



*Life Group
Study Guide*



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How to Use this Study Guide

This guide was written as a companion to our Life Group study in Luke 1-9 this winter, beginning in December and continuing through February. We've prepared this guide in hopes that it will encourage you in your daily walk and prepare you to engage well as you study with others in your Life Group.

Each week's lesson contains a brief overview of the week's passage, and then five days worth of study. Each day, you will find a short introduction, three questions to get you thinking about the text, and then challenges to apply the text and pray for God to use it in your life. A careful reading of the day's passage and answering the questions should take most people about 15-20 minutes a day.

There is a comprehensive introduction to the Gospel of Luke at the beginning of this study guide. And finally, at the end of the guide you will find two helpful background articles on some key issues you may encounter as you study.

However you use this guide, our prayer is that it would continually drive you to make the study of God's Word a regular habit. May the Lord richly bless and sustain you as you meditate on His Word.

The Study Guide Team



Introduction

by Keri Bosch

*Come, ye sinners, poor and needy
Weak and wounded, sick and sore
Jesus ready, stands to save you
Full of pity, love and power.*

- Joseph Hart (1759) *Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy*

As the longest book of the New Testament, the Gospel of Luke is a beautifully crafted portrait of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Gospel means “good news” or “to proclaim good news” and is the English translation of the Greek word *euangelion* (noun) or *euangelizomai* (verb). Both the Jews and the pagan world used this term to announce a victory after a battle or a new king’s birth or rise to power. In the Bible, the prophet Isaiah uses the term to declare God’s promise that He would return to Zion, defeat His enemies, end His people’s exile, and establish His reign as King (Isa 40:9-11; 52:7-10, 61). This is the gospel of Jesus Christ found in Luke—the fulfillment of God’s promises of the Old Testament. Jesus puts on flesh and comes to dwell with His people, to defeat His enemies by His death and resurrection, to seek that which was lost and in exile due to sin, and to be enthroned as Lord of all, King over all creation.

Luke is a part of the collection of three books, including Matthew and Mark, known as the Synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means “with the same eye” or “with the same viewpoint.” We find similar material in all three of these Gospels, and they each share a common geographical organizational pattern. All three begin with Jesus’s ministry in Galilee, then move to His ministry outside of Galilee on the way to Jerusalem, and culminate in Jerusalem with His death, burial and resurrection. Despite their literary commonalities, each Gospel was written with a different audience in mind. Thus, each presents a slightly different perspective of Jesus and what it means to be His disciple. The three Synoptic Gospels complement one another and work together to form a rich and complex portrait of Jesus Christ and His finished work.

AUTHORSHIP

The Gospel of Luke is volume one of a two-volume work, the second being the book of Acts. Luke, a travel companion and beloved physician of Paul (Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:11), is

regarded as the author of both Luke and Acts. Luke is a doctor with an apparent capacity for research and a careful accounting of historical detail. Luke addresses both books to a man named Theophilus (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). The beginning of Acts refers to “the first book” that “dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,” thus linking both books to the same author. Early church fathers agreed that Luke was the author as well. Most likely a Gentile, Luke was believed to have been from Antioch. Evidence of his Gentile identity includes his concern for the salvation of Gentiles in both Luke and Acts, his familiarity with Greco-Roman culture and politics, and his utilization of a more polished and refined form of Greek language and writing style. Though he was a Gentile, Luke demonstrates a deep knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish community life. Perhaps he was a “God-fearer,” one who worshiped the God of Israel but was not a full convert to Judaism. Luke and Acts make up roughly 30 percent of the New Testament, slightly more than Paul’s writings. Thus Luke is the only divinely inspired Gentile author of Scripture. Luke was with Paul on many of his missionary journeys, as evidenced by the “we” sections in Acts (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-15, 21:1-18, 27:1-28:16). He was Paul’s lone companion in Rome during Paul’s final imprisonment (2 Tim 4:11). These experiences with Paul gave Luke ample exposure to many apostolic and eyewitness sources he used to author his own “orderly account” (Luke 1:1-3).

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE

Little is known about Theophilus’s identity, although his name means “lover of God” or “friend of God.” The use of the title “most excellent” (Luke 1:3) indicates that Theophilus was most likely a man of high social standing and may have been the sponsor of Luke’s research and work. Despite this specific audience, Luke intended a wider audience of Jews and Gentiles to read his account of Jesus’ life. Luke writes this proclamation of the gospel so that his readers “may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught” (1:4). The Gospel of Luke is a source of encouragement. It confirms the integrity of what Theophilus and believers of all generations have heard about Christ while refuting any false teaching. Luke repeatedly testifies that all of Scripture points to Jesus, and Jesus fulfills all of Scripture. The church is built on this testimony.

DATE

Many believe that Luke was written after Mark and that Luke drew upon Mark’s Gospel as a resource. We should also consider the end of Acts, as it concludes with Paul’s imprisonment in Rome. This points to the Gospel being written between A.D. 60-63. Some scholars also believe it could have been written earlier, during Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (Acts 24-27). Still others maintain Luke’s Gospel was penned after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

THEMES: WHAT SETS LUKE APART

An astounding 60 percent of the material found in Luke is unique to this Gospel. First, what would Christmas be if not for Luke? No other Gospel contains the birth narratives found in Luke 1-2, including the angelic announcement to the lowly shepherds and the magnificent hymns of praise sung by Mary and Zechariah (1:46-53; 67-79). How fitting it is that

the first two chapters connecting the last prophet of the old covenant to the coming of the long-awaited Messiah, would be like a mini-musical that sets the stage for all that is to come in this beautiful Gospel! Luke also contains the only narratives concerning Jesus's childhood and the period before His ministry began.

In chapter 3, Luke outlines a different genealogy than the one found in Matthew, leading back to Adam. This emphasizes one of the more dominant themes of Jesus as the Savior of both the Jews and all people. More than any other Gospel writer, Luke portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of God's plan for Israel and God's plan for the whole world. In Luke's Gospel, God is doing something new; however, this new thing is actually old, as it was always God's plan to reconcile all people from every tribe and nation to Himself in Christ. God is making a new humanity, bringing both Jew and Gentile together under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This theme is also carried into the book of Acts.

Per the theme of the universal nature of the gospel, Luke emphasizes the social upheaval of the Kingdom of God in which the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; the outsider is brought near, and the poor become rich. Jesus continuously seeks out the rejected and the outcast, including tax collectors (the story of Zaccheus is found only in Luke), the poor and sick, the immoral, children, Gentiles, and Samaritans. Luke also clarifies the value of women in the Kingdom of God as he gives them a prominent place, referring to thirteen women not mentioned in other Gospels. Women were not even allowed to be disciples of rabbis during this time, so it was astonishing for Luke to reference those who were followers of Jesus and even gave money to support His ministry (8:1-3).

Most of the travel section in which Jesus journeys to Jerusalem (9:51-19:44) is only found in Luke, including 50 percent of Jesus's parables. If it weren't for Luke's Gospel, we would not have such beloved parables as the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and the Rich Man and Lazarus, to name a few. Much of Jesus's teaching on money, as well as the cost of discipleship, is only found in this section of Luke's Gospel. Predominantly featured in Luke are feasts. There are banquets with sinners and meals with the religious elite. All are occasions for teaching on the Kingdom of God and discipleship. Also, there are seven miracles not mentioned anywhere else. Other stories unique to Luke include the salvation of the criminal next to Jesus on the cross, Jesus interpreting all the Scriptures for the two discouraged disciples on the way to Emmaus, and the glorious ascension.

Two other prominent themes not to be missed in the Gospel of Luke are prayer and the Holy Spirit, and these are often intertwined. There are more prayers of Jesus referenced in Luke than are mentioned in any other Gospel. Jesus prays at His baptism (3:21); retreats to lonely places to pray (5:16); prays before selecting His apostles (6:12); prays before predicting His death for the first time (9:18); prays at the transfiguration (9:29); prays at the return of the seventy (10:17-21); prays before teaching on prayer (11:1); prays in the Garden of Gethsemane (22:39-46); prays for Peter (22:31-32); and prays from the cross (23:34, 46). There are also two parables found only in Luke on praying with boldness and persistence (11:5-8, 18:1-8).

The presence and power of the Holy Spirit saturate Luke's Gospel. In the first three chapters

alone, we see the Holy Spirit's work in the lives of John, Mary, Elizabeth, Zechariah, and Simeon. The Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus at His baptism. Jesus remains "full of the Holy Spirit" as He enters the wilderness. He is anointed by the Spirit to fulfill His mission (4:18-21; Isa. 42:7, 61:1-2). Both John the Baptist and Jesus anticipate the Holy Spirit's life-giving power dwelling within God's people in the age of the church (3:16, 11:13, 12:12, 24:49), which ultimately comes to fruition in the book of Acts.

Lastly, there is joy in the book of Luke, and it is joy that often ties the themes of Luke together. Luke begins and ends with the Holy Spirit and God's blessing and mercy that results in "great joy" and "rejoicing." This book also begins and ends with the people of God joyfully worshipping and blessing God in the temple. With great joy, those lost are found, including the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. The gospel of Jesus Christ causes our spirit to rejoice in God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ (1:46)!

HOW TO READ LUKE

Remember three vital things when reading Luke:

1. **Fulfillment.** One must ask the question: What Old Testament story or what Old Testament character is Jesus the fulfillment of at this particular moment? What, in the Old Testament, is Luke either directly referring to or alluding to?
2. **Humility.** We are the sick, the lost, the Gentile, the Samaritan, the prodigal, the traveler left for dead, the immoral, the outcast, the criminal condemned in desperate need of a Savior. The gospel is for us. May the Gospel of Luke cause us to know and to love Jesus our Savior all the more.
3. **Kingdom.** You can't read Luke without noticing the upside-down nature of the Kingdom of God. We must continually ask ourselves how we might live in a way that reflects the heavenly values of the Kingdom of God in our homes, our church, and our communities.

OUTLINE

1. Prologue (1:1-4)
2. The Infancy Narrative (1:5-2:52)
3. Preparation for the Ministry of Jesus (3:1-4:15)
4. The Ministry of Jesus in Galilee (4:16-9:50)
5. The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51-21:38)
6. The Suffering and Death of Jesus (22:1-23:56)
7. The Resurrection of Jesus (24:1-53)



Luke 1:1-25

We open our study of Luke's Gospel with an introduction to the sovereignty of God, as He displays His power and His purpose in preparing His people. We will find that our Lord is meticulous in His revelation, prompting Luke to write an account of Jesus' life that is orderly and certain. We will find that our Lord is kind and gracious, choosing to herald the coming of the Messiah by opening the womb of a barren woman. We will find that our Lord is merciful, granting even a doubting priest a second chance and a multitude of blessings. Above all, in the opening verses of Luke's Gospel, we see a God who delights in turning our expectations upside down in His pursuit of our redemption. As you study this week, look for God's unexpected providence. Think about how the same providence that prepared the way for Jesus is working in your life, right here and right now.

Prepared by Pastor Jason Hall

Day 1: Luke 1:1-4

Today we will read the prologue of Luke's Gospel and review some of what you saw in this study's introduction. We will concentrate on the fundamental questions (who and why) before thinking about how we are also recipients of the grace of revelation. Note in the first verse that Luke acknowledges other writings about Jesus ("many have undertaken to compile a narrative..."), but feels compelled to write his account anyway.

Who were the sources behind Luke's account? What does that tell you about the reliability of his story?

Read verses 3-4 closely. What was Luke's purpose in writing? What did he hope this story would accomplish for his readers?

God led Luke to compile his Gospel the way he did. What does that tell you about the character of God?

Apply: Because God's wrote His Word in language we can understand, we can study it carefully and know what it means – even if God's Word is sometimes difficult. Apply yourself diligently to the task of knowing God's Word well.

Pray: Lord, I praise you for being a God who has communicated yourself to me in a way that I can understand. I ask, along with the psalmist, that you "open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps. 119:18).

Day 2: Luke 1:5-7

Today we begin, in earnest, the story of Jesus. Truthfully, though, the story of Jesus began with a promise way back in Gen. 3:15. For centuries God prepared His people for the coming of a Savior. Zechariah and Elizabeth's story is the final preparatory act before the curtain opens, and the Messiah steps onto the stage.

Write below everything you learn about Zechariah and Elizabeth from this paragraph.

Why do you think the details of Elizabeth's barrenness, and Zechariah and Elizabeth's age, are relevant to Luke's account?

Take a few minutes and read Gen. 17:15-21; Gen. 25:19-21; Gen. 30:1 and 22-24; 1 Sam. 1:3-20. These are accounts of barren women, all of whom bore children that God used mightily. What do these accounts, along with Luke 1:7, tell you about God?

Apply: We can worship God amid difficulty because we trust Him to fulfill His purpose in our lives. Elizabeth believed this about God. Does your faith work itself out in righteousness and blamelessness, as hers did?

Pray: Father, strengthen my heart and mind to pay more attention to your commandments and teachings than I do to the lies of this world. Please help me to remember, each day, who I am in You and worship You according to this truth.

Day 3: Luke 1:8-17

Today we study the announcement by the angel of John the Baptist's birth. This announcement was made to answer Zechariah's prayer, both for his people, Israel, and his wife, Elizabeth. We serve a God who delights in answering prayer and always responds in keeping with His divine purpose.

How does God answering Zechariah's prayer both fulfill a divine promise and meet an individual need?

Write below everything you learn about John from the angel's announcement.

Read Mal. 4:6, the last verse of the last prophetic book of the Old Testament. Write out below a prayer of gratitude for God's faithfulness in keeping His promises.

Apply: We are commanded to make Jesus known, just as John was prophesied to do. Commit to obey by loving God in your witness and loving others while on mission.

Pray: Lord, give me wisdom and courage to speak your name to my friends, family, neighbors, and even strangers as you provide me with opportunity. Thank you for the privilege of sharing the name of Jesus, who deserves worldwide praise and glory.

Day 4: **Luke 1:18-25**

Today we look at Zechariah's reaction to the angel's stunning announcement. While his response may not match what we expect and hope, it is understandable. Sometimes the Word of God shocks us. We think it unbelievable, and so we question it rather than accept it. But God's grace is sufficient for us in these times like it was for Zechariah.

What is at the heart of Zechariah's response to the angel in verse 18?

How is God's discipline of Zechariah an example of God's grace rather than His wrath?

Elizabeth sees her pregnancy as the Lord taking away her "reproach" (childlessness was considered a disgrace and a judgment from God in their culture). List below ways in which God has taken away your "reproach."

Apply: People who are discouraged by their circumstances fill our church. Take time now to plan how you can be encouraging and uplifting to those struggling with discouragement.

Pray: Lord, forgive me for those times when I have not believed your Word. Thank you that you are faithful when I confess my sin and just to forgive and restore (1 John 1:9).

Day 5: Luke 1:5-25

Today we will review Zechariah and Elizabeth's story from this week and the announcement of John the Baptist's birth and ministry. Notice especially the theme of speaking in these verses. John's ministry would be fulfilled by his speaking; Gabriel, the angel, spoke and brought good news to Zechariah; when Zechariah's faith failed, he was disciplined by taking away his ability to speak.

Review the angel's prophecy about John's ministry, particularly detailed in verses 15-17. In what ways would John's ministry be like the Old Testament prophets? In what ways would it be different?

Read the apostle John's description of John the Baptist's ministry in John 1:6-8. Compare that to Gabriel's description in verses 16-17. In what ways will John bring light?

Like John the Baptist before he was born, we have also been given a commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). In what ways is our commission like John's? In what ways is it different?

Apply: Speaking truth in love is a fundamental requirement of following Jesus. Make a plan now to improve how and where you lovingly speak truth to your family, fellow believers, and unbelievers.

Pray: Lord, thank you for the grace to know your Word. Give me the grace to believe you and speak truth to those who need to hear it, in the same way that men like Luke and John the Baptist were faithful.



Luke 1:26-55

As we continue this week in Luke, we reach one of the most well-known stories of the Bible. This particular section of the text has long been included in annual Christmas programs and pageants. This story is told in Sunday school rooms all over as children listen in awe at the wonder of this amazing account, the birth of Jesus foretold by the angel Gabriel. Gabriel is sent from God to Mary with a great announcement—the Lord will be born through her. Luke presents Him as a King with a kingdom that will last forever. Indeed, our eternal King, the long awaited one, has come. As we study the text this week we are reminded of the faithfulness of God, the miracle of Christ, the sanctity of life, and the obedience and humility of Mary.

Prepared by Nicole Caldwell

Day 1: Luke 1:26-29

This first day of our week we open the text to an incredible moment. Luke has moved from announcing the birth of John the Baptist to announcing the birth of Jesus. Gabriel is on the scene sent by the Lord to bring the news.

What is the meaning of the word betrothed in verse 27? Look it up in a study Bible or Bible dictionary.

What would it have meant for a woman who was betrothed to be found pregnant? Read Matthew 1:18-19 to help you answer.

Do you think it is significant Gabriel's first words were to assure Mary, "the Lord is with you"? Why?

Apply: The sovereign Lord is in control of every moment of our lives. He does not leave us, nor forsake us. The Lord is near in times of trouble and joy.

Pray: Lord give me peace and encouragement as I am reminded that you are always with me. In every circumstance this world brings my way, you are with me and I can trust you to love and care for me. Help me to worship you in my thoughts, actions, and words because you are with me and are deserving of my worship.

Day 2: **Luke 1:30-33**

God's plan is unfolding. The announcement of Christ has come to the virgin who will bring forth the Savior of the world. Read today's text and answer the questions below.

What two things will Mary do according to Gabriel's announcement (verse 31)?

What five things does Gabriel reveal about Jesus (verses 32-33)?

Turn to 2 Samuel 7:11-16, where a prophecy is given to David. What are some links you see between verses 32-33 and the prophecy given to David in 2 Samuel?

Apply: God is trustworthy. He promised His Son will be great, reign as King, and His kingdom will have no end. He kept that promise by sending His son to save us.

Pray: God, thank you for sending your Son. Thank you for saving us. We did nothing to deserve your love or forgiveness and yet, you freely gave your Son anyway. Please remind me of this free gift of salvation every day and stir in my heart to share your love, mercy, and forgiveness with others.

Day 3: Luke 1:34-38

As we move on through the text today, we encounter the question from Mary, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?” The reply from Gabriel reveals the triune God present at the conception of Christ.

Read Isaiah 7:14. Why was the virgin birth so important?

Can you find the reference to the Trinity in verse 35?

Mary replies in verse 38, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word.” In what areas do you need to release control of your life and trust the Holy Spirit to do with it as He pleases?

Apply: With God nothing is impossible. We can trust Him to make a way. We are called as disciples to be willing servants and vessels for His will.

Pray: Holy Spirit, do with me as you please. I am your disciple; take and use me wherever you see fit in your perfect timing. Help me to live and speak in a way that points others to you. Give me opportunities to share with others that Jesus Christ is the Savior, the Son of the most high, and eternal King of kings.

Day 4: Luke 1:39-45

When the angel had gone, and Mary knew what was happening to her, she went straight away to Elizabeth. What a moment that must have been, when the women carrying two of the most important and impossible pregnancies see one another face to face! Let's look closely today at the implications of this very special section of the text.

Turn ahead to Luke 2:16. Here in Luke 2:16 and in today's text you see the word "baby" (Greek *brefos*). In Luke 1:41 the text is referring to John the Baptist in the womb, but in Luke 2:16 we see the same word used in reference Jesus. What can believers learn in comparing these two sections of text regarding life in the womb?

Notice also in Luke 1 the way the baby in Elizabeth's womb responds to Mary who was carrying the Son of God. Verse 41 says, "When Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, the baby leaped in her womb." Then in verse 44, Elizabeth speaks about the leap by saying, "Behold, when the sound of your greeting came to my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy." Luke writes Elizabeth said this because she was filled with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit prompted her to say that this leap of the baby in her womb was a leap of joy. The baby in the womb was moved by the Holy Spirit to leap for joy. Is there an indication anywhere in the bible that anything other than a person can be moved by the Holy Spirit?

What can we glean from this section of text regarding how the Lord views a baby in the womb?

Apply: Life begins in the womb. The Lord regards a baby in the womb as a person—a person created in His image.

Pray: Lord, thank you for your Word. Thank you that it is applicable in today's culture. Help me remember that it is not dated or irrelevant despite the arguments of the fallen world around us. Please move in the hearts of those who claim to be your followers and grant them a joyful, grateful reverence for the gift of human life from conception to eternity.

Day 5: Luke 1:46-55

As we wrap up our week we move into one of the most moving and inspiring sections of this week's text. God has moved. He has revealed His plan through Gabriel and the Savior of the world has come as a baby in the womb of a virgin. Mary is so moved by this vision of God, the lover of the lowly, that she breaks out in song—a song that has come to be known as the Magnificat. Read today's text and work through the questions below.

Do you remember the story of Samuel and his mother Hannah? Hannah had no children and was taunted by other women because of it. She prayed earnestly for the Lord to give her a son, which He graciously did. Hannah is so overjoyed in 1 Samuel 2 that she sings a song of praise similar to Mary's song. Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10. What parallel expressions and sentiments do you see between the two texts?

In Mary's moment of praise and worship the words that come her to lips are that of Scripture. What does this reveal about Mary's heart and mind?

Apply: We should steep our hearts and minds in Scripture day and night so that the words and thoughts of Scripture fill our mouths as naturally as they did Mary's.

Pray: From 2 Timothy 3:15-16: Father help us to remember how we have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. Remind us that, all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness. Lord, convict our hearts to commit ourselves to the daily study and reading of your Word and not take it for granted.



Luke 2:1-21

Luke 2:1-20 may be one of the most well-known and beloved passages of Scripture in Luke’s Gospel if not the entire Bible. Every Christmas Eve it is read all over the world. While it is an old story, it is ever new and God’s people never grow tired of it. Rich in theological truth, it narrates the announcement and story of the birth of Israel’s Messiah—the incarnation of the Son of God. This passage reveals Jesus Christ was fully God and fully man. Luke makes it clear Jesus experienced a fully human birth, making Him a fully human baby. As you study this week’s passage, think about how God has fulfilled His Word through the birth of His Son. In these verses, the sovereignty of God is clearly on display.

Prepared by Jamie O’Brien

Day 1: Luke 2:1-7

Today we begin the study of Luke's account of the birth of Christ (Luke 2:1-7). In this passage we will focus on the sovereignty of God and His plan of redemption (Gal. 4:4-5). The question of why now, and why here, is simply, "Because this is God's plan." As you carefully study this passage, how do you see God's plan of redemption unfolding here and in your own life?

Caesar Augustus made a decree that all the world should be registered. "Everyone" had to return to his ancestral city for the census (v. 3). How does this fulfill the Word of God (Micah 5:2) and demonstrate the sovereignty of God?

Read Genesis 12:1-3; 2 Samuel 7:1-17; Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2. How does Joseph's lineage from David, the timing of Mary's pregnancy, and the humility and simplicity of Jesus's birth play a role in the fulfill Old Testament prophecies?

In verse 7 Mary wraps baby Jesus in "swaddling cloths" (NKJV) or strips of cloths. Why is this an important detail?

Apply: In this passage, Luke clearly demonstrates the sovereignty of God by the fulfillment of His prophetic Word. If God's Word controls our lives, then we can trust God to fulfill His will in and through our lives. Jeremiah writes, "I am watching over My Word to perform it" (Jer. 1:12).

Pray: Dear Father God, I believe but help my unbelief. Lord Jesus, I trust in You and no other for my salvation. Now Lord, help me trust in Your sovereignty in my daily walk with You.

Day 2: Luke 2:8-12

In today's passage we will take a look at the angelic announcement of Jesus' birth. How amazed the angels must have been to see the Creator born as a creature, the Word becoming as helpless as a baby. The best commentary on this is 2 Corinthians 8:9. The first announcement of the Messiah's birth was given by an angel to some anonymous shepherds. Shepherds were considered outcasts and lowlifes in Jesus' day. Their work made them ceremonially unclean and kept them from the temple where they could be cleansed.

Why shepherds? Why not priests and scribes? By visiting the shepherds what did the angels reveal about God (see Luke 1:51-53; 1 Cor. 1:26-29)?

What did the angels reveal about the uniqueness of Jesus? What three titles are given to Jesus in verse 11? What is their significance?

In verse 12, what sign are the shepherds given so that they will recognize baby Jesus?

Apply: The angel said, "I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all people" (v. 10). Here Luke emphasizes a worldwide gospel. The good news is for everybody, not just the Jews. When we take the good news of Jesus Christ to the world, we fulfill our mission to love God, love people, and make disciples.

Pray: Dear Father God, thank You for the gift of Your Son Jesus Christ. I pray Father that You would give me the courage and the strength to take the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. I pray that people would hear Your message of salvation, repent, give their lives to You, and be saved.

Day 3: Luke 2:13-14

In our passage today we see a heavenly host suddenly appear worshiping and praising God. Initially, one angel appeared with an announcement of good news and great joy and then suddenly a host of angels joined him praising and worshiping God. The glory of the Lord had returned (v. 9) for the first time since departing the temple (Ezek. 10:15-19). The angels praised God at creation (Job 38:7). Now they praised Him at the beginning of the new creation (Luke 2:13-14).

What does the phrase mean, “Peace among men with whom God is pleased” (14)? Is God pleased with all men?

Who are the men God is pleased with in these verses? How can you be sure God is pleased with you?

What is the purpose of your salvation? And how can you bring glory to God today?

Apply: The Hebrew word for peace is “shalom.” It means much more than peace in the battles of life. It means well-being, health, prosperity, security, soundness, and completeness. In Christ we not only have peace with God, we also have the peace of God. This is true no matter what circumstance we find ourselves in.

Pray: Dear Father God, I praise You and worship You for You are the God of my salvation. I thank You Lord for the peace You have given me in Christ Jesus!

Day 4: **Luke 2:15-20**

In today's passage we see the shepherds responding to the angelic announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ. Even though they had the responsibility of tending their sheep, they knew they were experiencing something divine. Seeing the angels, hearing them speak of God's peace, and knowing the Messiah had arrived, they abandoned their daily routine and answered God's call. We need to embrace the message of Jesus' arrival with the same abandon.

What do we learn about God's love for us through the shepherds encounter with the angels?

Have you ever experienced an encounter with God? If so, describe the experience. How did you respond to Him?

What keeps you from embracing the message of Jesus with the same abandonment as the shepherds?

Apply: Between the angelic announcement of the Messiah's birth and the praise and worship of the heavenly host, we get an incredible picture of the gospel. Our Savior has come and He brings with Him salvation and peace; and that deserves our praise and worship.

Prayer: Dear Father God, I come to You in the name of our Lord and Savior Christ Jesus. Father, I praise and worship You, I give You my life. Take it Lord and use it any way You choose. I abandon all for You my dear Lord and Savior.

Day 5: Luke 2:1-20

This week's lesson should inspire believers to remember and respond to God's gift of His Son Jesus Christ (salvation) not just at Christmas but every day of the year. Many celebrate Christmas without understanding its true meaning. If asked, some would say that the true meaning of Christmas is giving, love, and peace. Some might even say that Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus. But most do not understand the significance of His birth. As we study the birth of Christ, it is clear that He is unique. Believers can rejoice and offer praise to God because God, in love, gave the world the gift of Jesus Christ; and Christ is truly unique because He is the only begotten Son of God (John 3:16). He is fully God and fully man.

Read Matthew 2:3-5. How did the shepherds' reaction to the news of the Messiah's birth compare to the religious leaders' reaction? What is significant about this contrast?

How did encountering Christ change your identity? How does becoming a Christian change your purpose?

How would you explain the significance of Christmas to someone who doesn't understand it? Who do you know that needs to hear this explanation?

Apply: Read 1 John 4:7-12. Based on these verses, what is the Biblical meaning of love? Demonstrate your love for God by sharing the good news of Jesus with someone today.

Pray: Dear Father God, thank You for loving me so much that You sent Your only begotten Son to die for me while I was yet in my sin. Help me Lord embrace the good news of Jesus with the same abandon those shepherds did. Help me Lord to glorify Jesus in all I say and do. I pray that You would accomplish Your will in and through my life.



Luke 2:22-38

In our study this week we are going to see a glimpse of how Joseph and Mary led godly lives by obeying the Word. They are still in Bethlehem and make a short trip to Jerusalem to perform some rituals in the temple as required by the law. Then Luke will introduce two eyewitnesses of baby Jesus in the temple. First, we see Simeon who gives prophetic declarations regarding the coming salvation—through the death of Jesus—that is freely available to both Jews and Gentiles. He bursts into doxology of praise and thanksgiving after meeting Jesus. Next we meet Anna, a prophetess. We learn that she is a widow and has dedicated her life fully to worshipping, praying and fasting in the temple—I think she never missed a single worship/prayer service! God reveals His plans and purposes to humble servants who continually live in His presence. As you study this week, I hope you will be challenged to spend more time in worship with God.

Prepared by Pastor John Nyota

Day 1: **Luke 2:22-24**

Today we study the purification and the presentation of baby Jesus in the temple. There are two ceremonies involved: Mary's purification, which involved a sacrifice being offered, and consecration of the firstborn son. We see that Joseph and Mary were godly parents who sought to obey the law—God's Word.

Read Leviticus 12:1-4;6-8 and Exodus 13:1-2;11-16. What kind of sacrifice did Mary offer? What does that tell us about their economic status?

What was the purpose of the presentation of the first born (Exodus 13:14-15)?

How can we share stories of God's faithfulness with other people?

Apply: We can commit to study God's Word and obey what we are learning. Are you obeying what you already know from the Bible? If not, why not? Are you regularly reading and studying God's Word?

Pray: Lord, thank you for your Word, which is easily accessible to me, and in a language that I understand. I pray that I will faithfully study and apply it in my life, for your own glory.

Day 2: **Luke 2:25-27**

In today's text Luke will introduce Simeon to us; he will later give prophetic statements praising and thanking the Lord for salvation, which is available to both Jews and Gentiles. He does this under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

What do you learn about Simeon from these verses?

How many times is the Holy Spirit mentioned in today's text? Why do you think Luke emphasizes the Holy Spirit?

Read Ephesians 6:18-21; Galatians 5:22-23; and Romans 8:26-28. What are the works of the Holy Spirit in our lives?

Apply: We are commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Will you fully obey the Holy Spirit so that your life is punctuated with His fruit?

Pray: Holy Spirit, I surrender my life to you and ask that you fill me so that your fruit may be evident to all around me.

Day 3: Luke 2:27-35

Today we look at Simeon's response after seeing the baby Jesus. This is the first human response to Jesus recorded in Luke's gospel. You can tell he is excited and doesn't hide it. We should also never hide our excitement for salvation that is freely available to all including Gentiles. Read today's verses and answer the following questions.

Briefly describe below Simeon's response when he meets baby Jesus.

Who does "all peoples" include? Does that include you? Have you accepted this salvation invitation?

According to John 1:14, how did Israel see God's glory?

Apply: Because of God's free gift of salvation, we should worship Him corporately and individually by offering praises and thanksgiving to Him. Do you regularly worship privately and corporately with your church family (this could be in person or via live stream)?

Pray: Lord, I pray that everything I do will result in praise of your name. May I be truly thankful because of the free gift of salvation made available through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Day 4: **Luke 2:33-35**

In today's passage Luke introduces us to Anna, a prophetess. We learn that she never left the temple, where she worshipped day and night, fasting and praying. After meeting the baby Jesus, she doesn't stop telling others about him. Read today's text and answer the following questions.

What do you learn about Anna from these verses?

What was she doing when she meets Jesus? How does that challenge you to practice the spiritual disciplines?

From verse 38 what is Anna's response after meeting baby Jesus? What is your response since you met Jesus?

Apply: We can devote ourselves to pray on daily basis; and even to a discipline of fasting—in order to focus more on God. Do you have a regular time of prayer? If not, why? How often do you pray (both privately and corporately)?

Pray: Lord, thank you for Anna's example of faithfulness in prayer before you. Please give me the strength to remain steadfast in prayer, even when I do not understand or answers are slow in coming.

Day 5: Read Luke 2:25-38

Today we will review the stories of Simeon and Anna. We will concentrate particularly on their testimonies after meeting the long-awaited Messiah. Every believer has a personal testimony.

Read verses 27-35 and briefly describe Simeon's story after meeting baby Jesus? How was his life changed?

Read verses 36-38. How would you describe Anna's story after meeting baby Jesus? What stands out the most from her testimony?

What personal testimony can you give about Jesus?

Apply: Sharing our testimony is part of our Christian witness. Christ commands us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8) by actively sharing the gospel with others and how it has changed us. Do you have a clear gospel outline, with a personal testimony that you can share at anytime? If you need help writing one, feel free to talk to your Lifegroup leader, a pastor, or any other leader at Richland Creek.

Pray: Lord, I pray that I will faithfully share the gospel with those in my circle of influence. I pray I will have a clear and simple gospel outline that all can understand. May the Holy Spirit use these words to lead someone to repentance and follow you.



Luke 2:39-52

The closing verses of Luke 2 give us a glimpse into the older boyhood life of Jesus. Luke is the only one of the four Gospels to do so. In many senses, it seems his childhood was like that of anyone else: He grew up physically, formed meaningful relationships, and became more mature and wise as he grew. The difference, though, is that Jesus grew perfectly, remaining blameless in His relationships with both His Heavenly Father and His earthly family and companions. We will also see hints here, with this vignette of Jesus as a boy in the temple, of Jesus' understanding of His purpose and mission.

The first two verses of our focus text, Luke 2:39-40, provide an overview of what happened within Jesus' family from the time of His dedication forward. Luke, it seems, uses these verses to give an overview of Jesus' family life as a child, rather than going into great detail. On the other hand, Matthew gives further detail on Jesus' life as a young child, including the visit of the Magi, Herod's attempt to kill Jesus, and His family's time living in Egypt. Does that mean there is a contradiction between Matthew and Luke? Not at all. Luke just chooses to include different details.

Prepared by Pastor Jason Hall

Day 1: Luke 2:39-40

The two short verses we will study today provide a very brief summary of Jesus' childhood. We're going to concentrate on observations about the nature of Jesus' family, their dedication to the Lord, and the faithfulness of God.

Verse 39 says that Jesus' parents "completed everything according to the law of the Lord..." How does this remind you of Zechariah and Elizabeth, two characters from Luke 1?

Compare the description of Jesus in verse 40 to the description of John in Luke 1:80. What similarities do you see? What do you learn from this?

Verse 40 also says that God's grace, or favor, was upon Jesus as a boy. How is this a fulfillment of Isaiah 11:1-2?

Apply: God is faithful to keep His Word in the smallest detail, and His grace was on Jesus even as a child. Do you realize that God is watching over you, as His child, every single day? Do you know that God's grace is on you? Let this grace fuel your worship today.

Pray: Lord, today I pray for the young people of Richland Creek Community Church. May your grace be upon them as they grow. I pray they would cry out to you in faith at a young age and spend all their earthly days worshipping and obeying you. Let them be filled with wisdom and joy in Christ.

Day 2: Luke 2:41-51

Today we're going to read the story of Jesus in the temple as a young boy. It seems likely that Luke's source for this story was Mary herself, so today, we'll read the story from Mary's perspective. As you read and answer the questions below, imagine you are Mary recounting this story to Luke, after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

Read verse 48. What is it that makes Joseph and Mary astonished? Why were they anxious?

Why do you think that, at the time, Joseph and Mary “did not understand” (verse 50) Jesus' explanation? Do you think it made sense in hindsight? Why?

Jesus was faithfully obedient as a child and a young man (verse 51). What do you think are some things that Mary “treasured up in her heart” about Jesus?

Apply: As we pay attention to the careful study of God's Word, we grow in our understanding of who He is and what He is doing in our lives, as Mary did with her son. We must treasure the Word of God in our hearts, meditating on it, and memorizing it with regularity.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for revealing yourself to me, as you did to your mother, Mary. Thank you for your example of obedience. I pray I would walk in your footsteps and trust in your Word every single day.

Day 3: Luke 2:41-51

Let's walk again through the story of Jesus in the temple, this time observing what we learn about Jesus himself. Bear in mind that this may have been Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem as a boy, as age 13 was for the Hebrews an essential time of passage for boys to become young men.

Consider that twice in this section Luke notes Jesus' growth in wisdom. Read Proverbs 9:10. In light of this, where do you think Jesus' "understanding and answers" (verse 47) came from?

What does Jesus' answer to his parents' question in verse 49 foreshadow about His future life and ministry?

Verse 51 says that Jesus remained "submissive" to His parents throughout His childhood. What does this tell you about the nature of authority and submission?

Apply: To grow regularly in faith and obedience, we must remain humble and teachable. Think carefully about areas of your life where you still like to stay in control. What steps can you take to submit to the Lord in those areas?

Pray: Lord, make me passionate for both knowledge and obedience as I study your Word. Give me the grace to understand, the wisdom to apply, and the courage to obey.

Day 4: Psalm 119:9-16

One of the primary lessons we can learn from Luke 2:39-52 is that even as a young man, Jesus was dedicated to knowing the Word of God. He was curious about it, asking questions, to the point that even temple teachers were astounded at His insights. Today we're going to spend time reading a portion of Psalm 119, the theme of which is the supremacy of the Word of God.

Based on what we've read in Luke 2 so far this week, do you think it's likely that Jesus knew Psalm 119:9? How can we apply that verse to our own lives?

What is the ultimate purpose of meditating on and memorizing Scripture, according to Psalm 119:11?

Psalm 119:15 says that those who walk with God will fix their eyes on His ways. In what ways was Jesus our perfect example in this?

Apply: If you do not have a plan to grow in the study, meditation, and memorization of God's Word, then talk to a pastor or your Life Group leader, or go to richlandcreek.com/discipleship. The daily habit of studying God's Word is the most critical discipline you can cultivate to grow in your faith.

Pray: Lord, I pray with the psalmist, let me delight in your statutes, and never forget your word (Psalm 119:16).

Day 5: Luke 2:52

For our final day's study in Luke 2:39-52, we're going to concentrate on the summary statement of Luke 2:52. This verse reminds us of what Luke wrote in Luke 2:40, and those two verses provide "bookends" for the story of Jesus in the temple as a boy. So as you study and consider this one verse, meditate on what you have already learned this week.

We've already studied this week about Jesus' growth in wisdom (day 3), but verse 52 says Jesus also grew in stature, or years. Simply put, that means he got bigger. What does that tell you about Jesus' humanity?

Read Hebrews 2:14-18 and 5:8-9 in light of Luke 2:52. Record below some of your observations about our Savior.

What do you learn about Jesus' approach to relationships when it says He grew in favor (or grace) with both God and men?

Apply: For us, growth in grace comes not haphazardly but through an intentional application of particular habits: Bible study, prayer, worship, witness, community, generosity, ministry, and mission. Think through your plans to grow in each of those areas and what areas of your growth might need special attention.

Pray: Jesus, you are my perfect example of living in relationship with both God and others. Thank you that by your grace and through your cross, I can live in right relationship with both my Heavenly Father and my fellow believers. Give me grace to grow in these relationships day by day.



Luke 3:1-4:13

We have arrived at a critical turning point in the life of Jesus. He is preparing to begin his ministry (3:23) on earth. We left off in chapter 2 with Jesus increasing “in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man” (2:52), but still a boy. As we open chapter 3, time has passed, and Jesus is an adult. Luke grounds this chapter historically by listing prominent rulers and noting that Jesus “was about thirty years of age” (3:23). The text addresses three significant events in preparation for Jesus’s ministry: an introduction to John the Baptist, Jesus’ baptism and genealogy, and His temptation in the wilderness. Luke artfully weaves Jesus’ status as the Son of God throughout his retelling of these events. The words of the prophet Isaiah, “The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together...” (Isa.40:5), beautifully come to fruition in this passage.

Editor’s Note: As you study this week, take time to turn to the back of this guide and read the article “The Genealogies of Jesus” by Dr. David Jones to give you further background and insight into the purpose of this, and other, genealogies in the Bible.

Prepared by Faith Cross

Day 1: Luke 3:1-20

Today we will take a closer look at John the Baptist, to whom the “the word of God” (verse 2) had come. There has been no “word” from God since Malachi, 400 years before Jesus. This astounding pronouncement breaks the long silence! Consider also the ancient tradition of a herald. This royal messenger goes ahead of their master, announcing their coming, making advance arrangements, and proclaiming the visit’s purpose. Let these points guide your answers to the questions below.

Read Malachi 3:1a. Read Luke 7:26-28, Matthew 11:9-11. What does Jesus say about who John the Baptist is?

Review Luke 1:57-60. Specifically, focus on verses 76-77. What will be John the Baptist’s purpose?

Read John 1:19-23. Who does John deny being, and who does he claim to be?

Apply: We can see how John’s life and purpose were predicted and fulfilled in these passages. Our lives as Christ-followers are equally purposeful. Choose to trust the Lord with all the circumstances of your life, proclaiming Christ as you go through your days.

Pray: Lord, help me to rest in your plans and purposes for me. I know “all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be” (Ps. 139:16). Let me trust you when you say, “For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future” (Jer. 29:11).

Day 2: Luke 3:1-20

We have established that John the Baptist's life was predicted and purposeful. Let's take a closer look at John the Baptist's message of repentance in this passage. Keep in mind that baptism, or ceremonial washings, were a part of Jewish tradition. It was common practice for Jewish people to self-immense in large pools built explicitly for this purpose and immerse Gentile converts new to the faith. The Jewish people would not have been surprised by the practice of baptism, but they would have been shocked at the content of John's message!

Read Luke 3:4-6. Read Isa. 40:1-5 to place the quote in context. Who is John's message from? Looking at Isa. 40: 1-2 closely, what is the message's intended purpose?

Read 3:7, 10, 12, 14. What groups of people were coming down to John at the river to hear his message and be baptized? How did his message of repentance (verse 8) ask each group to change? Read Matt. 21:32 and Mark 11:29-33. Did any people from the groups believe John's message?

Read 3:16-18 closely. Who does John "herald" as coming? What words are repeated? What impression would the hearer have of who is coming? In verse 18, how is his message summarized?

Apply: We, as believers, are commanded to repent, to bear fruit reflecting evidence of our faith in Jesus. This fruit will look different for each of us, depending on our roles in life. Reflect on how this has or should look in your life. Remember the empowering of the Holy Spirit do it.

Pray: Lord, God of comfort, you have shared the good news of forgiveness through Jesus Christ. You have empowered me through the Holy Spirit to lead a life that bears much fruit for you. Help me be confident of this: He who began a good work in me will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. 1:6).

Day 3: Luke 3:21-23

The crowds coming down to the river to be baptized were instructed to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” Now Jesus has arrived at the river. Our sinless Savior engages in a ceremony seemingly unnecessary for him. Keep in mind the theme of “Son of God” as you read this passage and cross-references. Note the similarities and who is repeatedly mentioned as present in each reporting of Jesus’ baptism.

Read Luke 3:21-22, Matt. 3:13-17. Does John think Jesus needs to be baptized? Why does Jesus say he is being baptized?

Read Peter’s description of Jesus’ baptism in Acts 10:37-38. Look up the word “anoint.” Who anoints Jesus? What (or who) is He anointed with?

Read John 1:29-34. What sign does John say helped him recognize Jesus? What names does John assign to Jesus in this passage?

Apply: There is no mistaking the testimony of God, the Holy Spirit, and John in these passages that Jesus is the Son of God, set apart and holy. Yet Jesus chooses to identify himself with us, sinful man, in this ceremony of baptism! Praise God that when we are in Christ, we are set apart with him. We have access to the power of the Holy Spirit living in us (Eph. 1:19-20) through him! Choose today to rely on the power of the Holy Spirit in you and not fall into the trap of self-reliance.

Pray: Lord, remind me of the power living in me, the Holy Spirit. I am a new creation, set apart for your purposes because of what you did for me on the cross. “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2Cor. 5:20). Help me to act on your behalf, not in my own strength.

Day 4: **Luke 3:23-37**

John has testified, calling Jesus the Lamb of God and the Son of God. The heavens have opened, and God has spoken, identifying to all that Jesus is his beloved Son. The Spirit has descended, anointing Jesus as his earthly ministry is beginning. Now let's take a closer look at the beginning of Jesus' ministry and his "earthly" genealogy.

Read 3:23. At what age does Jesus' ministry begin? Read Num. 4:3. The Kohathites were Levite priests who mostly handled the holy items in the temples. At what age are these priests able to begin performing their duties? Read Heb. 4:14. How does this help your understanding of the beginning of Jesus' ministry?

Read Matt. 4:17 and Mark 1:14. What message is Jesus proclaiming as his ministry begins? Look ahead to the Old Testament passage referenced in Luke 4:18-19. How does Jesus describe the beginning of his ministry?

Read 3:24-37. Who does Jesus' earthly genealogy begin with? Who does it end with?

Apply: We, as Christ-followers, also have an earthly ministry given to us by God. We have a message of hope and forgiveness to share with the world. We all begin with an earthly, human genealogy, but when we place our faith in Christ, we are called children of God. Be bold to share this message.

Pray: Lord, let me remember with joy and awe that you are a high priest who sympathizes with my weaknesses. You understand the temptations I face to give in to fear and uncertainty during these strange times. You tell me to draw near to your throne of grace with confidence to receive mercy and grace. Help me to draw near, be strengthened, and then share this hope with others.

Day 5: Luke 4:1-14

Luke has painted a clear picture of Jesus, at the beginning of his ministry, as being fully God and fully man. Now Jesus will face what every man faces daily on earth: temptation. Keep in mind that in the Bible, a reference to the wilderness is often symbolizing the world. Don't forget Luke's emphasis on Jesus as the Son of God as you read.

Read 4:1-3 closely. Replace the word “if” in verse 3 with “since” to understand the verse’s full implication. Who is acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God? Does this change the way you read the temptations Jesus faces?

Read the first temptation of man in Gen. 3:1-6. Do you see any similarities and common themes as you compare it to Luke 4:3-12?

Scripture is the best interpreter of Scripture. Read 1 John 2:16 and 1 Cor. 15: 45-46. How do these passages help you understand the temptations the first Adam faced in the garden and the second Adam -- Jesus -- faced in the wilderness?

Apply: Unfortunately, temptations will continue as long as we are on earth. Consider in what ways you are most tempted: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life. Spend time in confession and prayer over these areas.

Pray: Jesus, I know that you are one “who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). I stand in awe of this and thank you for making a way for me to be with you in eternity. I confess to you that I often fall short and sin when faced with temptation. Strengthen me to repent and remind me again of your great love and sacrifice.



Luke 4:14-44

This week's passage from Luke begins immediately after Jesus' temptation in the wilderness with the start of His public ministry. As you work through the text, note the sharp contrasts recorded by Luke. Victorious in His encounter with Satan, Jesus is filled with the power of the Spirit and begins teaching. While well received initially, Jesus is rejected by the community in which He grew up. He demonstrates His authority over evil and sickness by casting out demons and healing the sick but commands the evil spirits to not speak His name or reveal His identity to anyone. Jesus' authoritative teaching and healings spark great interest in His ministry in Galilee and beyond, setting the stage for the calling of His disciples.

Prepared by Pastor Brian Merritt

Day 1: **Luke 4:14-15**

These two, simple, straight forward verses serve as an announcement of the start of Jesus' earthly ministry and a hint of what is to come. Also read Matthew 3:12-17; Mark 1:14-15 as you study.

What do you think it means that Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit?

How do you feel after a big trial or overcoming a significant temptation?

What is significant about Galilee to Jesus' ministry?

Apply: At the right time, with authority and filled with power, Jesus begins His earthly ministry. The same Spirit and power reside in you. How are you going to be an effective witness?

Pray: Heavenly Father, empower me to do Your will through Your Spirit. Help me to be obedient to You and die to my selfish desires and limited understanding.

Day 2: Luke 4:16-20

Today's passage is a great example of how fickle an audience can be. In just a few words, the crowd changes from praising and marveling at His teaching to wanting to kill him for speaking truth. Also read Mark 6:1-6 as you study today.

What is the passage from Isaiah that Jesus read? Why do you think He did not read the full passage?

What was Jesus telling them in His statement, "No prophet is acceptable in his hometown?"

Why do you think the people of Nazareth wanted to kill Jesus?

Apply: The people of Nazareth rejected Jesus and his teaching. Throughout the rest of His ministry He spent almost no further time there. Instead, Jesus turned to a much wider and more diverse audience. Rejection of our message should never stop us from sharing. Perhaps it is God's way of growing us and taking the gospel into new territory.

Pray: Lord God, help me to be bold in my proclamation of the gospel and wise in how and when to speak. Let me overcome rejection with love and compassion as I seek to be a disciple who makes disciples.

Day 3: Luke 4:31-37

Luke's account of this event is of significant importance in light of the Isaiah passage Jesus just read at the synagogue in Nazareth, "He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives...to set at liberty those who are oppressed." We see here the beginning of a spiritual battle that still continues. Also read Mark 1:21-28 as you study.

Where did Jesus encounter the man with an unclean spirit? Does that seem odd? Why or why not?

Why do you think Jesus told the unclean spirit to be silent?

What does this event tell you about Jesus and His ministry?

Apply: Delivery from demonic possession was an important aspect of Jesus' ministry. While it is not as common in our society, we are battling spiritual forces beyond our comprehension (Ephesians 6:12). Therefore, we must daily protect ourselves with the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank You for the protection Your Holy Spirit and the blood of Christ provides for me as I seek to live a life that is pleasing to You. Help me to faithfully equip myself daily so that I can serve You well.

Day 4: **Luke 4:38-41**

After the encounter with the demon possessed man, Jesus goes to Simon's house (Peter) for the night. He is asked to heal Simon's mother-in-law but when word gets out that Jesus is there, many people come to him seeking healing. Also read Matthew 8:14-17 and Mark 1:29-34 as you study.

When did the people come to Jesus? Why is this significant?

Is there any significance to Simon's mother-in-law getting up and serving everyone after being healed (Luke 22:27)?

What is the significance of the demons calling Jesus the Son of God?

Apply: Sick, hurting, and oppressed people were coming to Jesus for healing and deliverance when they could, not necessarily when it was convenient for them or Jesus. Loving others often requires us to put their needs first—often at times that conflict with our plans. Am I on God's agenda or mine?

Pray: Lord, help me to be aware of the divine appointments You place before me each day. Help me to give a good account for the hope that I have in You.

Day 5: Luke 4:42-44

After a night of ministry, Jesus leaves to be alone. In Mark's gospel we are told Jesus went away alone to pray, which is implied in Luke's version. When the people finally catch up with Jesus, and ask Him to stay with them, Jesus tells them that He must go preach the good news of the kingdom of God to others as well. Also read Mark 1:35-39 as you study.

Why do you think Jesus would go off alone to pray? Is this unique to Jesus or have you seen this done by others in Scripture?

Why do you think the people were looking for Jesus and wanted him to stay?

How does Jesus' statement in verse 43 compare with Matthew 28:19-20?

Apply: As you read through the gospels it becomes very clear that Jesus had a specific mission and that He was un-wavering in His effort to accomplish it. We too have been given a mission, a calling to serve the King of kings. You will fulfill your calling as you actively love God and love others daily.

Pray: Heavenly Father, thank You for Your gift of salvation and eternal life through faith in the atoning work of Jesus on the cross. I also thank You for the calling You have placed on my life, for the spiritual gifts You have given me, and for my church where I can utilize my giftedness and fulfill my calling.



Luke 5:1-39

We noted in Luke 4 the growth of Jesus' teaching ministry, as Luke records that He was popular and taught in the synagogues of both Galilee and Judea. As a traveling itinerant preacher, it would have been expected and customary for Jesus to attract followers. What kind of followers would they be? Not the type that would draw envy from the religious elite, that's for sure. Most of Luke 5 is devoted to detailing what kind of people follow Jesus. It's not the wealthy, the super-spiritual, or the cultural movers and shakers who seem drawn to follow this man. Instead, it's the ordinary folks, those who have seen their share of pain and felt the sting of rejection, who give their lives to Him.

Prepared by Chuck Bounds

Day 1: Luke 5:1-11

Today we read about Jesus' ministry in the area of the Sea of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). Everywhere He went, Jesus drew a crowd. Many sought healing; many wanted to hear His message about the kingdom of God; some likely followed Him out of curiosity, hoping to see some miracles. Luke tells us about Jesus' interaction with a fisherman named Simon (Peter) and his partners, James and John. This was not Jesus' first interaction with these men; Jesus had previously healed Simon's mother-in-law (chapter 4). Simon showed respect for Jesus, and he readily did as Jesus asked, but he had yet to see Jesus in His true identity -- the Messiah, the Son of God. Jesus had a custom miracle for calling these fishermen to follow Him and become fishers of men.

Jesus used Simon's boat as a platform from which to teach the crowds. Then Jesus asked him to go out into deeper water and let down his nets. What was Simon's initial response?

Though Simon, a professional fisherman, thought it was useless, he did as Jesus asked. How did this miracle get Simon, James, and John to see Jesus for who He was?

Do you obey God's Word even when you don't fully understand what He is saying?

Apply: Take a few minutes to read Isaiah 6:1-8. Isaiah and Simon had similar experiences in seeing the Lord's power and having their eyes opened to His true identity. Two things took place in both Isaiah and Simon's lives: When they saw the power of the Lord, they were immediately humbled to be in His presence, and they were called by Him to proclaim His gospel message. Have you had a "miraculous catch of fish" experience? Have you had an encounter that brought you face to face with the reality of Jesus' true identity as your Lord?

Pray: Lord Jesus, I believe Your Word is true, and I trust that You are the Son of God who takes away my sins. Thank you for revealing Yourself to me. Lead me to follow You faithfully and to share Your gospel message.

Day 2: Luke 5:12-16

Today we read about a man with leprosy who showed great faith in Jesus. Luke tells us that the man was “full of leprosy,” indicating that he was pretty much a man without hope. There was no cure for leprosy, and lepers were forbidden to be around ritually clean people; that is, most Jews.

How did the leper approach Jesus?

How did Jesus respond?

Why did Jesus ask the man not to tell anyone about his healing?

Apply: The leper said to Jesus, “Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean.” Jesus responded to the man’s faith. Faith is how we know Jesus and experience a personal relationship with Him. Jesus responds to our faith when we humble ourselves before Him and trust that His will is best.

Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for coming to save me when I had no hope. I believe in You, and I want Your will to be accomplished in and through me, that You may be glorified in everything You do in me.

Day 3: Luke 5:17-26

In today's verses, Luke shows us a contrast between those who have true faith in Jesus and those who put their trust in a religious system. A paralyzed man was brought to Jesus by his friends who demonstrated their faith by the measures they took to get the man before Jesus. Jesus again responds to faith.

What two things did Jesus do for the paralyzed man?

The scribes and Pharisees put their trust in their efforts to keep their religion's rules and regulations. What was their objection to what Jesus did for the paralyzed man?

What can we learn from verse 22 about Jesus' ability to know what is in our hearts?

Apply: Some of our friends and loved ones do not believe in Jesus as the Son of God. It is essential that we consistently demonstrate our faith as a witness to them.

Pray: Lord Jesus, You are my Savior and my Lord. Help me to be such a witness that others will see You in me by my faith and actions.

Day 4: **Luke 5:27-32**

Today we read about the calling of Levi (also called Matthew) to be one of Jesus' twelve disciples. Jesus called His disciples from all walks of life. He didn't look at their social status or religious affiliation. He looked for those who had a willing heart. Once again, we see a contrast between the truth of Jesus, the Messiah, and the religious establishment's opinions. The scribes and Pharisees complained that Jesus was hanging out with tax collectors and sinners.

Why did the scribes and Pharisees think it was wrong for Jesus to associate with tax collectors and sinners?

How did Jesus answer their complaint?

Read verse 32 - Jesus said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." What pre-qualifications does a person need to become a follower of Christ?

Apply: Jesus came to save lost sinners. Have you ever heard the saying, "You have to know that you are lost before you can know you need to be saved?" Like the scribes and Pharisees who relied on their good works to get them into heaven, many people you know may think that their good deeds are enough for salvation.

Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, forgive me for any pride that may be present in my heart. Help me to see others through Your eyes. Teach me to love as You love and to have Your compassion for those who are lost and in need of Your salvation.

Day 5: Luke 5:33-39

Today we read about Jesus being questioned about why His disciples did not fast and pray like the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees. In his answer, Jesus did not say much about fasting; instead, he spoke more to the issue behind the question. Jesus responded that He is the new way of life (John 14:6), and John and the Pharisees were still practicing the old way of life, and the old is not compatible with the new.

The Pharisees were satisfied with waiting for the Messiah. Were they genuinely anticipating His coming?

Write down the three illustrations Jesus used in answering the question.

Take a few minutes to read John 1:19-41. What does this passage reveal about John and his disciples?

Apply: Jesus was and is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. He came to earth to give us new and eternal life, and it is available to all for free. All you have to do is believe in Him, and His salvation is yours. Why would anyone want to hold on to their old sinful lifestyle and miss the new eternal life in Christ? Are you sharing this good news everywhere you go?

Pray: Lord Jesus, I love and praise You for providing my eternal life. Thank you, Lord, for opening my eyes to see the truth in Your word. Use me, Lord, to reach others with the good news that You are the Son of God who can take away their sins and give them eternal life.



Luke 6:1-19

In chapter 6, Jesus continues to establish His authority as the Son of Man. We have already witnessed His power over disease, the demons, and nature. In the last chapter, Jesus further demonstrated that the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins. Despite the miracles that accompany this display of authority, the Pharisees choose to view Jesus as a threat. In chapter 6, we will see this tension between Jesus and the Pharisees heighten as Jesus moves further into the Pharisees' perceived area of jurisdiction - the Law. The Pharisees see Jesus' actions on the Sabbath and decry Him as a law-breaker. But Jesus declares Himself, "the Lord of the Sabbath." In this statement, Jesus asserts His authority over the Sabbath and the whole of the Law as well. The Pharisees will have none of it.

As you study this week, look for ways in which Jesus redefines religion and reinterprets rest in light of who He is and who He calls us to be to our neighbors. True Sabbath rest should promote "communion between God and man, between man and man, and even between humanity and the rest of creation. Only Jesus, the Son of Man, is Lord of the Sabbath. It was Jesus who 'scandalously' worked on this day to forgive the sinner, heal the sick, and enjoy creation. As we find our rest in him, our communion with God and others is properly renewed" (Gospel Transformation Bible).

Prepared by Robin Hall

Day 1: Luke 6:1-5

Today we encounter Jesus and His hungry disciples trekking through a grain field. The disciples grab some of the grains for a quick meal, which, according to Mosaic Law, is not stealing (Deut. 23:25). However, the Pharisees quickly condemn them for working on the Sabbath. Jesus' response reveals to us something about the Pharisees and something about our Savior.

What do the Pharisees say to Jesus and His disciples?

Look at the Old Testament example that Jesus references in His response to the Pharisees (verses 3-4). List below anything you see that these two incidents have in common.

Read verse 5 as well as the parallel accounts in Matthew 12:7-8 and Mark 2:27-28. What authority does Jesus assert?

Apply: We witnessed today a clash between the authority of man and the authority of God, and how man's authority condemned while Christ's authority demanded mercy. How can you show mercy in your relationships and God-given responsibilities?

Pray: Father, help us to be merciful as You are merciful. Give us eyes that see people in need of Your help and salvation rather than people in need of our judgment. Thank you for the endless mercy You show us each day and guide us in Your merciful ways.

Day 2: **Luke 6:6-11**

In today's reading, we glimpse another eyewitness account on another Sabbath day with another Pharisaical confrontation regarding one of Jesus' merciful miracles. While the Pharisees are focused on Jesus' outward actions, Jesus focuses on the Pharisees' hearts.

Who were the scribes and Pharisees watching, and why?

Read the parallel account in Mark 3:4-5. Who was Jesus watching, and what did He see?

What was the response of the Pharisees after Jesus healed the man (Luke 6:11, Mark 3:6)?

Apply: We may be able to fool our friends and family by self-righteous rituals or works, but the Lord sees our hearts. When the Lord looks at your heart, does He see a heart transformed and bearing the fruits of love, faith, and mercy? Or does He see a hardened heart?

Pray: "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me," Psalm 51:10.

Day 3: Luke 6:1-11

Today we will look at several Old Testament passages describing the original intent of the Sabbath day laws. As you read, keep in mind Jesus' commentary on the Sabbath laws: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

Read Exodus 20:9-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the two accounts of the Sabbath commandment. How is the wording the same in the two passages? How is it different?

Read Isaiah 58:1-14. While the Israelites attempted to fast and keep the Sabbath, what were they doing that displeased God? How did God want them to change?

Look back at Luke 6:1-11, especially verses 9-10. What did the Lord of the Sabbath prioritize on the Sabbath? Was this in keeping with the intent of the Sabbath laws?

Apply: Deny self-interest and self-pleasure. Do good to your neighbor. Delight in the Lord. These are the priorities of the Sabbath. Do you pursue self on the Sabbath (or any other day of the week), or do you delight to worship the Lord and do His will?

Pray: Father, please forgive us for drawing near to you day after day with our self-righteous rituals and words, but not with our hearts. Please forgive us for seeking to build our own kingdoms on the Sabbath rather than yours, for loving self rather than neighbor.

Day 4: Luke 6:12-16

Today we watch as Jesus expands His ministry by calling twelve of His disciples to be apostles. The Greek word for “apostle” (apostolos) means “messenger, or one who is sent out.” Soon we will see Jesus send these twelve men out to preach the good news of the kingdom in town after town. Later, these men will witness His death, burial, and resurrection, and take the good news of salvation to the world.

What did Jesus do the night before he chose the twelve?

Jesus chose from among his many disciples twelve to be named “apostles.” According to Mark 3:14-15, what did He especially appoint these twelve to do?

Reread the names of the twelve, then read the following passages, noting below the diversity of these men: Matthew 4:18-22 and 9:9-11 (Note: Zealots were political activists radically opposed to the Romans).

Apply: Before calling the twelve, Jesus prayed. All night long. Here again, we see rest redefined. Staying up all night does not seem restful, yet by praying unceasingly, Jesus exhibited proper rest in the Father’s will. Do we look at our agendas and think we have no time for prayer? Let us follow the example of our Savior and men like Martin Luther, who declared: “I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer.”

Pray: Father, teach us to pray, not out of duty, but out of delight. May we devote time to taste and see that You are good.

Day 5: Luke 6:17-19

Our last paragraph sets the stage for Jesus' sermon on the plain (Luke 6:20-49). As you read today's passage, notice what groups of people are there for this sermon. Why were they there? What do you think the crowd wanted Jesus to say or do? What do you think Jesus wanted to teach them? What kind of rest were they looking for, and what sort of rest did Jesus want them to find?

Where did Jesus go next, and who was with Him there (give specifics)?

Why were the people there?

Who was healed, and how?

Apply: “Why?” is a compelling question. Why were the people there? Why are you here now, reading God's Word? What do you want from the Lord? What does He want from you? Do your priorities at this moment align with His?

Pray: Father, prepare our hearts to hear the words you taught your disciples and the crowds in this upcoming sermon. May Your will be our will, and Your priorities our passion. Empower us to teach one another and the nations to “observe all that (You) have commanded” (Matthew 28:20).



Luke 6:20-49

Continuing the Luke 4:43 kingdom theme, Jesus addresses the crowd and trains the apostles in this “Sermon on the Plateau,” a similar message or an abbreviated account of the Matthew 5-7 “Sermon on the Mount.” He deconstructs the typical worldview and reshapes it, upending common values. Jesus shifts his listener’s perspectives from the here and now to the there and then – eternity in God’s kingdom. He understands the hardships of the people yet calls them to a different way of life. As he fleshes out the Greatest Commandments and the Golden Rule, Jesus invites the crowd to participate in His restoring work. Citizens of His kingdom love, forgive, and serve from an overflow of their identity in Christ. They must first scour the depths of their hearts to see if they are a disciple of Jesus, and if they are, then live obediently in light of eternity.

Prepared by Julia Siegart

Day 1: **Luke 6:20-26**

Today we study blessings (like the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12) and woes. God bestows blessings on His family, while His justice demands consequences for those who turn their back on Him. People naturally value the temporal, diminishing eternal heavenward perspectives. Yet, Jesus reverses expectations for His kingdom citizens.

Examine Psalm 32:1-2 and Isaiah 3:8-11 to understand today's verses better. Describe the recipients of the blessings and woes.

There are two opposing kingdoms – God's and the world's. Contrast the blessings and woes by making two lists below. Observe what citizens should expect now and forever.

Jesus is telling truth statements. What do we learn about God's character and His kingdom?

Apply: God graciously invites people into His eternal kingdom. Today, pray for someone who does not have a relationship with him. Pray that you may share your witness of the good news of Jesus with that person.

Pray: Lord, thank you for growing my worship of you as a gracious provider of eternal life. Help me bring you glory by valuing what you value and by sharing the gospel as you give an opportunity. Keep my thoughts centered on you and your kingdom work.

Day 2: **Luke 6:27-38**

Similar to Matthew 5:38-48 and 7:1-12, Jesus is challenging what's under the surface. Anyone can look good on the outside by doing good deeds. But do we love as God expects? Christians must love when it's inconvenient and love when it costs us. Christ-like love commits to gracious forgiveness and overflowing generosity.

Read Romans 13:8. What is taught about love?

Sowing and reaping are biblical themes (Galatians 6:7-9). Document below the examples you see in today's passage.

In hindsight, we realize Jesus is saying, "Do as I have done." How did Jesus live out today's verses? How does this grow our relationship with him?

Apply: Jesus is calling Christians to radical self-sacrificing generosity. Decide to be generous with kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and love.

Pray: Father, thank you for the ultimate selfless love Jesus portrayed (Philippians 2:5-11, Ephesians 5:1-2). Make me more sensitive to those around me and help me live a life of humble generosity. Use everything I am and have for your glory.

Day 3: Luke 6:39-45

Actions expose the heart and reveal the kingdom we pursue. Pharisees led toward destruction by focusing solely on the external. In contrast, Jesus calls Christians first to examine their hearts and obey, then teach others to do the same. Only God knows the heart. Yet, eventually, through what is seen and heard, we recognize who follows Jesus. We understand this principle from the plant kingdom. An apple tree only produces apples. Likewise, disciples reveal their identity in Christ (John 15:1-17).

Write lists below, contrasting the heart and actions of a Christ-follower versus someone living for the world.

Read Jeremiah 17:7-10. What do you learn about God and yourself?

In light of God's grace, how do "hypocrite, first...and then" in verse 42 impact relationships? (Luke 17:3, Gal. 6:1-2)

Apply: We should be thankful that God gives us biblical community, a family to journey alongside. Commit to one way you may spur someone on to love and good deeds today.

Pray: God, thank you for encouraging me by placing me in church community. I need my brothers and sisters in Christ. Through your Spirit, urge me to obey you by intentionally building others up into Christlikeness.

Day 4: **Luke 6:46-49**

Today we look at a litmus test for true love – obedience to God’s teaching as we grow in Christlikeness. If we have a relationship with Jesus, we must live how He lived (Luke 6:40, 46-47). We either participate in God’s kingdom, secure eternally; or, we await destruction in the world’s kingdom. There is no third option.

How does seeing God as a good Father and Master (Malachi 1:6) impact my understanding of these verses?

Read John 14:15, 21, 24. Describe the person who follows the Lord.

Using verses 48-49, explain how Christians have unexpected perspectives on trials.

Apply: Within the Word, we see how to live like Jesus. Discipline yourself to spend time in Bible study so you may pursue Christlikeness.

Pray: Father, I thank you for being a gracious master and teacher. Produce in me an attitude of humble joyful obedience so others may know of your great love.

Day 5: Luke 6:20-49

Today, we review Jesus' sermon by focusing on his followers. A disciple is a student of God and His Word (Deut. 6:4-9, Matt. 11:29) and an imitator of Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). The heart posture of a follower of Christ is counter-cultural. A true Christian desires to be transformed into the image of Jesus (Rom. 12:1-2), chooses to do the Father's will (Matt. 6:10), purposes to fully obey (Luke 6:46-49), and orients to eternity (Luke 6:20-23). Read today's text and answer the questions below.

If we are Christians, Jesus is our master teacher (Luke 6:40). List below the attitudes and actions of his apprentices.

God's character shapes our understanding of morality. How do you now view love, goodness, forgiveness, and generosity in light of who He is?

Psalm 30:12 reminds us to give thanks to God forever. Using this week's passage, what are you grateful for?

Apply: Choose to allow Jesus' teaching to lead to humble astonishment (Matt. 7:28-29). Before praying about anything else, worship God.

Pray: God, as Heb. 12:28-29 says, I'm grateful you are King over an unshakeable kingdom. Thank you for ruling with power, grace, forgiveness, mercy, love, and justice. I'm amazed at Jesus's teaching. May your people worship You and obey.



Luke 7:1-50

Throughout Luke's Gospel, Jesus has been explaining who He is. In the previous chapter, Jesus gave a lengthy sermon on how those who love and follow Him ought to live (ourselves included). The crowds (Jews and non-Jews) saw Him as a healer through His miracles and a rabbi through His teachings. In this passage, Jesus continues to show who He is by performing two more miracles. One is a miracle of healing, begged for by a Roman soldier, and one of resurrection, prompted by our Lord's compassion. In verse 34, Jesus calls Himself "the Son of Man," which, in Daniel 7, referred to an exalted human being. The "Son of Man," though, did not come to be exalted but sacrifice Himself for the salvation and forgiveness of those who follow Him. That is who Jesus is.

Prepared by Stef Dowd

Day 1: Luke 7:1-10

Jesus performed countless miracles throughout His earthly ministry; most were carried out in person. In this passage, however, Jesus chose to make it known that His healing power was not dependent on His bodily presence. By this miracle, which was requested by a Roman soldier, Jesus declared that His power and love extended to all people, not only the Jews.

Read verses 3-5. Why did the elders of the Jews want Jesus to heal the centurion's servant? Why was the centurion "worthy"?

The centurion describes himself as "not worthy." What does that reveal about his mindset toward Jesus? How does he address Jesus?

What were Jesus' two responses to the centurion's declaration of faith? See Matthew 8:13 for a specific answer.

Apply: From the world's perspective, people are worthy of respect/privilege because of actions or positions. Scripture tells us that, regardless of status, "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Do you trust that Jesus' sacrifice was enough to make you worthy of salvation, or do you attempt to show yourself worthy through your actions only?

Pray: Lord Jesus, you are worthy, and I am not. I express my gratitude for your perfect, selfless sacrifice. I praise you that you made me worthy at my confession of unworthiness and acceptance of the Gospel. Please remind me that all my "righteousnesses are like filthy rags" and that it is your work alone that makes me worthy of salvation (Isaiah 64:6).

Day 2: **Luke 7:11-17**

The Law God gave to Israel is clear on making provisions for orphans and widows. These provisions set Israel apart from other nations. Jesus, the perfect fulfillment of the Law (Matthew 5:17), takes that provision to a higher level. His compassion for a widow moves Him to perform a more extraordinary miracle in person than He had done the day before — namely, a resurrection. Read today's text and answer the questions below.

Read 1 Kings 17:19-24. How is it similar to today's passage?

According to verse 16, what did the crowds do? What did they call Jesus?

Who did they realize was in their midst?

Apply: The church as a whole and every individual son or daughter of God is to look different from the world. If compassion is a constant mindset for a Christian, the church will be noticeably unlike the world. Do you have compassion, not pity, on others? Does your mercy reflect Jesus' mercy? If not, think about how it could, make a plan, and record it here.

Pray: Thank you, God, for being so rich in love and compassion. Help me, "as one of your chosen ones, holy and beloved, to put on a compassionate heart" (Col. 3:12). Open my eyes to see opportunities to share the kindness and compassion you have shown me with those around me.

Day 3: Luke 7:18-23

John the Baptist, his disciples, and all of Israel had expectations of the Messiah. John himself had declared Jesus the Messiah in Luke 3:16. Those expectations were mostly military — overthrow the current government and reestablish Israel as a nation. Jesus' ministry seemed to be the opposite of these expectations, which prompted John the Baptist to wonder if Jesus was "the one who is to come."

Read Matthew 11:2-3. Where was John the Baptist when he sent his disciples to Jesus? Had John been able to watch or be part of Jesus' ministry?

When did Jesus answer John the Baptist's question? Read verse 21.

Throughout the Old Testament, particularly Isaiah, the Messiah is described in many ways. Read Isaiah 29:18 or Isaiah 35:5-6. Write the descriptions of the Messiah you find.

Apply: We have expectations of everyone in our lives. Whether a stranger passing by or a life-long friend, expectations are always present. What expectations have you placed on Jesus? Fix a marriage? Find a job? Finish school? Surrender your expectations of Him for His expectations for you. Read Matthew 16:24-25 for guidance.

Pray: Father, forgive me for any self-serving expectations I place on you or your plan for my life. Give me the courage I need to lay my expectations down so that I can experience the freedom found only in a life surrendered to you.

Day 4: **Luke 7:24-35**

Those around Jesus could have taken his slight rebuke of John the Baptist as disapproval. So, Jesus explains who John was. John was not just a prophet; he was the prophet spoken of in Malachi 3:1, “Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me.” John was the last Old Testament prophet, greater than any previous prophet, but lesser than anyone after him who would trust in Jesus. Those who trust in Jesus have a full understanding of the Old Testament’s message, whereas John did not.

According to verses 29-30, who accepted and rejected the truth?

Look at the comparison of Jesus and John the Baptist in verses 33-34. What does Jesus’ comparison tell us about his listeners?

How does Jesus being a “friend of tax collectors and sinners” help us understand who He is?

Apply: Our understanding of the great, full message of the Gospel and Jesus’ second coming ought to fuel us in sharing the Gospel message with more passionate urgency than John the Baptist. Do you see the Gospel message as urgent? When was the last time you shared the Gospel?

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank you for allowing me to live in a time when the full Gospel message is known. Ignite a passion for your Gospel in me and give me opportunities to share the Gospel with others, the way you allowed someone to share it with me.

Day 5: Luke 7:36-50

At the beginning of this chapter, the Roman centurion acknowledged he was not worthy of having Jesus come to his home. At the end of the chapter, an unnamed woman acknowledged her unworthiness in being forgiven of her sin, by coming into the presence of Jesus. Her action should not be taken lightly. Women were not usually welcome to eat with men, much less “a woman of the city.”

At whose house was Jesus eating? What was a Pharisee?

Looking at verse 42 and then at 47, why did the woman love Jesus? What did her love for Jesus produce?

How does Jesus show who He is in this passage? What does he say/do? Read verse 49-50.

Apply: We would have been forever unworthy of God’s love and forgiveness, if not for Jesus’ work. But in our salvation, Jesus has made us worthy. Do you still see yourself as unworthy of His love? Has that affected your life? If you are a Christian, embrace the worthiness that comes with being a child of God.

Pray: Father, I praise you for making me worthy through your Son’s perfect work. Forgive me when I make my unworthiness bigger than my worthiness found in you.



Luke 8:1-56

Jesus' ministry is growing. He and his disciples move from place to place, and as they go, they spread the message of God's inevitable kingdom breakthrough. What does this message look like? Primarily it comes in the form of true teaching and application of God's Word to human hearts; it seems clear from the Gospels that Jesus spends most of His time with the people teaching them to obey the Word of God. But it also looks like healings, casting out demons, and so forth. The result? Great crowds gather wherever Jesus goes.

If one of the critical themes in Luke 7 was Jesus' identity, this week in Luke 8, we'll focus again on Jesus' authority. Because He is the divine Son of God, Jesus' authority extends from the natural world to the spiritual realm, over wind and waves and sickness and death and demons and human hearts. Those who claim to follow Him must obey Him.

Editor's Note: Early in this week's study, turn to the back of this guide and read the article entitled "Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?" by Dr. David Jones. It will give you critical background information on parables and how to read them.

Prepared by Pastor Jason Hall

Day 1: Luke 8:4-15

Today we'll study one of the most famous of Jesus' parables, the parable of the sower. While commonly known as the parable of the sower, the teaching focuses on the types of soils depicted. That's where we'll concentrate our attention. Keep in mind, as you read, that Jesus was speaking to large crowds consisting of all kinds of people, not just his closest followers.

In the space below, take a moment to write out, perhaps in parallel lists, the types of soil and what happened to each kind.

In the space below, write out in another parallel list what kind of heart each soil represents and what happens when that heart encounters the Word of God.

What kind of soil (heart) do you think Jesus wants from His followers?

Apply: Consider what kind of listener you are when it comes to the Word of God. When you study it, hear it preached, or listen to it taught, you should feel conviction, allow it to shape you, and then see genuine change. If that is not happening regularly for you, then check with a Life Group leader, pastor, or trusted mature Christian on how you can seek change.

Pray: Lord, by your Holy Spirit, give me an “honest and good” heart. When I hear the Word of God, give me a burning desire to obey. Help me see conviction as grace, as an opportunity to respond with joy and to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.

Day 2: Luke 8:16-21

Jesus' teaching in these verses should make us reflect carefully on the message of the parable of the sower. How are we listening to the Word of God? How are we responding to it? Jesus uses two examples – one of a lamp and the other of His own family – to drive home the point that only those who listen carefully and obey fully are taking seriously the kingdom message that Jesus came to spread. As you read, consider that the “light” mentioned in verse 16 is the Word of God, or kingdom message, that Jesus is making known. Also, in verses 19-21, Jesus is not being disrespectful to His family but is using them as an illustration to make a point.

Jesus says, in verse 18, “Take care then how you hear” (ESV). As you reflect on verses 16-18, what will be the outcome for those who pay attention carefully? What about those who ignore Jesus' message?

How is Jesus redefining relationships with his statement in verse 21? What is he saying about the nature of our loyalty?

Focusing again on verse 21, those who genuinely follow Jesus must not only hear the Word of God but also what?

Apply: The message of the kingdom of God is not unclear or confusing: Jesus is Lord, and those who follow Him must do so with their whole hearts and lives. Think particularly about how you spend your time today, and if it reflects that your utmost loyalty is to Jesus and His kingdom.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for forgiving me and inviting me into your family. I realize that I am a child of God by faith in you, and nothing can take that relationship away. Give me the heart to hear your Word every day, and then do it.

Day 3: Luke 8:22-25

The scene shifts from Jesus teaching in front of a large crowd to a wind-tossed boat containing only Jesus and his disciples. It's difficult not to see a direct chance for application in this story: Will the disciples show themselves to have understood Jesus' teaching? When given an opportunity, will they exercise faith in Him? Jesus has laid out His authority and expectation for obedience. The question for the disciples (as for us) is, how will we respond to His power? That question is especially crucial in times of testing, such as the storm. For the disciples, the storm was quite literal. For us, it might be figurative. But the expectation is the same.

What was Jesus doing while the storm howled? What does this indicate to you about true faith?

When the disciples cried out to Jesus that they were “perishing,” what did that reveal about their hearts?

Read Psalm 135:6-7. Who is in control of all the storms – natural, spiritual, or emotional?

Apply: It is said that in this life, we are always either getting ready for a storm, going through a storm, or coming out of a storm. No matter what is happening in our lives' circumstances, faith in Jesus must reflect our genuine belief that He is in control, and nothing happens to us outside of His sovereign will.

Pray: Father, I know that you are the maker of heaven and earth and that every storm – whether from the heavens or in my own heart – is under your command. Please give me the strength to trust and obey in the midst of whatever storm I am facing.

Day 4: Luke 8:26-39

*Jesus has demonstrated His command over earthly storms, thus proving Himself to be God. Now we'll see Luke make the case, through the story of an encounter with a legion of demons, that Jesus controls the spiritual world as well. This story takes place on the eastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, populated mainly by Gentiles. Mike McKinley, in his book *Luke for You*, notes that this encounter almost plays out like a Wild West showdown between Jesus and these demons. And yet, this is not a fair fight between equal powers, but a demonstration of Jesus' supreme authority.*

Note the description of the man with the demons as spelled out in verse 27. How do you think that man had been treated by the townsfolk (see verse 29)? How does Jesus treat him?

As you read the text, note details that demonstrate Jesus' complete authority over these demons. Write what you notice below.

Contrast how the demon-possessed man is described in verse 35 with how he was described at the beginning of the story. What difference does Jesus' power make in the lives of those enslaved to sin?

Apply: The demons feared Jesus, and rightly so. For us as his followers, we should walk in reverent awe of His power, but also fundamentally understand that Jesus became “the Lamb of God” to take away the sins of the world. With those who love and serve Him, Jesus is gentle and kind. Jesus frees us from the abuse of sin to live in loving obedience to Him.

Pray: Lord Jesus, you are more powerful and holy than I can imagine, yet you took on flesh to save me from my sin. Thank you, Lord, for this deliverance. Give me the courage to sit at your feet, to learn from you, and walk in your ways.

Day 5: Luke 8:40-56

Jesus has authority over the natural world, over the spiritual world, and even over disease and death. The physical maladies that everyone faces were not part of God's original design for the world. The Bible teaches that human sin ushered sickness, pain, and death into the perfect world that God created. In bringing the kingdom of God to bear on our broken world, Jesus demonstrates the wonder and grace of His mission.

Notice the contrast in verses 43-44: No human physician could help this woman after 12 years of trying, but one touch of Jesus' garment and she is healed. What is Luke trying to communicate about Jesus?

How does Jesus react when hearing that Jairus's daughter is not just sick but dead? What does that tell you about Jesus' perception of His power and authority?

Reflect deeply on Jesus' statement to Jairus in verse 50: "Do not fear; only believe..." (ESV). In what areas of your life do you need to cast aside fear? Read 1 John 4:18 as you think about this.

Apply: With everyone Jesus came in contact with, He was gentle and understanding, just like He is with you. Do not think that God's acceptance of you is because of your performance; we obey God not to be accepted, but because we are already accepted in Christ.

Pray: Lord, I know that you have authority over everything in the universe, even down to the organisms that cause disease and suffering. Give me the faith to walk with you and not to live in fear of disease and death. These things have no power over me because I am in Christ.



Luke 9:1-62

A casual reading of this chapter might lead one to think it is just a collection of stories. While each narrative is significant, the events seem to fit a pattern in both timing and purpose. Jesus presents Himself as the Son of God, and people respond in a variety of ways. Although their understanding is limited, the twelve are seeing Jesus in a new light. While the events are fascinating and instructive, the passage's key point is the journey to Jerusalem. The cross has always been the goal, but this chapter is a turning point where Jesus tells the disciples about His fate, and "He was determined to go to Jerusalem..." Our study this week should challenge your thinking about what it means to be a disciple today. Is your idea of Christianity a mountaintop experience or selfless labor in the trenches? Is your view of Jesus based on what you have heard or what you know to be true from His Word? After studying the text, who do you say that He is?

Prepared by Mike Greene

Day 1: **Luke 9:1-11**

Jesus sends the twelve disciples on their first mission trip on their own. Jesus gave them specific instructions and empowered them for the task.

What three things did Jesus give the twelve the power and authority to do? How does this compare to our calling today? Compare with Matt. 28:18-20 and Acts 1:8.

Notice the instructions that Jesus gave. Why did Jesus send the twelve out this way? Is this a model for ministry today? Why or why not?

From the text, list all of the expected and actual responses to the gospel message. In what ways are people perplexed by it today?

Apply: The mission matters as much today as it did then. The Lord continues to empower His people for the task. Make it your ambition to know Him and make Him known.

Pray: Thank You, Lord, for the privilege of knowing You and being Your ambassador in my world today. Open the eyes of those who are blind and perplexed so that they may know You. Please keep me and my church focused on the mission to proclaim the kingdom of God.

Day 2: Luke 9:11-27

Even as Jesus ministers to the crowds, He teaches the twelve in some unusual ways, preparing them to carry on His earthly ministry. The multitude's feeding is undoubtedly a fascinating story in itself, but consider it in personal ministry contexts and the conversations that follow in verses 18-27. As you prayerfully study today's text, the following questions will help you.

Why do you think that Jesus told the twelve to feed the people when He knew they could not? What are the implications for ministry today? See John 15:1-5 for more insight.

“But who do you say that I am?” (v. 20). We must all wrestle with this question. Where do you get your view of Jesus? From today's text, how did Peter know? Read Matt. 16:13-17, how does this account change your answer?

In verse 22, Jesus reveals His purpose. In verse 23, what three things must a true disciple do? What do these three things look like today? What is your cross?

Apply: We come to know Jesus by the truth of His Word and the power of His Spirit. A true disciple must deny the old life, setting aside pride and fear. Taking up your cross is a daily decision to do God's will, and that may sometimes bring suffering. Suffering in itself is not noble; it is all about the mission.

Pray: Lord Jesus, I want to know You, not just in a mountaintop experience, but in the realities of everyday life. I will trust in Your provision and power as I choose to take up my cross daily, to do Your will. Help me to live for You as a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).

Day 3: Luke 9:28-36

We see another sensational mountaintop experience in our text today. In tomorrow's text, we return to life in the valley. Only three of the disciples witness the glorified Christ and His meeting with Moses and Elijah, and they hear the voice of the Father. It is interesting to note that Jesus asked the disciples who they thought He was before the transfiguration. Once again, the crux of the chapter is repeated in the conversation between Jesus and Moses and Elijah (v. 31).

Since they were Jewish, how do you think seeing Moses and Elijah impacted the three disciples? What connection do you think Jesus wanted them to make? (Hint: see Matt. 5:17, Luke 16:16, and Luke 24:44).

Reread verse 35. Considering the disciples' religious background and traditions, how do you think this message affected their thinking?

Why do you think that the disciples kept this experience to themselves? It does not appear that Jesus told them to do that this time.

Apply: Our faith is in a living Savior. Jesus once again reveals His identity as the Son of God, and He repeats His purpose for physically coming into our world. Who do you say that He is?

Pray: Thank You, Jesus, for leaving the glories of heaven to bring salvation to us. Just as the disciples witnessed your glory, I too look forward to seeing You as you are. In the meantime, I will listen to you. In your power, I commit to love God, love people, and make disciples.

Day 4: Luke 9:37-45

As soon as Jesus, Peter, John, and James came down from the mountain, another massive crowd met them. As you read the text and respond to the questions below, remember that we spend most of our lives in the valley. In the valley is where we need to trust God and live for Him. Secondly, as glorious as the transfiguration was, there is nothing more miraculous than one sinner meeting Jesus and being changed.

In verse 1, we saw that Jesus had given the twelve power and authority over demons. How do you think the incident in verses 37-43 affected them? Is this a coincidence?

Read the parallel passage in Matt. 17:14-23. Why were the disciples unable to help? What did Jesus want them to learn?

Notice another reference to the journey to Jerusalem in verse 44. How did the culture and religious background of the disciples affect their understanding?

Apply: While you may be blessed to witness something spectacular that God does, you spend most days in the valleys of ordinary life. Yet, there is nothing ordinary about what God is doing. There is nothing more miraculous than a sinner who is changed and given new life by the risen Christ.

Pray: Lord Jesus, thank You for revealing Yourself in my everyday world. Thank You for Your sovereignty over all things and your unfailing love for Your people.

Day 5: Luke 9:46-62

After all they had seen and heard, notice what the disciples are doing in verse 46. This is astounding! Or is it? Other incidents in verses 49 and 54 suggest that the disciples have a zeal for what Jesus is doing but a minimal understanding. Their view of the kingdom is still fuzzy. Before judging the disciples, let the text speak to you as you read it and answer the questions below. Pay particular attention to the costs and characteristics of true discipleship.

Why do you think that the disciples reacted to the Samaritan opposition as they did? Perhaps they recalled Elijah's experience in Samaria (see 2 Kings 1). How do you respond to opposition? How did Jesus correct the disciples' thinking?

List as many characteristics of a disciple as you can find in the text or implied by the text. Which of these are the most difficult for you?

Notice the levels of commitment in verses 57-62. How do these relate to the question, "Who do the people say that I am?" What are the costs of discipleship? What are some reasons that people hesitate to trust Jesus today?

Apply: Our view of Christ and His kingdom can also be fuzzy if we are not defined by His Word and directed by His Spirit. Abiding in Christ starts with consistent prayer, Bible study, and trust. Settle the question of who Jesus is to you based on truth. Reflecting on this week's study, what have you learned about Jesus that you didn't know before or maybe took for granted? What does He want you to do?

Pray: Lord, I pray that my life glorifies You and not me. Forgive me for the times I lose sight of who You are. Help me by Your grace, the power of Your Word, and the power of Your Spirit to be a true disciple who makes disciples.



Articles

by Dr. David Jones

The Genealogies of Jesus

One of the unique aspects of the Bible is the many lengthy genealogical lists it contains. Apart from DNA researchers and ancestry enthusiasts, most contemporary believers are likely not accustomed to reading such long lists. Indeed, the way Christians have viewed biblical genealogies has changed over time. In the early church, believers focused upon genealogies so much that Paul had to warn his readers twice (!) not to “give heed to . . . endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith (1 Tim. 1:4; cf. Titus 3:9). In the modern church, many—if not most—believers who are reading Scripture likely skip over these lists, as they seem to have little practical relevance to Christian living.

Some of the more critical genealogies in the Old Testament are given at Gen. 5:1–32; Genesis 10, Ruth 4:18–22, and 1 Chronicles 1–10. In the New Testament, the two most important genealogies are recorded at Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28. These genealogies in the Gospels are essential, for they reveal the family lineage of Christ. Believing that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable” (2 Tim. 3:16), many contemporary Christians sense that the biblical genealogies are important; nevertheless, it is often difficult to understand how these ancient lists of hard-to-pronounce names apply to the church. Yet, upon consideration of the biblical genealogies—especially those that record the lineage of Jesus in Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28—we can make the following five observations that show the importance of genealogies.

Biblical genealogies show that God is working in history. Given the world’s fallenness, it is sometimes tempting to believe that the world is out of control. Yet, Jesus’ genealogy reveals that God was always at work, sometimes through otherwise unknown people, to bring about the birth of Jesus in an unremarkable small town in Palestine. We often cannot detect God’s hand, but He is always at work.

Biblical genealogies show that God can use imperfect people for His purposes. Christ’s lin-

age names five women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary—who were involved in sexual scandals for different reasons. Furthermore, in Jesus' genealogy, we read the names of evil kings whom God used, including Amon and Manasseh. God is pleased to use imperfect people, for it highlights His glory.

Biblical genealogies show God's grace. The fact that God uses imperfect people to accomplish His purposes reminds us that not only are God's purposes not contingent upon mankind but also God's grace extends to mankind. Just as God was patient with and forgave imperfect people in the past, so is God longsuffering toward us and full of grace. Note, too, that the Gentiles in Jesus' lineage hint at the universality of the gospel.

Biblical genealogies show that God cares about families. Just as we care about our own families, so God cares about His family. Observe that the Bible is full of family language, such as God adopting believers, God calling His children sons and daughters, and God inviting those in relationship with Him to call Him Father. Human families are the foundation of society, and God's family is the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Biblical genealogies show that God fulfills His promises. Note that the genealogies in Matt. 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–28 differ, for Matthew begins with Abraham and follows Joseph's line through one of David's sons. At the same time, Luke starts with Adam and follows

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Mary's line through another of David's sons. Yet, both genealogical lists show that Jesus was the fulfillment of promises God made to David in 2 Samuel 7:1–17.

So, for these five reasons, and indeed for others, we ought

not to view biblical genealogies as just a curiosity but as essential revelation in the Word of God. In reading through the account of the lineage of Christ in the Gospels, we can locate Him in history. More importantly, however, reading through and learning about Jesus' genealogy can help us to understand our own history, for, in addition to being our Savior, the Bible tells us that we have been adopted into God's family (cf. Eph. 1:5). Christ is our brother (cf. Heb. 2:11), and Jesus is our husband (cf. 2 Cor. 11:2). The book of life that will be read at Christ's second coming contains a much longer genealogical list—including the names of all believers—which will prove that those who have taken on the name of Christ are members of God's family.

Why Did Jesus Teach in Parables?

The Gospels record thirty-nine distinct parables of Jesus. These range in length from the Parable of the Old Garment, which is given in only one verse (cf. Luke 5:36), to the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which covers some twenty-one verses (cf. Luke 15:11–32). Some parables are unique, being only found in one of the Gospel narratives, while other parables appear in each of the Synoptic Gospels. Note that the Gospel of John contains no parables—at least not as parables are commonly understood—for John’s focus was more upon recording Jesus’ teaching narratives, especially to his disciples.

The word “parable” in Greek literally means “to come alongside.” Parables, then, were short stories given by Jesus in order “to come alongside” His listeners and to teach an important spiritual truth. Since they convey more than just a moral truth, parables are not fables; and since they focus upon more than just words and phrases, parables are not metaphors, similes, or word pictures. Indeed, parables are a unique genre of literature and they are the most common way Jesus taught, especially when speaking to large crowds (cf. Matt. 13:34). To modern readers, at first glance, parables may seem like colorful examples that clarify Jesus’ teachings. In a similar manner to sermon illustrations, then, contemporary Christians may assume that Jesus primarily used parables to explain His doctrines, which may have seemed complex to the common crowds. Yet is this a correct understanding of Jesus’ use of parables?

Observe that after giving the Parable of the Soils, which is recorded in all three of the Synoptic Gospels (cf. Matt. 13:3–23; Mark 4:2–32; Luke 8:4–15), and before He explained its meaning, Jesus was asked by His disciples, “Why do You speak to the crowds in parables?” (Matt. 13:10). The precise reason why the apostles asked this question is not stated; however, it may have been the case that the disciples were afraid the people did not understand Jesus’ teachings (cf. Mark 4:13). Regardless of the rationale for the disciples’ question, Christ’s answer about His use of parables is both surprising and instructive. Here Jesus replied that He taught in parables, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given” (Matt. 13:11).

... the reason why Jesus taught in parables was not to explain spiritual truths to the crowds, but to keep spiritual truths from the crowds.

In other words, the reason why Jesus taught in parables was not to explain spiritual truths to the crowds, but to keep spiritual truths from the crowds. Lest we doubt or misunderstand Christ’s answer here, Jesus noted that the veiling of spiritual truths from the unbelieving crowds is actually a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy given at Isa. 6:9–10. Note Luke’s account of this narrative, as he refers to Jesus’ citation of Isa. 6:9, and writes, “And Jesus said to the disciples, ‘To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, [so] that, “Seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand”’” (Luke 8:10; cf. Mark 4:11–12).

Yet this invites the question: Why would Jesus purposefully veil truth from unbelievers? By

way of response we can note that the condition of the unbelieving crowds was both a natural result of their own rejection of Christ's message, and a divine response of judicial blinding on account of their sin (cf. 2 Thess. 2:11–12). Indeed, whenever spiritual truth is communicated—be it plainly or in parables—acceptance will always result in understanding and growth (cf. Rom. 3:20; 10:17), while rejecting truth will always result in confusion and hardness of heart (cf. Ps. 81:12; Rom. 1:24). This idea is communicated throughout Scripture.

So, as we read Christ's parables in the Gospel narratives, let us be confident that while certain of the parables can be very challenging to understand, the Holy Spirit who indwells all of God's people will "guide [believers]. . . into all truth" (John 16:13) and God's Word—which contains parables—is truth (cf. John 17:17). Yet, if the parables of Christ make no sense to us, or if their meaning eludes others to whom we are ministering, let us consider Jesus' teaching about His rationale for speaking in parables. Indeed, we must always evaluate ourselves, and others, in light of God's Word in order to make sure that our lack of understanding of a given parable is not a symptom of a wider rejection of spiritual truth.