

LUKE 10:25-37

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: CULTIVATING COMPASSION

“But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion.” Luke 10:33

What causes one person to come to the aid of another in distress while others simply pass him by? The answer is compassion. Compassion at its core means “to suffer with.” When the Good Samaritan saw the beaten man his heart was moved in such a way that it was as if he himself was experiencing the man’s sufferings. He had to help. The priest and Levite also saw the man but any concern they may have had was too weak to move them to action. Their hearts were hardened towards the man’s clear need.

We have all missed opportunities to show compassion to those in need and perhaps have felt varying degrees of regret afterwards. But God in His grace commits to make each one of us more tenderhearted. One of the promises the Lord gives is “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekial 36:26) Each of us can be encouraged that God is committed to shaping us to be more compassionate.

How can we intentionally cultivate compassion in our lives? One way is to think intently and frequently about the marvelous compassion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures speak of Him as “full of compassion.” He enters so deeply into the sufferings of His people that when Christians are under attack He calls out to a raging Saul “Why do you persecute me?” When His people suffer He suffers; that is how closely He sympathizes with them. Jesus is the ultimate “Good Samaritan.” Pray that the Lord will move in your heart in a similar way to show compassion to others today.

NOTES

Week 8

LUKE 10:38-42

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: SIMPLIFYING YOUR “NEEDS LIST”

“Mary... sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to his teaching. ‘...one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her.”
Luke 10:39, 42

Daily demands can keep us from the things that are important and can cause us to lose sight of what we truly need. Fortunately we are not helpless in the matter since God has given us an important power: the power to choose. We have the power to set our priorities and live according to them. In the brief account of Luke 10:38-42, Mary made a choice that the Lord Jesus commended and we can learn from her example.

Mary chose what was needful. Advisors tell us to distinguish between our wants and our needs. Jesus simplifies the needs side of our list by saying it really only includes one thing – to sit with Him and hear His word. Every day we eat, and similarly every day we need to feed on his word, for “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

Mary chose the “good portion.” Whenever we choose to spend time with Jesus we make a good choice. We can say with confidence “the Lord is my portion” knowing that in Him we have every good thing. Because we become like the people we spend time with, we become better people as well.

Mary chose that which would not be not taken away from her. What a remarkable privilege that Jesus makes Himself so available to us, that He really does desire our fellowship! His door is always open, His calendar is free. He eagerly waits for you to come and sit with Him and will never turn you away.

Jesus still speaks today – the Bible is His voice. Choose to hear His word each day to receive what you need, what is good, and what shall never be taken away from you.

NOTES

Week 9

LUKE 11:1-13

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

*"Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread,
and forgive us our sins,
for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation."*

And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his impudence he will rise and give him whatever he needs. And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. What father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: GOOD GIFTS

"If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" Luke 11:13

When I was young, my Dad and I used to bond over grocery shopping. Although it was somewhat unconventional, it was our quality time. I knew my Daddy loved me and I trusted him enough to ask for what I thought I needed.

"Daddy, can we please get some ice cream? Daddy, can we please get some fruit snacks? What about chips?"

I coaxed and pleaded for every treat I saw in the store, and most of the time my Dad would smile and say, "Okay. I guess so." I was fortunate to have a Dad who, when he was able and thought it was good for me, could give me the things I asked for.

Maybe your earthly parents didn't give you gifts. Maybe the gifts you were given felt more like the scorpions Jesus refers to in verse 12. Maybe you are scared to trust and ask Jesus for your heart's desires. Hear His promises, you are a child of the living God (John 1:12); you belong (1 Corinthians 6:20); ask and you will receive; seek and you will find... Grace... Love... Peace... Acceptance.

Jesus wants to bond with us. He wants quality time with His Children, He longs to give us more than we can ever imagine through the Holy Spirit, and all we have to do is pray and ask. He teaches his disciples to ask for their needs, their "daily bread" and more. What is holding you back from asking Him? Do you believe Him?

NOTES

Week 9

LUKE 11:33-36

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light. Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light.”

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE LIGHT IN YOU

"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness." Luke 11:34-35

It's 5 a.m. and your alarm is blaring. The dark of night still consumes the room. You have a choice: stumble around in the darkness, or turn on your lamp. You choose the lamp: The light immediately engulfs the room, chasing the darkness away. Your eyes struggle to adjust, and then realize that all is illuminated. A new day has come. How will you choose to live it?

The ESV Study Bible suggests that in Luke chapter 11, the "Lamp" is a metaphor for Jesus and His Mission. We are a sinful and broken people in need of Him! His mission is love. His mission is grace. Jesus completed His mission on earth by defeating Satan, sin, and death – the darkness! Hear this truth, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1:5) With Jesus, we will not be overcome by the darkness; He is the light we need.

Why then, does Jesus warn us in verse 35 to be careful of the darkness? He knows that the reality of our broken world is that we see darkness every day. We are bombarded with it at every turn. It can easily consume and distract us. We press the snooze button, our "bad" eyes cloud over, and we return to old habits. Is your lamp burning out? What prevents you from becoming "wholly bright"(verse 36)?

Fellow believers, we no longer have to stumble around in the darkness! "His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning." (Lamentations 22-23) We have been set free from the bondage of sin and have been illuminated by the Holy Spirit. If we are filled with the light, we should not hide it (verse 33). Our lives should reflect Him and His Mission. How are we shining our light to our city, neighbors, coworkers, friends, families, and kids?

NOTES

LUKE 11:37-54

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.

"But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: WOE TO THE PHARISEES

"And the Lord said to him, 'Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? But give as alms those things that are within and behold, everything is clean for you.'" Luke 11:39-41

The Pharisees loved their money, tithed for show, wanted the best seat at the table, and deceived people by appearing to be holy and good, but they were incredibly selfish. When Jesus joined them for a meal, the Pharisees were disgusted that Jesus would not participate in a cleansing ritual before dining with them. Knowing they were disgusted, Jesus could have walked away and left the Pharisees to their own devices, but instead He decided to teach them.

See, Jesus loved the Pharisees. He wanted them to know the love of the Father. He wanted to teach them the truth about their messy, sinful, appearance-driven hearts, and so He rebuked them. He told them that God saw the shiny clean outside they were trying to present, but what really mattered was on the inside. He wanted them to repent, give their hearts to God first, and let their love for the Father be the motivation for their actions.

Are we acting like Pharisees? Do we tithe for show or as an act of worship? Do we volunteer on multiple service teams to show the love of the Father, or to prove to others that we are good? Do we show up to our small group trying to look good on the outside while secretly judging messier people on the inside?

We need Jesus. We need Him to look through our seemingly put-together exteriors, and heal the sinful, selfish, brokenness on the inside. Jesus wants us to give our hearts to Him first, to be transformed by His love and mercy, and let that drive our actions instead of our appearance-driven tendencies. Will you let Him?

NOTES

Week 10

LUKE 12:4-12

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

"And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God, but the one who denies me before men will be denied before the angels of God. And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but the one who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not be anxious about how you should defend yourself or what you should say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: DO NOT FEAR

“Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear. You are of more value than many sparrows.” Luke 12.6-7

During a college class discussion, one of my instructors asked me a question that may have been an opportunity to shed the light of the gospel on the topic. I didn't answer. There may have been a few reasons, but one definitely was my fear that in that environment my Christian faith would not have been well-received.

In Luke 12:1-12 Jesus gives His disciples encouragement for times when they may be afraid to speak. He lets them know that all those who confess Him as their lord will be identified as His people in the presence of God and the angels. He also lets them know that the Spirit in them will enable them to say the right things when they're brought before earthly authorities to explain themselves as followers of Jesus. At the center of it all is His reminder of how well God knows His children, how deeply He loves them, and how faithfully He cares for them.

Jesus gives warnings too, especially about hypocrisy, emphasizing the need to be sure that all we say in private matches up faithfully with who we are and what we would say in public. He warns against being afraid of people, likely because it's often fear of people that prompts us to speak like hypocrites; that prompts us to talk as if we don't even know Jesus.

It's a relief when we know that even if (or when) private conversations are made known, there's nothing to fear from what's been said, because it is faithful to Jesus and His character. It's an encouragement knowing that even the simplest acknowledgement of the lordship of Jesus to our family and friends and colleagues honors God and comes from the Spirit. God knows and cares for us, so we don't need to be afraid to speak faithfully.

DAY 1
DAY 2
DAY 3

NOTES

Week 10

LUKE 12:22-34

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: WHAT'S IN YOUR WALLET?

- *"Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12.34*

Treasure, money, wealth: however we think of it, it's a problem, whether we control a lot or none at all. There's a reason for the prayer in Proverbs 30:8, "Give me neither poverty nor riches." Too much leads too often to believing we ourselves are lord of our lives, that we're in control, that we don't need to acknowledge God. (Luke 12:19) Too little and daily life feels so tenuous and insecure, we're tempted to begin to think it's up to us to make sure there's enough to eat and drink and wear to preserve our lives, but none of us, not even the wealthy, controls that. Jesus again reminds His disciples of the Father's great love and tender care, releasing us from worry. (12:29-32)

But as that well-known moral philosopher Captain Jack Sparrow explained to his disciple, Will Turner, "Not all treasure is silver and gold, mate." For Will Turner, the treasure of his heart was a certain woman, and too often our relationships with others, especially spouses and children, can begin to become more precious to us than our relationship with God. Job success, recognition, Facebook likes, Twitter followers and retweets, degrees and titles, status and respect, and many other personal values can become the treasures we seek to accumulate, the treasures that capture our hearts, the treasures that draw us away from God.

With all due respect to Samuel L. Jackson, the question is not just "What's in your wallet?", but "Where is your heart?" Jesus calls His disciples to commit both their treasures and their hearts to the safety of the Kingdom of God.

DAY 1
DAY 2
DAY 3

NOTES

Week 10

LUKE 12:35-48

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

“Stay dressed for action and keep your lamps burning, and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

Peter said, “Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?” And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. But if that servant says to himself, ‘My master is delayed in coming,’ and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful. And that servant who knew his master’s will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.”

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: KEEP THE LIGHT ON FOR HIM

■ *"You too be ready." Luke 12.40*

I'm one of those people who really enjoys the pleasures of home: knowing where everything is kept, having favorite foods and meals ready to be made, sleeping in my own bed. My wife suspects I mainly travel just to experience the pleasure of returning (partly because I said so once).

Jesus uses this idea to explain the importance of being ready and watchful for His return. In Luke 12:36-38, the master of the house is returning from a wedding banquet. Good celebrations can last awhile, and weddings in the first century were multi-day affairs, so the servants would not know when exactly he'd return, but would have been expected to have things ready.

He wants his disciples to imagine the pleasure for the master of returning home, even at 3:00 a.m., to find his servants waiting with the fire burning, warm water to clean up with, a change of clean clothes laid out, and a warm meal ready. The master will return that love and devotion to them by turning around their roles, having the servants recline at the table while the master serves them dinner.

The parables in this last part of Luke 12 encourage us to think about who it is we serve and the love we have for Him. When we're waiting on someone we love to return, we tend to prepare things to be the way they like them, but mostly we tend to keep looking out the window and down the street, ready to throw open the door and welcome them with open arms. For a long time a motel chain made "We'll leave the light on for you" their way of saying, "We've got things ready for you." How much more should Jesus' disciples have the lights on and things ready for His return for us?

NOTES

Week 11

LUKE 13:1-9

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

There were some present at that very time who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE ROAD TO REPENTANCE

“No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” Luke 13:3

The words “Cornhusker” and “Nebraska” are not synonyms. It seems like it on football Saturday, but it’s not true on the ride home to Omaha. I wish I’d known that.

Two roads head east from Lincoln, but “Cornhusker” Highway veers north to Omaha and “Nebraska” Highway veers south to somewhere I did not want to go. Driving east on “Nebraska,” thinking I was on “Cornhusker,” my confidence in the journey deteriorated to doubt, worry, panic and anger. I was now late, causing disappointment and inconvenience for others at my intended destination. If I’d had a GPS, it would have commanded, “Turn (repent!) and go the other way!” I would have silenced it; I did not want to repent. I did not have time to be wrong. Pride kept me pressing forward on the wrong road. To repent requires humility, admitting that I’ve been wrong.

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.” (Proverbs 14:12 ESV.) Nebraska Highway seemed full of promise, but led further and further from where I wanted and expected to go. Sin usually looks good and feels good at first, but inevitably leads to pain and destruction.

“Repent or perish” is not a forced choice of two bitter options, being stuck between a rock and a hard place. To repent is only hard when we’re holding onto our sin, in denial about the consequences. To repent is to turn from sin and self, and find relief and deliverance in the arms of Jesus.

Lord, what sinful thoughts, words, or deeds am I holding onto today? From what sins are you calling me to repentance, if I will just quiet myself before you, listen, and obey?

NOTES

Week 11

LUKE 13:10-17

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. And behold, there was a woman who had had a disabling spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, said to the people, "There are six days in which work ought to be done. Come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." Then the Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" As he said these things, all his adversaries were put to shame, and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: STRAIGHTEN UP

"When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your disability." And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and she glorified God." Luke 13:12-13

This woman had been bent over and unable to fully straighten herself for 18 years. I imagine she had suffered not only great physical pain but also relationship pain. How difficult it must be to communicate when you cannot catch a person's eye, give a knowing glance, acknowledge humor with a smile, nod approval, and indicate inclusion and acceptance. How isolated she must have felt!

This woman came to hear Jesus teach. She did not ask Him for help or healing. Elsewhere, Jesus required a person to voice their need for healing. Here, He simply called her over. This healing was completely initiated by Jesus, as she drew near.

Jesus often said, "Come to me..." (Matthew 11:28.) He never said, "Straighten yourself up first and then come to me."

How about you? What burden keeps you from "straightening yourself up?" Is it illness, disability, financial burden, family problems, isolation, fear, or depression? Maybe it's addiction to drugs, alcohol, sex, pornography, food, or approval. Stop and think of your personal situation. Whatever it is that weighs you down, are you fully aware that Jesus is fully aware of you and your need? He invites you to "Come to me." As He meets you at your point of need, will you do as this woman did? Glorify God!

I need You, Jesus! I need You like this woman needed You. You saw her; You called her; You spoke to her; You touched her; You freed her; You healed her. You straightened her. You gave her life. I hear You calling me, saying, "Come to Me." So Jesus, here I am, with all of my burdens, sin, problems, and pain. I don't know what You will do for me or with me, but I know I cannot straighten myself. I need You.

NOTES

Week 11

LUKE 13:22-30

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE NARROW DOOR

“Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” Luke 24, 34b

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6) “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Jesus is the door to heaven, the narrow door, the only door.

Here we have a warning: many will be deceived, thinking that they will be admitted to heaven because they had been among believers. Jesus sees their hearts, and calls them “workers of evil.” (v. 27) They are left out of the kingdom of heaven, because even though Jesus invited them, they refused the invitation to repent of their sin and place their trust in Christ alone for salvation. Satan, the father of all lies, has convinced them to trust in their religious activity and charitable good deeds to earn their way to heaven. They have faith in themselves and their own works, not in Jesus.

Speaking to Jerusalem, but also to us as individuals, Jesus says that His desire is to gather us together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings. For those who are left out, it is solely because they “were not willing.”

Are you willing? For now, as long as we have breath, it is not too late. If you have not yet placed your trust in Jesus for salvation, let today be the day of salvation!

Dear Jesus, I believe that You are the narrow door. I cannot earn or deserve heaven, but You suffered and died on the cross to pay the price for my sin. I choose to turn from sin and I place my trust in You for my salvation right now. Thank you, Jesus, for saving me!

NOTES

Week 12

LUKE 14:7-11

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: A SPIRIT OF HUMILITY

“But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” Luke 14:10-11

We serve God best with a spirit of humility, but what does that look like in our twenty-first century life? In this parable, Jesus instructs His disciples not to take the highest place of honor at the table; rather, choose the lowest spot (the chair seemingly placed far away from “important” guests, good food, and a charming host). This lesson doesn’t just apply to seating arrangements; instead, Jesus is teaching us how to serve and love others above ourselves.

“Humility is the queen or foundation of all the other virtues because it enables us to see and judge correctly, the way God sees. Humility leads to knowledge, honesty, realism, strength, and dedication to give ourselves to something greater than ourselves. Humility frees us to love and serve others selflessly, for their sake, rather than our own.”
—Don Schwager, *The Gospel of Luke*

Who do you serve in your life, and how often do you consider others instead of becoming preoccupied with yourself? Whether it be tasks at work that you’d wish someone else would accomplish, or how you act toward a kid at school who is considered by others as inferior, or serving your family with a generous, selfless heart—all of these things take mindful practice, especially as they seem counter-culture to us.

Choosing to view others as God sees them and serving them as Jesus did takes effort, and often, those efforts go unnoticed by the ones on the receiving end; however, Jesus makes clear in this parable that He is pleased by the way we serve with humility. Our reward will not be a fleeting feeling here on earth; rather, our reward is eternal.

Lord, help me see others as You see them, help me serve without looking to be repaid, and send Your Spirit of humility to guide me.

NOTES

Week 12

LUKE 14:12-24

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

Week 12

DEVOTIONAL:

THE INVITATION: DO YOU ACCEPT OR GIVE AN EXCUSE?

"And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses." Luke 14: 17-18

Have you ever cancelled plans at the last minute with a friend or family member because you figured that person will forgive you and still be there? Have you done it multiple times? I know I have, and over time, it has hurt the relationship. In this parable, the master of a house invites a group to his banquet. At the last minute, they cancel with excuses. The master is angry and instead fills his house with those eager to accept: the poor, lame, crippled, blind, and those furthest away. He tells his servant that those who cancelled will not enter his banquet.

This story demonstrates God's anger at those who take His invitation lightly, those who start out devoted to Him and end up being pulled away. Whether we get caught up in the latest toys or just life's daily routine, when we prioritize things of this world over God, He is angry.

For many of us, we first heard the Gospel as a child, and now, we take His invitation for granted. We rely on its existence, but we no longer see it for what it is: an awe-inspiring, amazing opportunity of grace. He called us to be in His family, come to the banquet, and enter His kingdom. This cannot be a light-hearted decision.

Just as cancelling plans with our friends or family impacts those relationships, our excuses for not obeying or following God negatively affect our relationship with Him. Conversely, we see that He is pleased with those who run toward His invitation.

Have you rattled off an excuse this week in order to avoid time with God? Do you find yourself still in awe of His invitation? Are you the excuse-maker or the crippled man running to the banquet?

NOTES

Week 12

LUKE 14:25-33

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple." Luke 14: 26

Imagine being the president and making the decision to go to war with another country without contemplation beforehand. Imagine building the tallest structure in Omaha without first making sure you have the money to complete it. In the first scenario, you could sacrifice many lives due to your rash decision, and in the second scenario, you would be considered the fool whose finished product was nothing more than a framework with no purpose.

In this final passage of Luke 14, Jesus urges His followers to count the cost of being His disciple; do not make a quick decision to follow Him without first weighing the cost. And there is a cost. A sacrifice is required.

In the first few verses, Jesus calls us to hate others if we come to Him. The word "hate" in this context means to "love less." He calls us to love others less than we love Him. If He appeared in person tonight and asked you to do that, I'm sure your answer would be quick and full of sincerity: Yes. But if you examine your life, is your answer truthful?

Being a disciple of Jesus requires sacrifice. Following Him may cost you comforts and luxuries of this world, and it will cost you a life of living selfishly. Our comfort and satisfaction in things of this life should be less than our satisfaction and comfort in Him.

In His deep love and compassion for you, He urges you to consider your life, your thoughts, and motives. He urges you to first consider being a follower of Christ before making the decision, so that you can finish the race. Do you love Jesus? Do you love Jesus like nothing else in this world? If not, what would that life look like?

NOTES

Week 13

LUKE 15:1-7

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

So he told them this parable: "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE LOST SHEEP

“What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.” Luke 15:4-5

In this chapter, Jesus gives three parables that showcase the passionate pursuit of God for the lost, broken, and hurting people of this world. Jesus teaches that there are no bounds to how far God will go for one of His people that is lost. No matter where you have been, where you may be, and what you may have done, you have never out-sinned or out-run the work of the cross of Christ.

In this parable Jesus equates the people of God to a flock of sheep. Even if 99 of one hundred of the flock are safe, would the shepherd not run after the one who has strayed? Would a good shepherd allow his lost sheep to remain lost? No, the good shepherd pursues the lost sheep until it has been found. And when he finds the sheep, he gently carries it home.

Similarly, Jesus parallels this with His pursuit of the lost in this world. Jesus tells the religious “99” that He will stop at nothing to pursue the one broken and lost. And when Jesus pursues him, He finds him. And when Jesus finds him, He will gently carry him home.

You see, this passage shows us that our good shepherd, Jesus, isn’t just the One who saves us but is also the One who sustains us. He doesn’t find you and leave you where you are, He puts you on his shoulder and carries you through life until you reach your rightful home.

Jesus wants you to know today that you have not run too far. You have not sinned too much. You are not too lost. Rest assured that Jesus can find you, save you, and sustain you.

NOTES

Week 13

LUKE 15:8-10

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He's done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE LAST COIN

“Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.’ Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” Luke 15:8-10

After Jesus likens the people of God to sheep, He now uses the analogy of a coin. The coin that He refers to is most likely a drachma, which was the equivalent of one day's wage. For the woman in the parable, this coin is valuable; it is a treasure to her. When her coin was lost, the woman scoured the house and fervently searched for her lost treasure.

Jesus uses this analogy because we are His treasure and the earnings of His work on the cross. Humans are invaluable to Jesus. Like the woman in the parable, Jesus gave up everything to bring the lost treasure home to Himself for all eternity.

Hebrews 12 says that “for the joy that was set before Him,” Jesus endured the cross. What was that joy that was awaiting him? You! You are the joy that was awaiting Him after His work on the cross. Jesus went so far as to endure the cross so that He could buy you back with His blood. You have not been cheaply purchased, but Jesus shed his blood to make you His treasure.

And as the woman deeply rejoiced when her lost coin was found, Jesus tells us that there is a party in heaven when a sinner repents. Great joy abounds in the heavens when God's treasures are brought home. What joy there is when someone's heart is melted for the first time by the astounding grace of God. Do you remember the joy you felt the first time you experienced God's grace and the Gospel? Let us rejoice with others also, then, as the heavens rejoice when Jesus' treasures are found!

NOTES

LUKE 15:11-32

And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

"But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: THE LOST SON

"For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate." Luke 15:24

The parable of the prodigal son concludes this chapter's stories on the pursuit of God for His people and may be the most well-known of all. For years Christians have dubbed this parable, "The Prodigal Son," yet, in reality, this parable is about a lost son and his prodigal Father. You see, the word prodigal simply means "recklessly extravagant, giving profusely, or to lavish." While we often give this title and theme to the son, Jesus's point in the narrative is not to display the son's prodigal sinning but the father's prodigal grace.

It doesn't matter if you have sinned extravagantly for the world to see, like the younger son, or have sinned judgmentally and internally as did the older son. This parable is not about how much sin you can commit but about how much grace God is waiting to pour out. The beauty of the Gospel is that God does not just accept and justify those whom He likes and have been "good people." The beauty of the Gospel is that to even those who run from Him, disown Him, and choose death over life with Him – grace abounds.

The father in this parable celebrates because his son who was dead is now alive. He was lost and is now found. This is all of our default spiritual conditions. The fact of the matter is that it's not about being good enough or too bad. The problem is we are dead in our sin. But the Gospel brings wayward sons home. The Gospel pours grace into the dead and makes souls alive.

You have not, cannot, and will not out-sin the Father's grace. Jesus's plea to us is to come home, for our Father is good.

NOTES

Week 14

LUKE 24:1-12

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise." And they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: TRANSFORMATION

“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you...” And they remembered his words... While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God. Luke 24:5b-8a, 51-53a.

These dedicated followers of Jesus walked with, touched, and experienced God on earth, though they still expected and hoped for an earthly Savior. They witnessed His execution, burial, and feared the same fate. Their hopes of a restored Israel were lost. They would remain oppressed, taxed and victimized. Their mourning was deep, dark, and hopeless. Any hope of rescue or even survival weighed on each person’s shoulders, suffocating their dreams.

But... one word from an angel amidst the mundane ritual of death shot a ray of hope through the black veil. “Risen!” They were reminded of Jesus’ words. Another ray blasts through the clouds. They ran. Their friends didn’t believe. Jesus showed up amidst their unbelief to remind them. He ascended to heaven to open their eyes to what they didn’t understand, to remind them that His is an eternal kingdom, and to impart His resurrection power in them to do His work.

In our unbelief, we need Him to come beside us and remind us that He rose and ascended. He is eternal, but present each moment with us. We are eternal, but have His mission to carry out. His power is IN us if we believe IN Him. We can do all things through Christ who gives us His strength. (Philippians 4:13)

With Paul, we desire to know Him and the power of His resurrection. (Philippians 3:10)

He promised to never leave us or forsake us. We need to be reminded. Believe that His death, resurrection, and ascension were for all, including you. Believe that His Kingdom is eternal, His power works in us, and we exist for God’s purpose and glory. You will find joy in your mourning, hope without despair, eternal versus temporary perspective, and power to serve Him and others, over yourself. Be transformed.

NOTES

LUKE 24:13-35

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And he said to them, "What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?" And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see." And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He’s done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: BLIND EYES. BURNING HEARTS.

"But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?" Luke 24: 6, 27, 32

It's not clear why this couple was kept from recognizing Jesus. When He broke the bread, a familiar event they probably had experienced with Him in the past, their eyes were opened and He vanished. Upon reflecting, they acknowledged that their hearts burned as they listened to Him speak from the Scriptures.

What things in my life keep my eyes and senses veiled to His presence and mission? When I tend to focus on my life—my agendas, comforts, anxieties, routines, accomplishments, circumstances, and self—I don't recognize that my senses have been blinded, deafened, and muted. I am enveloped in the mire, unaware of His presence and word.

What does Jesus do? Notice that "Jesus himself drew near and went with them." (v.15) He didn't force himself on them. "He acted as if he were going farther," until they strongly urged him to stay. When they invited Him in, He stayed with them.

He draws near, but doesn't impose. He accompanies, when asked. He communes, when invited. He stays, when allowed. His Spirit, His fire lives on in me, unless quenched.

I love that about Him. He didn't come the first time as a judge, but as a Savior, a Redeemer, and a Shepherd. His love towards me compels me onward past myself and into the world, toward others to show them His love.

How do we get ourselves out of the way so that our eyes are not blinded to Him and our hearts burn for Him? Let's begin today with this prayer:

Jesus, give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to worship as we wait for you.

Come, Lord Jesus, come!

NOTES

LUKE 24:36-53

Spend some time in prayer asking God to open your heart! Then read the passage slowly and allow God to speak to you. Circle or underline key words and phrases that stick out to you. Put question marks next to areas of confusion that can be answered later by a friend, small group leader, or pastor.

As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.

OBSERVATION

What stuck out to you and caught your attention the most? What do you learn about the characters in the story? What is the climax of the section? What is the central point or message?

INTERPRETATION

Why might Luke want to include this passage in his gospel account? What does the passage reveal about who Jesus is and what he came to accomplish? What does this passage teach us about being a disciple of Jesus?

APPLICATION

What do you believe God is saying to you in this passage? What kind of disciple does this passage call you to be, what truth does it call you to embrace, what sin does it expose, and/or what spiritual need does it surface that requires the grace and power of God? Write how this Scripture can apply to you today.

PRAYER

In light of what God has said, spend some time in prayer – praising God in adoration for who He is, thanking Him for who He is and what He's done, confessing any sin that comes to mind, and bringing urgent requests to God for yourself, friends, family members, City Group, church, city, and beyond!

DEVOTIONAL: PROMISES, PEACE, PROOF & PURPOSE

"... Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, "Peace to you!" And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures ... You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you." Luke 24:36, 38-39, 44-45, 48-49

Thirty three years before this event, give or take, Jesus was born. God in the flesh. At the time, news of His birth, brought unbelief and fear, except for the anticipating heart. The response from God to the listening ear, "Do not be afraid." "Peace." A promise—centuries in the making—fulfilled. A hope, longed for, now revealed. The Prince of Peace, the Savior of the world had arrived.

Now, after passing through death, a resurrected Jesus stood amongst His closest friends and family, amidst their unbelief, fear, and pain, and the voice that calmed the storm and the demon-possessed offered them "peace."

Knowing human frailty, He offered proof to back up his peace offering. "Look. Touch. Listen." Giving them physical and historical proof, He calmed their fears and placed them on a firm foundation of love. His perfect love cast out their fears. Having existed before creation and continuing into eternity, His love is evidenced in the present.

The purpose? So "that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations" and so that He could send "the promise of my Father upon you."

Jesus knows that we all need something bigger than ourselves to aspire to, to give us purpose. We may not all acknowledge it, but He's created us to long for Him, an infinite, loving God, who exists eternally realm. After our temporary tent is folded up, we, too, will enter into eternity.

We need purpose. His direction to us? "Take my promises. Receive my peace. Experience my proof. Live on purpose."

Our purpose? "Be my witnesses. Proclaim that repentance and forgiveness is available to ALL through Jesus." The promise? "The Holy Spirit will be upon you. Go in peace and love, because you are loved. I AM the proof."

NOTES _____

