Life Application Bible Studies
LUKE
APPLICATION® BIBLE STUDIES

Part 1:
Complete text of Luke with study notes and features from the Life Application Study Bible

Part 2:
Thirteen lessons for individual or group study

Study questions written and edited by
Linda Chaffee Taylor
Rev. David R. Veerman
Dr. James C. Galvin
Dr. Bruce B. Barton
Daryl J. Lucas
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A NOTE TO READERS

The Holy Bible, New Living Translation, was first published in 1996. It quickly became one of the most popular Bible translations in the English-speaking world. While the NLT’s influence was rapidly growing, the Bible Translation Committee determined that an additional investment in scholarly review and text refinement could make it even better. So shortly after its initial publication, the committee began an eight-year process with the purpose of increasing the level of the NLT’s precision without sacrificing its easy-to-understand quality. This second-generation text was completed in 2004 and is reflected in this edition of the New Living Translation. An additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007.

The goal of any Bible translation is to convey the meaning and content of the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts as accurately as possible to contemporary readers. The challenge for our translators was to create a text that would communicate as clearly and powerfully to today’s readers as the original texts did to readers and listeners in the ancient biblical world. The resulting translation is easy to read and understand, while also accurately communicating the meaning and content of the original biblical texts. The NLT is a general-purpose text especially good for study, devotional reading, and reading aloud in worship services.

We believe that the New Living Translation—which combines the latest biblical scholarship with a clear, dynamic writing style—will communicate God’s word powerfully to all who read it. We publish it with the prayer that God will use it to speak his timeless truth to the church and the world in a fresh, new way.

The Publishers
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Translation Philosophy and Methodology

English Bible translations tend to be governed by one of two general translation theories. The first theory has been called “formal-equivalence,” “literal,” or “word-for-word” translation. According to this theory, the translator attempts to render each word of the original language into English and seeks to preserve the original syntax and sentence structure as much as possible in translation. The second theory has been called “dynamic-equivalence,” “functional-equivalence,” or “thought-for-thought” translation. The goal of this translation theory is to produce in English the closest natural equivalent of the message expressed by the original-language text, both in meaning and in style.

Both of these translation theories have their strengths. A formal-equivalence translation preserves aspects of the original text—including ancient idioms, term consistency, and original-language syntax—that are valuable for scholars and professional study. It allows a reader to trace formal elements of the original-language text through the English translation. A dynamic-equivalence translation, on the other hand, focuses on translating the message of the original-language text. It ensures that the meaning of the text is readily apparent to the contemporary reader. This allows the message to come through with immediacy, without requiring the reader to struggle with foreign idioms and awkward syntax. It also facilitates serious study of the text’s message and clarity in both devotional and public reading.

The pure application of either of these translation philosophies would create translations at opposite ends of the translation spectrum. But in reality, all translations contain a mixture of these two philosophies. A purely formal-equivalence translation would be unintelligible in English, and a purely dynamic-equivalence translation would risk being unfaithful to the original. That is why translations shaped by dynamic-equivalence theory are usually quite literal when the original text is relatively clear, and the translations shaped by formal-equivalence theory are sometimes quite dynamic when the original text is obscure.

The translators of the New Living Translation set out to render the message of the original texts of Scripture into clear, contemporary English. As they did so, they kept the concerns of both formal-equivalence and dynamic-equivalence in mind. On the one hand, they translated as simply and literally as possible when that approach yielded an accurate, clear, and natural English text. Many words and phrases were rendered literally and consistently into English, preserving essential literary and rhetorical devices, ancient metaphors, and word choices that give structure to the text and provide echoes of meaning from one passage to the next.

On the other hand, the translators rendered the message more dynamically when the literal rendering was hard to understand, was misleading, or yielded archaic or foreign wording. They clarified difficult metaphors and terms to aid in the reader’s understanding. The translators first struggled with the meaning of the words and phrases in the ancient context; then they rendered the message into clear, natural English. Their goal was to be both faithful to the ancient texts and eminently readable. The result is a translation that is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful.

Translation Process and Team

To produce an accurate translation of the Bible into contemporary English, the translation team needed the skills necessary to enter into the thought patterns of the ancient authors and then to render their ideas, connotations, and effects into clear, contemporary English.
To begin this process, qualified biblical scholars were needed to interpret the meaning of the original text and to check it against our base English translation. In order to guard against personal and theological biases, the scholars needed to represent a diverse group of evangelicals who would employ the best exegetical tools. Then to work alongside the scholars, skilled English stylists were needed to shape the text into clear, contemporary English.

With these concerns in mind, the Bible Translation Committee recruited teams of scholars that represented a broad spectrum of denominations, theological perspectives, and backgrounds within the worldwide evangelical community. Each book of the Bible was assigned to three different scholars with proven expertise in the book or group of books to be reviewed. Each of these scholars made a thorough review of a base translation and submitted suggested revisions to the appropriate Senior Translator. The Senior Translator then reviewed and summarized these suggestions and proposed a first-draft revision of the base text. This draft served as the basis for several additional phases of exegetical and stylistic committee review. Then the Bible Translation Committee jointly reviewed and approved every verse of the final translation.

Throughout the translation and editing process, the Senior Translators and their scholar teams were given a chance to review the editing done by the team of stylists. This ensured that exegetical errors would not be introduced late in the process and that the entire Bible Translation Committee was happy with the final result. By choosing a team of qualified scholars and skilled stylists and by setting up a process that allowed their interaction throughout the process, the New Living Translation has been refined to preserve the essential formal elements of the original biblical texts, while also creating a clear, understandable English text.

The New Living Translation was first published in 1996. Shortly after its initial publication, the Bible Translation Committee began a process of further committee review and translation refinement. The purpose of this continued revision was to increase the level of precision without sacrificing the text’s easy-to-understand quality. This second-edition text was completed in 2004, and an additional update with minor changes was subsequently introduced in 2007. This printing of the New Living Translation reflects the updated 2007 text.

**Written to Be Read Aloud**
It is evident in Scripture that the biblical documents were written to be read aloud, often in public worship (see Nehemiah 8; Luke 4:16-20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Revelation 1:3). It is still the case today that more people will hear the Bible read aloud in church than are likely to read it for themselves. Therefore, a new translation must communicate with clarity and power when it is read publicly. Clarity was a primary goal for the NLT translators, not only to facilitate private reading and understanding, but also to ensure that it would be excellent for public reading and make an immediate and powerful impact on any listener.

**The Texts behind the New Living Translation**
The Old Testament translators used the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible as represented in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (1977), with its extensive system of textual notes; this is an update of Rudolf Kittel’s *Biblia Hebraica* (Stuttgart, 1937). The translators also further compared the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Septuagint and other Greek manuscripts, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Syriac Peshitta, the Latin Vulgate, and any other versions or manuscripts that shed light on the meaning of difficult passages.

The New Testament translators used the two standard editions of the Greek New Testament: the *Greek New Testament*, published by the United Bible Societies (UBS, fourth revised edition, 1993), and *Novum Testamentum Graece*, edited by Nestle and Aland (NA, twenty-seventh edition, 1993). These two editions, which have the same text but differ in punctuation and textual notes, represent, for the most part, the best in modern textual scholarship. However, in cases where strong textual or other scholarly evidence supported the decision, the translators sometimes chose to differ from the UBS and NA Greek texts and followed variant readings found in other ancient witnesses. Significant textual variants of this sort are always noted in the textual notes of the New Living Translation.

**Translation Issues**
The translators have made a conscious effort to provide a text that can be easily understood by the typical reader of modern English. To this end, we sought to use only vocabulary and
language structures in common use today. We avoided using language likely to become quickly dated or that reflects only a narrow subdialect of English, with the goal of making the New Living Translation as broadly useful and timeless as possible.

But our concern for readability goes beyond the concerns of vocabulary and sentence structure. We are also concerned about historical and cultural barriers to understanding the Bible, and we have sought to translate terms shrouded in history and culture in ways that can be immediately understood. To this end:

- We have converted ancient weights and measures (for example, “ephah” [a unit of dry volume] or “cubit” [a unit of length]) to modern English (American) equivalents, since the ancient measures are not generally meaningful to today’s readers. Then in the textual footnotes we offer the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek measures, along with modern metric equivalents.

- Instead of translating ancient currency values literally, we have expressed them in common terms that communicate the message. For example, in the Old Testament, “ten shekels of silver” becomes “ten pieces of silver” to convey the intended message. In the New Testament, we have often translated the “denarius” as “the normal daily wage” to facilitate understanding. Then a footnote offers: “Greek a denarius, the payment for a full day’s wage.” In general, we give a clear English rendering and then state the literal Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek in a textual footnote.

- Since the names of Hebrew months are unknown to most contemporary readers, and since the Hebrew lunar calendar fluctuates from year to year in relation to the solar calendar used today, we have looked for clear ways to communicate the time of year the Hebrew months (such as Abib) refer to. When an expanded or interpretive rendering is given in the text, a textual note gives the literal rendering. Where it is possible to define a specific ancient date in terms of our modern calendar, we use modern dates in the text. A textual footnote then gives the literal Hebrew date and states the rationale for our rendering. For example, Ezra 6:15 pinpoints the date when the postexilic Temple was completed in Jerusalem: “the third day of the month Adar.” This was during the sixth year of King Darius’s reign (that is, 515 b.c.). We have translated that date as March 12, with a footnote giving the Hebrew and identifying the year as 515 b.c.

- Since ancient references to the time of day differ from our modern methods of denoting time, we have used renderings that are instantly understandable to the modern reader. Accordingly, we have rendered specific times of day by using approximate equivalents in terms of our common “o’clock” system. On occasion, translations such as “at dawn the next morning” or “as the sun was setting” have been used when the biblical reference is more general.

- When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the message of the text, its meaning is often illuminated with a textual footnote. For example, in Exodus 2:10 the text reads: “The princess named him Moses, for she explained, ‘I lifted him out of the water.’ ” The accompanying footnote reads: “Moses sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to lift out.’ ”

- Many words and phrases carry a great deal of cultural meaning that was obvious to the original readers but needs explanation in our own culture. For example, the phrase “they beat their breasts” (Luke 23:48) in ancient times meant that people were very upset, often in mourning. In our translation we chose to translate this phrase dynamically for clarity: “They went home in deep sorrow.” Then we included a footnote with the literal Greek, which reads: “Greek went home beating their breasts.” In other similar cases, however, we have sometimes chosen to illuminate the existing literal expression to make it immediately understandable. For example, here we might have expanded the literal Greek phrase to read: “They went home
beating their breasts in sorrow." If we had done this, we would not have included a textual footnote, since the literal Greek clearly appears in translation.

- Metaphorical language is sometimes difficult for contemporary readers to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the meaning of a metaphor. For example, the ancient poet writes, "Your neck is like the tower of David" (Song of Songs 4:4). We have rendered it "Your neck is as beautiful as the tower of David" to clarify the intended positive meaning of the simile. Another example comes in Ecclesiastes 12:3, which can be literally rendered: "Remember him . . . when the grinding women cease because they are few, and the women who look through the windows see dimly." We have rendered it: "Remember him before your teeth—your few remaining servants—stop grinding; and before your eyes—the women looking through the windows—see dimly." We clarified such metaphors only when we believed a typical reader might be confused by the literal text.

- When the content of the original language text is poetic in character, we have rendered it in English poetic form. We sought to break lines in ways that clarify and highlight the relationships between phrases of the text. Hebrew poetry often uses parallelism, a literary form where a second phrase (or in some instances a third or fourth) echoes the initial phrase in some way. In Hebrew parallelism, the subsequent parallel phrases continue, while also furthering and sharpening, the thought expressed in the initial line or phrase. Whenever possible, we sought to represent these parallel phrases in natural poetic English.

- The Greek term hoi Ioudaioi is literally translated "the Jews" in many English translations. In the Gospel of John, however, this term doesn’t always refer to the Jewish people generally. In some contexts, it refers more particularly to the Jewish religious leaders. We have attempted to capture the meaning in these different contexts by using terms such as "the people" (with a footnote: Greek the Jewish people) or "the religious leaders," where appropriate.

- One challenge we faced was how to translate accurately the ancient biblical text that was originally written in a context where male-oriented terms were used to refer to humanity generally. We needed to respect the nature of the ancient context while also trying to make the translation clear to a modern audience that tends to read male-oriented language as applying only to males. Often the original text, though using masculine nouns and pronouns, clearly intends that the message be applied to both men and women. A typical example is found in the New Testament letters, where the believers are called "brothers" (adelphoi). Yet it is clear from the content of these letters that they were addressed to all the believers—male and female. Thus, we have usually translated this Greek word as "brothers and sisters" in order to represent the historical situation more accurately.

  We have also been sensitive to passages where the text applies generally to human beings or to the human condition. In some instances we have used plural pronouns (they, them) in place of the masculine singular (he, him). For example, a traditional rendering of Proverbs 22:6 is: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it." We have rendered it: "Direct your children onto the right path, and when they are older, they will not leave it." At times, we have also replaced third person pronouns with the second person to ensure clarity. A traditional rendering of Proverbs 26:27 is: "He who digs a pit will fall into it, and he who rolls a stone, it will come back on him." We have rendered it: "If you set a trap for others, you will get caught in it yourself. If you roll a boulder down on others, it will crush you instead."

  We should emphasize, however, that all masculine nouns and pronouns used to represent God (for example, "Father") have been maintained without exception. All decisions of this kind have been driven by the concern to reflect accurately the intended meaning of the original texts of Scripture.

**Lexical Consistency in Terminology**

For the sake of clarity, we have translated certain original-language terms consistently, especially within synoptic passages and for commonly repeated rhetorical phrases, and within
certain word categories such as divine names and non-theological technical terminology (e.g., liturgical, legal, cultural, zoological, and botanical terms). For theological terms, we have allowed a greater semantic range of acceptable English words or phrases for a single Hebrew or Greek word. We have avoided some theological terms that are not readily understood by many modern readers. For example, we avoided using words such as “justification” and “sanctification,” which are carryovers from Latin translations. In place of these words, we have provided renderings such as “made right with God” and “made holy.”

The Spelling of Proper Names
Many individuals in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, are known by more than one name (e.g., Uzziah/Azariah). For the sake of clarity, we have tried to use a single spelling for any one individual, footnoting the literal spelling whenever we differ from it. This is especially helpful in delineating the kings of Israel and Judah. King Joash/Jehoash of Israel has been consistently called Jehoash, while King Joash/Jehoash of Judah is called Joash. A similar distinction has been used to distinguish between Joram/Jehoram of Israel and Joram/Jehoram of Judah. All such decisions were made with the goal of clarifying the text for the reader. When the ancient biblical writers clearly had a theological purpose in their choice of a variant name (e.g., Esh-baal/Ishbosheth), the different names have been maintained with an explanatory footnote.

For the names Jacob and Israel, which are used interchangeably for both the individual patriarch and the nation, we generally render it “Israel” when it refers to the nation and “Jacob” when it refers to the individual. When our rendering of the name differs from the underlying Hebrew text, we provide a textual footnote, which includes this explanation: “The names ‘Jacob’ and ‘Israel’ are often interchanged throughout the Old Testament, referring sometimes to the individual patriarch and sometimes to the nation.”

The Rendering of Divine Names
All appearances of ‘el, ‘elohim, or ‘eloah have been translated “God,” except where the context demands the translation “god(s).” We have generally rendered the tetragrammaton (YHWH) consistently as “the Lord,” utilizing a form with small capitals that is common among English translations. This will distinguish it from the name ‘adonai, which we render “Lord.” When ‘adonai and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Sovereign Lord.” This also distinguishes ‘adonai YHWH from cases where YHWH appears with ‘elohim, which is rendered “Lord God.” When YH (the short form of YHWH) and YHWH appear together, we have rendered it “Lord God.” When YHWH appears with the term tseba’oth, we have rendered it “Lord of Heaven’s Armies” to translate the meaning of the name. In a few cases, we have utilized the transliteration, Yahweh, when the personal character of the name is being invoked in contrast to another divine name or the name of some other god (for example, see Exodus 3:15; 6:2-3).

In the New Testament, the Greek word christos has been translated as “Messiah” when the context assumes a Jewish audience. When a Gentile audience can be assumed, christos has been translated as “Christ.” The Greek word kurios is consistently translated “Lord,” except that it is translated “Lord” wherever the New Testament text explicitly quotes from the Old Testament, and the text there has it in small capitals.

Textual Footnotes
The New Living Translation provides several kinds of textual footnotes, all designated in the text with an asterisk:

- When for the sake of clarity the NLT renders a difficult or potentially confusing phrase dynamically, we generally give the literal rendering in a textual footnote. This allows the reader to see the literal source of our dynamic rendering and how our translation relates to other more literal translations. These notes are prefaced with “Hebrew,” “Aramaic,” or “Greek,” identifying the language of the underlying source text. For example, in Acts 2:42 we translated the literal “breaking of bread” (from the Greek) as “the Lord’s Supper” to clarify that this verse refers to the ceremonial practice of the church rather than just an ordinary meal. Then we attached a footnote to “the Lord’s Supper,” which reads: “Greek the breaking of bread.”
Textual footnotes are also used to show alternative renderings, prefaced with the word “Or.” These normally occur for passages where an aspect of the meaning is debated. On occasion, we also provide notes on words or phrases that represent a departure from long-standing tradition. These notes are prefaced with “Traditionally rendered.” For example, the footnote to the translation “serious skin disease” at Leviticus 13:2 says: “Traditionally rendered leprosy. The Hebrew word used throughout this passage is used to describe various skin diseases.”

When our translators follow a textual variant that differs significantly from our standard Hebrew or Greek texts (listed earlier), we document that difference with a footnote. We also footnote cases when the NLT excludes a passage that is included in the Greek text known as the Textus Receptus (and familiar to readers through its translation in the King James Version). In such cases, we offer a translation of the excluded text in a footnote, even though it is generally recognized as a later addition to the Greek text and not part of the original Greek New Testament.

All Old Testament passages that are quoted in the New Testament are identified by a textual footnote at the New Testament location. When the New Testament clearly quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, and when it differs significantly in wording from the Hebrew text, we also place a textual footnote at the Old Testament location. This note includes a rendering of the Greek version, along with a cross-reference to the New Testament passage(s) where it is cited (for example, see notes on Psalms 8:2; 53:3; Proverbs 3:12).

Some textual footnotes provide cultural and historical information on places, things, and people in the Bible that are probably obscure to modern readers. Such notes should aid the reader in understanding the message of the text. For example, in Acts 12:1, “King Herod” is named in this translation as “King Herod Agrippa” and is identified in a footnote as being “the nephew of Herod Antipas and a grandson of Herod the Great.”

When the meaning of a proper name (or a wordplay inherent in a proper name) is relevant to the meaning of the text, it is either illuminated with a textual footnote or included within parentheses in the text itself. For example, the footnote concerning the name “Eve” at Genesis 3:20 reads: “Eve sounds like a Hebrew term that means ‘to give life.’” This wordplay in the Hebrew illuminates the meaning of the text, which goes on to say that Eve “would be the mother of all who live.”

As we submit this translation for publication, we recognize that any translation of the Scriptures is subject to limitations and imperfections. Anyone who has attempted to communicate the richness of God’s Word into another language will realize it is impossible to make a perfect translation. Recognizing these limitations, we sought God’s guidance and wisdom throughout this project. Now we pray that he will accept our efforts and use this translation for the benefit of the church and of all people.

We pray that the New Living Translation will overcome some of the barriers of history, culture, and language that have kept people from reading and understanding God’s Word. We hope that readers unfamiliar with the Bible will find the words clear and easy to understand and that readers well versed in the Scriptures will gain a fresh perspective. We pray that readers will gain insight and wisdom for living, but most of all that they will meet the God of the Bible and be forever changed by knowing him.

The Bible Translation Committee
October 2007
WHY THE
LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE
IS UNIQUE

Have you ever opened your Bible and asked the following:

- What does this passage really mean?
- How does it apply to my life?
- Why does some of the Bible seem irrelevant?
- What do these ancient cultures have to do with today?
- I love God; why can't I understand what he is saying to me through his word?
- What's going on in the lives of these Bible people?

Many Christians do not read the Bible regularly. Why? Because in the pressures of daily living they cannot find a connection between the timeless principles of Scripture and the ever-present problems of day-by-day living.

God urges us to apply his word (Isaiah 42:23; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:4), but too often we stop at accumulating Bible knowledge. This is why the Life Application Study Bible was developed—to show how to put into practice what we have learned.

Applying God's word is a vital part of one's relationship with God; it is the evidence that we are obeying him. The difficulty in applying the Bible is not with the Bible itself, but with the reader’s inability to bridge the gap between the past and present, the conceptual and practical. When we don't or can't do this, spiritual dryness, shallowness, and indifference are the results.

The words of Scripture itself cry out to us, "But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves" (James 1:22). The Life Application Study Bible helps us to obey God's word. Developed by an interdenominational team of pastors, scholars, family counselors, and a national organization dedicated to promoting God's word and spreading the gospel, the Life Application Study Bible took many years to complete. All the work was reviewed by several renowned theologians under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Kantzer.

The Life Application Study Bible does what a good resource Bible should: It helps you understand the context of a passage, gives important background and historical information, explains difficult words and phrases, and helps you see the interrelationship of Scripture. But it does much more. The Life Application Study Bible goes deeper into God's word, helping you discover the timeless truth being communicated, see the relevance for your life, and make a personal application. While some study Bibles attempt application, over 75 percent of this Bible is application oriented. The notes answer the questions "So what?" and "What does this passage mean to me, my family, my friends, my job, my neighborhood, my church, my country?"

Imagine reading a familiar passage of Scripture and gaining fresh insight, as if it were the first time you had ever read it. How much richer your life would be if you left each Bible reading with a new perspective and a small change for the better. A small change every day adds up to a changed life—and that is the very purpose of Scripture.
WHAT IS APPLICATION?

The best way to define application is to first determine what it is not. Application is not just accumulating knowledge. Accumulating knowledge helps us discover and understand facts and concepts, but it stops there. History is filled with philosophers who knew what the Bible said but failed to apply it to their lives, keeping them from believing and changing. Many think that understanding is the end goal of Bible study, but it is really only the beginning.

Application is not just illustration. Illustration only tells us how someone else handled a similar situation. While we may empathize with that person, we still have little direction for our personal situation.

Application is not just making a passage “relevant.” Making the Bible relevant only helps us to see that the same lessons that were true in Bible times are true today; it does not show us how to apply them to the problems and pressures of our individual lives.

What, then, is application? Application begins by knowing and understanding God’s word and its timeless truths. But you cannot stop there. If you do, God’s word may not change your life, and it may become dull, difficult, tedious, and tiring. A good application focuses the truth of God’s word, shows the reader what to do about what is being read, and motivates the reader to respond to what God is teaching. All three are essential to application.

Application is putting into practice what we already know (see Mark 4:24 and Hebrews 5:14) and answering the question “So what?” by confronting us with the right questions and motivating us to take action (see 1 John 2:5-6 and James 2:26). Application is deeply personal—unique for each individual. It makes a relevant truth a personal truth and involves developing a strategy and action plan to live your life in harmony with the Bible. It is the biblical “how to” of life.

You may ask, “How can your application notes be relevant to my life?” Each application note has three parts: (1) an explanation, which ties the note directly to the Scripture passage and sets up the truth that is being taught; (2) the bridge, which explains the timeless truth and makes it relevant for today; (3) the application, which shows you how to take the timeless truth and apply it to your personal situation. No note, by itself, can apply Scripture directly to your life. It can only teach, direct, lead, guide, inspire, recommend, and urge. It can give you the resources and direction you need to apply the Bible, but only you can take these resources and put them into practice.

A good note, therefore should not only give you knowledge and understanding but point you to application. Before you buy any kind of resource study Bible, you should evaluate the notes and ask the following questions: (1) Does the note contain enough information to help me understand the point of the Scripture passage? (2) Does the note assume I know more than I do? (3) Does the note avoid denominational bias? (4) Do the notes touch most of life’s experiences? (5) Does the note help me apply God’s word?
NOTES
In addition to providing the reader with many application notes, the Life Application Study Bible also offers several kinds of explanatory notes, which help the reader understand culture, history, context, difficult-to-understand passages, background, places, theological concepts, and the relationship of various passages in Scripture to other passages.

BOOK INTRODUCTIONS
Each book introduction is divided into several easy-to-find parts:

Timeline. A guide that puts the Bible book into its historical setting. It lists the key events and the dates when they occurred.

Vital Statistics. A list of straight facts about the book—those pieces of information you need to know at a glance.

Overview. A summary of the book with general lessons and applications that can be learned from the book as a whole.

Blueprint. The outline of the book. It is printed in easy-to-understand language and is designed for easy memorization. To the right of each main heading is a key lesson that is taught in that particular section.

Megathemes. A section that gives the main themes of the Bible book, explains their significance, and then tells you why they are still important for us today.

Map. If included, this shows the key places found in that book and retells the story of the book from a geographical point of view.

OUTLINE
The Life Application Study Bible has a new, custom-made outline that was designed specifically from an application point of view. Several unique features should be noted:

1. To avoid confusion and to aid memory work, the book outline has only three levels for headings. Main outline heads are marked with a capital letter. Subheads are marked by a number. Minor explanatory heads have no letter or number.

2. Each main outline head marked by a letter also has a brief paragraph below it summarizing the Bible text and offering a general application.

3. Parallel passages are listed where they apply.

PERSONALITY PROFILES
Among the unique features of this Bible are the profiles of key Bible people, including their strengths and weaknesses, greatest accomplishments and mistakes, and key lessons from their lives.
FEATURES OF THE LIFE APPLICATION STUDY BIBLE

MAPS
The *Life Application Study Bible* has a thorough and comprehensive Bible atlas built right into the book. There are two kinds of maps: a book-introduction map, telling the story of the book, and thumbnail maps in the notes, plotting most geographic movements.

CHARTS AND DIAGRAMS
Many charts and diagrams are included to help the reader better visualize difficult concepts or relationships. Most charts not only present the needed information but show the significance of the information as well.

CROSS-REFERENCES
An updated, exhaustive cross-reference system in the margins of the Bible text helps the reader find related passages quickly.

TEXTUAL NOTES
Directly related to the text of the New Living Translation, the textual notes provide explanations on certain wording in the translation, alternate translations, and information about readings in the ancient manuscripts.

HIGHLIGHTED NOTES
In each Bible study lesson, you will be asked to read specific notes as part of your preparation. These notes have each been highlighted by a bullet (●) so that you can find them easily.
LUKE
EVERY birth is a miracle, and every child is a gift from God. But nearly 20 centuries ago, the miracle of miracles occurred. A baby was born, but he was the Son of God. The Gospels tell of this birth, but Dr. Luke, as though he were the attending physician, provides most of the details surrounding this awesome occasion. With a divine Father and a human mother, Jesus entered history—God in the flesh.

Luke affirms Jesus’ divinity, but the real emphasis of his book is on Jesus’ humanity—Jesus, the Son of God, is also the Son of Man. As a doctor, Luke was a man of science, and as a Greek, he was a man of detail. It is not surprising, then, that he begins by outlining his extensive research and explaining that he is reporting the facts (1:1–4). Luke also was a close friend and traveling companion of Paul, so he could interview the other disciples, had access to other historical accounts, and was an eyewitness to the birth and growth of the early church. His Gospel and book of Acts are reliable, historical documents.

Luke’s story begins with angels appearing to Zechariah and then to Mary, telling them of the upcoming births of their sons. From Zechariah and Elizabeth would come John the Baptist, who would prepare the way for Christ. And Mary would conceive a child by the Holy Spirit and bear Jesus, the Son of God. Soon after John’s birth, Caesar Augustus declared a census, and so Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, the town of David, their ancient ancestor. There the child was born. Angels announced the joyous event to shepherds, who rushed to the manger. When the shepherds left, they went praising God and spreading the news. Eight days later, Jesus was circumcised and then dedicated to God in the Temple, where Simeon and Anna confirmed Jesus’ identity as the Savior, their Messiah.

Luke gives us a glimpse of Jesus at age 12—discussing theology with the Jewish teachers of the law at the Temple (2:41–52). Eighteen years later Jesus went out in the wilderness to be baptized by John the Baptist before beginning his public ministry (3:1–23). At this point, Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy on his stepfather Joseph’s side, through David and Abraham back to Adam, underscoring Jesus’ identity as the Son of Man (3:23–38).

After the Temptation (4:1–13), Jesus returned to Galilee to preach, teach, and heal (4:14ff). During this time, he began gathering his group of 12 disciples (5:1–11, 27–29). Later Jesus commissioned the disciples and sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. When they returned, Jesus revealed to them his mission, his true identity, and what it meant to be his disciple (9:18–62). His mission would take him to Jerusalem (9:51–53), where he would be rejected, tried, and crucified.

While Jesus carried his own cross to Golgotha, some women in Jerusalem wept for him, but Jesus told them to weep for themselves and for their children (23:28). Luke’s Gospel does not end in sadness, however. It concludes with the thrilling account of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, his appearances to the disciples, and his promise to send the Holy Spirit (24:1–53). Read Luke’s beautifully written and accurate account of the life of Jesus, Son of Man and Son of God. Then praise God for sending the Savior—our risen and triumphant Lord—for all people.
THE BLUEPRINT


From an infant who could do nothing on his own, Jesus grew to become completely able to fulfill his mission on earth. He was fully human, developing in all ways like us. Yet he remained fully God. He took no shortcuts and was not isolated from the pressures and temptations of life. There are no shortcuts for us either as we prepare for lives of service to God.


Jesus taught great crowds of people, especially through parables, which are stories that illustrate great truths. But only those with ears to hear will understand. We should pray that God’s Spirit would help us understand the implications of these truths for our lives so we can become more and more like Jesus.

C. DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, THE SAVIOR (22:1—24:53)

The Savior of the world was arrested and executed. But death could not destroy him, and Jesus came back to life and ascended to heaven. In Luke’s careful, historical account, we receive the facts about Jesus’ resurrection. We must not only believe that these facts are true, but we must also trust Christ as our Savior. It is shortsighted to neglect the facts, but how sad it is to accept the facts and neglect the forgiveness that Jesus offers to each of us.

MEGATHEMES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
<th>IMPORTANCE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus Christ, the Savior</td>
<td>Luke describes how God’s Son entered human history. Jesus lived as the perfect example of a human. After a perfect ministry, he provided a perfect sacrifice for our sin so we could be saved.</td>
<td>Jesus is our perfect leader and Savior. He offers forgiveness to all who will accept him as Lord of their lives and believe that what he says is true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>Luke was a medical doctor and historian. He put great emphasis on dates and details, connecting Jesus to events and people in history.</td>
<td>Luke gives details so we can believe in the reliability of the history of Jesus’ life. Even more important, we can believe with certainty that Jesus is God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Jesus was deeply interested in people and relationships. He showed warm concern for his followers and friends—men, women, and children.</td>
<td>Jesus’ love for people is good news for everyone. His message is for all people in every nation. Each one of us has an opportunity to respond to him in faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>As a perfect human, Jesus showed tender sympathy to the poor, the despised, the hurt, and the sinful. No one was rejected or ignored by him.</td>
<td>Jesus is more than a good teacher—he cares for you. Because of his deep love for you, he can satisfy your needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit was present at Jesus’ birth, baptism, ministry, and resurrection. As a perfect example for us, Jesus lived in dependence on the Holy Spirit.</td>
<td>The Holy Spirit was sent by God as confirmation of Jesus’ authority. The Holy Spirit is given to enable people to live for Christ. By faith we can have the indwelling Holy Spirit’s presence and power to witness and to serve.</td>
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Luke gives us the most detailed account of Jesus’ birth. In describing Jesus’ birth, childhood, and development, Luke lifts up the humanity of Jesus. Our Savior was the ideal human. Fully prepared, the ideal human was now ready to live the perfect life.

1 Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. 2 They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early

- 1:1, 2 Luke tells Jesus’ story from the unique perspective of a Gentile, a physician, and the first historian of the early church. Though not an eyewitness of Jesus’ ministry, Luke nevertheless was concerned that eyewitness accounts be preserved accurately and that the foundations of Christian belief be transmitted intact to the next generation. In Luke’s Gospel are many of Jesus’ parables. In addition, more than any other Gospel, it gives specific instances of Jesus’ concern for women.
• 1:1-4 There was a lot of interest in Jesus, and many people had written firsthand accounts about him. Luke may have used these accounts and all other available resources as material for an accurate and complete account of Jesus’ life, teachings, and ministry. Because truth was important to Luke, he relied heavily on eye-witness accounts. Christianity doesn’t say, “Close your eyes and believe,” but rather, “Check it out for yourself.” The Bible encourages us to investigate its claims thoroughly (John 1:14; 21:24; Acts 17:11, 12) because your conclusion about Jesus is a life-and-death matter.

• 1:1-4 Theophilus means “one who loves God.” The book of Acts, also written by Luke, is likewise addressed to Theophilus. This preface may be a general dedication to all Christian readers. Theophilus may have been Luke’s patron, who helped to finance the book’s writing. More likely, Theophilus was a Roman acquaintance of Luke’s with a strong interest in the new Christian religion.

• 1:3, 4 As a medical doctor, Luke knew the importance of being thorough. He used his skills in observation and analysis to thoroughly investigate the stories about Jesus. His diagnosis: *The Good News of Jesus Christ is true!* You can read Luke’s account of Jesus’ life with confidence that it was written by a clear thinker and a thoughtful researcher. Because the Good News is founded on historical truth, our spiritual growth must involve careful, disciplined, and thorough investigation of God’s Word so that we can understand how God has acted in history. If this kind of study is not part of your life, find a pastor, teacher, or even a book to help you get started and to guide you in this important part of Christian growth.

• 1:5 This was Herod the Great, confirmed by the Roman Senate as king of the Jews. Only half-Jewish himself and eager to please his Roman superiors, Herod expanded and beautified the Jerusalem Temple—but he placed a Roman eagle over the entrance. When he helped the Jews, it was for political purposes and not because he cared about their God. Later, Herod the Great would order a massacre of infants in a futile attempt to kill the infant Jesus, whom some were calling the new “king of the Jews” (Matthew 2:2).

• 1:5 A Jewish priest was a minister of God who worked at the Temple managing its upkeep, teaching the people the Scriptures, and directing the worship services. At this time there were about 20,000 priests throughout the country—far too many to minister in the Temple at one time. Therefore the priests were divided into 24 separate groups of about 1,000 each, according to David’s instructions (1 Chronicles 24:3-19).

Zechariah was a member of the order of Abijah, on duty this particular week. Each morning a priest was to enter the Holy Place in the Temple and burn incense. The priests would cast lots to decide who would enter the inner sanctuary, and one day the lot fell to Zechariah. But it was not by chance that Zechariah was on duty and that he was chosen that day to enter the Holy Place—perhaps a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. God was guiding the events of history to prepare the way for Jesus to come to earth.

• 1:8 Zechariah and Elizabeth didn’t merely go through the motions in following God’s laws; they backed up their outward compliance with inward obedience. Unlike the religious leaders whom Jesus called hypocrites, Zechariah and Elizabeth did not stop with the letter of the law. Their obedience was from the heart, and that is why they are called “righteous in God’s eyes.”

• 1:7 God answers prayer in his own way and in his own time. He worked in an “impossible” situation—Elizabeth’s age and barrenness—to bring about the fulfillment of all the prophecies concerning the Messiah. If you want to have your prayers answered, you must be open to what God can do in impossible situations. And you must wait for God to work in his way and in his time.

• 1:9 Incense was burned in the Temple twice daily (Exodus 30:7-10). When the people saw the smoke from the burning incense, they prayed. The smoke drifting heavenward symbolized their prayers ascending to God’s throne.

• 1:11, 12 Angels are spirit beings who live in God’s presence and do his will. Only two angels are mentioned by name in Scripture—Michael and Gabriel—but there are many who act as God’s messengers. Here, Gabriel (1:19) delivered a special message to Zechariah. This was not a dream or a vision. The angel appeared in visible form and spoke audible words to the priest.

• 1:13 While burning incense on the altar, Zechariah was also praying, most likely for the coming of the Messiah to his people. How odd it must have seemed that the angel would say that his prayer was answered and Zechariah would soon have a son. Yet the greatest desire of Zechariah’s heart—to have a son—would come true. At the same time, the answer to the nation’s prayer for the Messiah would also come true. Zechariah’s son would grow up to prepare the way for the Messiah.

• 1:13 John means “the Lord is gracious,” and Jesus means “the Lord saves.” Both names were prescribed by God, not
chosen by human parents. Throughout the Gospels, God acts graciously and saves his people. He will not withhold salvation from anyone who sincerely comes to him.

1:15 John was set apart for special service to God. He may have been forbidden to drink wine as part of the Nazirite vow, an ancient vow of consecration to God (see Numbers 6:1-8). Samson (Judges 13) was under the Nazirite vow, and Samuel may have been also (1 Samuel 1:11).

1:15 This is Luke’s first mention of the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity. Luke refers to the Holy Spirit more than any other Gospel writer. Because Luke also wrote the book of Acts, we know he was thoroughly informed about the work of the Holy Spirit. Luke recognized and emphasized the Holy Spirit’s work in directing the beginnings of Christianity and in guiding the early church. The presence of the Spirit was God’s gift to the entire church at Pentecost. Prior to that, God’s Spirit was given to the faithful for special tasks. We need the Holy Spirit’s help to do God’s work effectively.
He will be a man with the spirit and power of Elijah. He will prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children,* and he will cause those who are rebellious to accept the wisdom of the godly.*

Zechariah said to the angel, “How can I be sure this will happen? I’m an old man now, and my wife is also well along in years.”

Then the angel said, “I am Gabriel! I stand in the very presence of God. It was he who sent me to bring you this good news! But now, since you didn’t believe what I said, you will be silent and unable to speak until the child is born. For my words will certainly be fulfilled at the proper time.”

Meanwhile, the people were waiting for Zechariah to come out of the sanctuary, wondering why he was taking so long. When he finally did come out, he couldn’t speak to them. Then they realized from his gestures and his silence that he must have seen a vision in the sanctuary.

When Zechariah’s week of service in the Temple was over, he returned home. Soon afterward his wife, Elizabeth, became pregnant and went into seclusion for five months.

“How kind the Lord is!” she exclaimed. “He has taken away my disgrace of having no children.”

An Angel Promises the Birth of Jesus to Mary (5)

In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel* forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

1:17 See Mal 4:5-6. 1:28 Some manuscripts add Blessed are you among women. 1:33 Greek over the house of Jacob.

1:17 John’s role was to be almost identical to that of an Old Testament prophet: to encourage people to turn away from sin and back to God. John is often compared to the great prophet Elijah, who was known for standing up to evil rulers (Malachi 4:5; Matthew 11:14-17; 17:10-13). See Elijah’s Profile in 1 Kings 17, p. 545.

1:18-20 When told he would have a son, Zechariah doubted the angel’s word. From Zechariah’s human perspective, his doubts were understandable—but with God, anything is possible. What God promises, he delivers. And God delivers on time! You can have complete confidence that God will keep his promises. Their fulfillment may not be the next day, but they will be “at the proper time.” If you are waiting for God to answer some request or to fill some need, remain patient. No matter how impossible God’s promises may seem, what he has said in his Word will come true at the right time.

1:21 The people were waiting outside for Zechariah to come out and pronounce the customary blessing upon them as found in Numbers 6:24-26.

1:25 Zechariah and Elizabeth were both godly people, yet they were suffering. Some Jews at that time did not believe in a bodily resurrection, so their hope of immortality was in their children. In addition, children cared for their parents in their old age and added to the family’s financial security and social status. Children were considered a blessing, and childlessness was seen as a curse. Zechariah and Elizabeth had been childless for many years, and at this time they were too old to expect any change in their situation. They felt humiliated and hopeless. But God was waiting for the right time to encourage them and take away their disgrace.

1:26 Gabriel appeared not only to Zechariah and to Mary but also to the prophet Daniel more than 500 years earlier (Daniel 8:15-17; 9:21). Each time Gabriel appeared, he brought important messages from God.

1:26 Nazareth, Joseph and Mary’s hometown, was a long way from Jerusalem, the center of Jewish life and worship. Located on a major trade route, Nazareth was frequently visited by Gentile merchants and Roman soldiers. It was known for its independent and aloof attitude. Jesus was born in Bethlehem but grew up in Nazareth. Nevertheless the people of Nazareth would reject him as the Messiah (4:22-30).

1:27, 28 Mary was young, poor, female—all characteristics that, to the people of her day, would make her seem unusable by God for any major task. But God chose Mary for one of the most important acts of obedience he has ever demanded of anyone. You may feel that your ability, experience, or education makes you an unlikely candidate for God’s service. Don’t limit God’s choices. He can use you if you trust him.

1:30, 31 God’s favor does not automatically bring instant success or fame. His blessing on Mary, the honor of being the mother of the Messiah, would lead to much pain; her peers would ridicule her; her fiancé would come close to leaving her; her son would be rejected and murdered. But through her son would come the world’s only hope, and this is why Mary has been praised by countless generations. Her submission was part of God’s plan to bring about our salvation. If sorrow weighs you down and dims your hope, think of Mary and wait patiently for God to finish working out his plan.

1:31 Jesus, a Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, was a common name meaning “the LORD saves.” Just as Joshua had led Israel into the Promised Land (see Joshua 1:1, 2), so Jesus would lead his people into eternal life. The symbolism of his name was not lost on the people of his day, who took names seriously and saw them as a source of power. In Jesus’ name, people were healed, demons were banished, and sins were forgiven.

1:32, 33 Centuries earlier, God had promised David that David’s kingdom would last forever (2 Samuel 7:16). This promise was
Mary asked the angel, “But how can this happen? I am a virgin.” The angel replied, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she has conceived a son and is now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.”

For the word of God will never fail.

Zechariah, a Jewish priest, was told before anyone else that God was setting in motion his own visit to earth. Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were known for their personal holiness. They were well suited to doing a special work for God. But they shared the pain of not having children, and in Jewish culture this was considered not having God’s blessing. Zechariah and Elizabeth were old, and they had stopped even asking for children.

One day while on duty at the Temple in Jerusalem, Zechariah received an unexpected blessing. He was chosen to be the priest who would enter the Holy Place to offer incense to God for the people. Suddenly, much to his surprise and terror, he found himself face to face with an angel. The angel’s message was too good to be true! But the news of the coming Savior was eclipsed by doubts about his own ability to father the child the angel promised him. His age spoke more loudly than God’s promise. As a result, God prevented Zechariah from speaking until the promise became a reality.

The record of the prayer in Luke 1 is our last glimpse of Zechariah. Like so many of God’s most faithful servants, he passed quietly from the scene once his part was done. He becomes our hero for those times when we doubt God and yet are willing to obey. We gain hope from Zechariah’s story that God can do great things through anyone who is available to him.

ZECCHARYAH

Strengths and accomplishments
- Known as a righteous man
- Was a priest of God
- One of the few people to be directly addressed by an angel
- Fathered John the Baptist

Weakness and mistake
- Momentarily doubted the angel’s promise of a son because of his own old age

Lessons from his life
- Physical limitations do not limit God
- God accomplishes his will, often in unexpected ways

Vital statistics
- Occupation: Priest
- Relatives: Wife: Elizabeth. Son: John the Baptist.

Key verses:
“Zechariah and Elizabeth were righteous in God’s eyes, careful to obey all of the Lord’s commandments and regulations. They had no children because Elizabeth was unable to conceive, and they were both very old” (Luke 1:6-7).

Zechariah’s story is told in Luke 1.
Mary responded, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." And then the angel left her.

Mary Visits Elizabeth (6)

A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, "God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said."

The Magnificat: Mary's Song of Praise

Mary responded,

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior!
For he has looked with favor on the lowly servant girl.
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.
He shows mercy from generation to generation
to all who fear him.
His mighty arm has done tremendous things!
He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.
He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands.
He has helped his servant Israel
and remembered to be merciful.
For he made this promise to our ancestors,
to Abraham and his children forever."

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.
When it was time for Elizabeth’s baby to be born, she gave birth to a son. And when her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had been very merciful to her, everyone rejoiced with her.

When the baby was eight days old, they all came for the circumcision ceremony. They wanted to name him Zechariah, after his father. But Elizabeth said, “No! His name is John!”

“What?” they exclaimed. “There is no one in all your family by that name.” So they used gestures to ask the baby’s father what he wanted to name him.

He motioned for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s surprise he wrote, “His name is John.” Instantly Zechariah could speak again, and he began praising God.

Awe fell upon the whole neighborhood, and the news of what had happened spread throughout the Judean hills. Everyone who heard about it reflected on these events and asked, “What will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was surely upon him in a special way.

Zechariah’s Prophecy

Then his father, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit and gave this prophecy:

Praise the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has visited and redeemed his people. He has sent us a mighty Savior from the royal line of his servant David, just as he promised through his holy prophets long ago. Now we will be saved from our enemies and from all who hate us. He has been merciful to our ancestors by remembering his sacred covenant—

Zechariah’s relatives talked to him by gestures because he was apparently deaf as well as speechless and had not heard what his wife had said.

GOD’S UNUSUAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATING

One of the best ways to understand God’s willingness to communicate to people is to note the various methods, some of them quite unexpected, that he has used to give his message.

Person/Group

Jacob, Zechariah, Mary, shepherds
Jacob, Joseph, a baker, a cup-bearer, Pharaoh, Isaiah, Joseph, the wise men
Belshazzar
Balaam
People of Israel
Jonah
Abraham, Moses, Jesus at his baptism, Paul
Moses
Us

Method

Angels
Dreams
Writing on the wall
Talking donkey
Pillars of cloud and fire
Being swallowed by a fish
Verbally
Fire
God’s Son

Reference

Genesis 32:22-32; Luke 1:13, 30; 2:10
Genesis 28:10-22; 37:5-10; 40:5; 41:7, 8; Isaiah 1:1; Matthew 1:20; 2:12, 13
Daniel 5:5-9
Numbers 22:21-35
Exodus 13:21, 22
Jonah 2
Genesis 12:1-4; Exodus 7:8; Matthew 3:13-17; Acts 18:9
Exodus 3:2
Hebrews 1:1, 2

The circumcision ceremony was an important event to the family of a Jewish baby boy. God commanded circumcision when he was beginning to form his holy nation (Genesis 17:4-14), and he had reaffirmed it through Moses (Leviticus 12:1-3). This ceremony was a time of joy when friends and family members would celebrate the baby’s becoming part of God’s covenant nation.

Family lines and family names were important to the Jews. The people naturally assumed the child would receive Zechariah’s name or at least a family name. They were surprised, therefore, that both Elizabeth and Zechariah wanted to name the boy John. This was the name the angel had given them (see 1:13).

Zechariah’s relatives talked to him by gestures because he was apparently deaf as well as speechless and had not heard what his wife had said.

Zechariah praised God with his first words after months of silence. In a song that is often called the Benedictus after the first words in the Latin translation of this passage, Zechariah prophesied the coming of a Savior who would redeem his people and predicted that his son, John, would prepare the Messiah’s way. All the Old Testament prophecies were coming true—no wonder Zechariah praised God! The Messiah would come in Zechariah’s lifetime, and his son had been chosen to pave the way.

This was God’s promise to Abraham to bless all peoples through him (see Genesis 12:3). It would be fulfilled through the Messiah, Abraham’s descendant.
the covenant he swore with an oath to our ancestor Abraham.

74 We have been rescued from our enemies so we can serve God without fear,
in holiness and righteousness for as long as we live.

75 And you, my little son, will be called the prophet of the Most High,because you will prepare the way for the Lord.

You will tell his people how to find salvation through forgiveness of their sins.

76 Because of God's tender mercy, the morning light from heaven is about to break upon us,*
to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,and to guide us to the path of peace."*  

John grew up and became strong in spirit. And he lived in the wilderness until he began his public ministry to Israel.  

Jesus Is Born in Bethlehem (9)  

2 At that time the Roman emperor, Augustus, decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Roman Empire. *(This was the first census taken when Quirinius was governor of Syria.)* All returned to their own ancestral towns to register for this census.

*And because Joseph was a descendant of King David, he had to go to Bethlehem in Judea, David's ancient home. He traveled there from the village of Nazareth in Galilee. He took with him Mary, his fiancée, who was now obviously pregnant.  

1:76 Zechariah had just recalled hundreds of years of God's sovereign work in history, beginning with Abraham and going on into eternity. Then, in tender contrast, he personalized the story. His son had been chosen for a key role in the drama of the ages. Although God has unlimited power, he chooses to work through frail humans who begin as helpless babies. Don't minimize what God can do through those who are faithful to him.  

1:78 Why did John live out in the wilderness? Prophets used the isolation of the uninhabited wilderness to enhance their spiritual growth and to focus their message on God. By being in the wilderness, John remained separate from the economic and political powers so that he could aim his message against them. He also remained separate from the hypocritical religious leaders of his day. His message was different from theirs, and his life proved it.  

THE JOURNEY TO BETHLEHEM  

Caesar's decree for a census of the entire Roman Empire made it necessary for Joseph and Mary to leave their hometown, Nazareth, and journey the 70 miles to the Judean village of Bethlehem.  

1:77 Jer 31:34

1:78 Mal 4:2

1:79 Isa 9:2; 58:8; 60:1-2

1:80 Luke 2:40, 52

2:1-7 Matt 1:18-25

2:5 Luke 1:27

2:1 Luke is the only Gospel writer who related the events he recorded to world history. His account was addressed to a predominantly Greek audience that would have been interested in and familiar with the political situation. Palestine was under the rule of the Roman Empire with Emperor Caesar Augustus, the first Roman emperor, in charge. The Roman rulers, considered to be like gods, stood in contrast to the tiny baby in a manger who was truly God in the flesh.

2:1 A Roman census (registration) was taken to aid military conscription or tax collection. The Jews weren't required to serve in the Roman army, but they could not avoid paying taxes. Augustus's decree went out in God's perfect timing and according to God's perfect plan to bring his Son into the world.

2:1-6 The Romans ruled the civilized world at this time. By contrast, Joseph controlled very little. Against his better judgment and political convictions, he complied with the Roman order to make a long trip just to pay his taxes. His fiancée, who had to go with him, was about to give birth. The Romans were in control insofar as human authority can get its way by exerting human power. But the Romans did not recognize their limitations. In reality, God controls the world. In all times and places, he works his will. By the decree of Emperor Augustus, Jesus was born in the very town prophesied for his birth (Micah 5:2), even though his parents did not live there. Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David. The Old Testament is filled with prophecies that the Messiah would be born in David's royal line (see, for example, Isaiah 11:1; Jeremiah 33:15; Ezekiel 37:24; Hosea 3:5). Rome made the decree, just as God intended.

2:4, 5 Sometimes we think to ourselves, "I'm being obedient, so why aren't things going better?" We face discomfort or inconvenience and immediately think either that we have misread God's will or that God has made a mistake. But watch this quiet couple as they head toward Bethlehem. God did not soften Joseph's bumpy road, but strengthened him. God did not provide a luxurious inn for Joseph and Mary, but brought his Son into the world in humble surroundings. When we do God's will, we are not guaranteed comfort and convenience. But we are...
6 And while they were there, the time came for her baby to be born. 7 She gave birth to her first child, a son. She wrapped him snugly in strips of cloth and laid him in a manger, because there was no lodging available for them.

Shepherds Visit Jesus (10)

8 That night there were shepherds staying in the fields nearby, guarding their flocks of sheep. 9 Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared among them, and the radiance of the Lord’s glory surrounded them. They were terrified, 10 but the angel reassured them. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. 11 The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! 12 And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger.”

13 Suddenly, the angel was joined by a vast host of others—the armies of heaven—praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”

2:6
Matt 1:25
Gal 4:4

2:9
Acts 5:19

2:11
John 4:42; 20:31

2:13
Ps 103:20
Rev 5:11

2:14
Isa 57:19
Luke 15:38

Doubters in the Bible

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<td>When told he would be a father in old age</td>
<td>Genesis 17:17</td>
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<td>Thomas</td>
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Many of the people God used to accomplish great things started out as real doubters. With all of them, God showed great patience. Honest doubt was not a bad starting point as long as they didn’t stay there. How great a part does doubt have in your willingness to trust God?

promised that everything, even discomfort and inconvenience, has meaning in God’s plan. He will guide you and provide all you need. Like Joseph, live each day by faith, trusting that God is in charge.

2:7 Strips of cloth were used to keep a baby warm and give him a sense of security. These clothes were believed to protect his internal organs. The custom of wrapping infants this way is still practiced in many Mid-eastern countries.

2:7 This mention of the manger is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs (mangers) carved into the rock walls. Despite popular Christmas card pictures, the surroundings were dark and dirty. This was not the atmosphere the Jews expected as the birthplace of the Messiah-King. They thought their promised Messiah would be born in royal surroundings. We should not limit God by our expectations. He is at work wherever he is needed in our sin-darkened and dirty world.

2:7 Although our first picture of Jesus is as a baby in a manger, it must not be our last. The Christ child in the manger is the subject of a beautiful Christmas scene, but we must not leave him there. This tiny, helpless baby lived an amazing life, died for us, ascended to heaven, and will return to earth as King of kings. Christ will rule the world and judge all people according to their decisions about him. Do you still picture Jesus as a baby in a manger—or is he your Lord? Make sure you don’t underestimate Jesus. Let him grow up in your life.

2:8 God continued to reveal the news about his Son, but not to those we might expect. Luke records that Jesus’ birth was announced to shepherds in the fields. These may have been the shepherds who supplied the lambs for the Temple sacrifices that were performed for the forgiveness of sin. Here the angels invited these shepherds to greet the Lamb of God (John 1:36), who would take away the sins of the world forever.

2:8-15 What a birth announcement! The shepherds were terrified, but their fear turned to joy as the angels announced the Messiah’s birth. First the shepherds ran to see the baby; then they spread the word. Jesus is your Messiah, your Savior. Do you look forward to meeting him in prayer and in his Word each day? Have you discovered a Lord so wonderful that you can’t help sharing your joy with your friends?

2:9, 10 The greatest event in history had just happened! The Messiah had been born! For ages the Jews had waited for this, and when it finally occurred, the announcement came to humble shepherds. The Good News about Jesus is that he comes to all, including the plain and the ordinary. He comes to anyone with a heart humble enough to accept him. Whoever you are, whatever you do, you can have Jesus in your life. Don’t think you need extraordinary qualifications—he accepts you as you are.

2:11-14 Some of the Jews were waiting for a savior to deliver them from Roman rule; others hoped the Christ (Messiah) would deliver them from physical ailments. But Jesus, while healing their illnesses and establishing a spiritual Kingdom, delivered them from sin. His work is more far-reaching than anyone could imagine. Christ paid the price for sin and opened the way to peace with God. He offers us more than temporary political or physical changes—he offers us new hearts that will last for eternity.

2:14 The story of Jesus’ birth resounds with music that has inspired composers for 2,000 years. The angels’ song, often called the Gloria after its first word in the Latin translation, is the basis for many modern choral works, traditional Christmas carols, and ancient liturgical chants.
18 When the angels had returned to heaven, the shepherds said to each other, “Let’s go to Bethlehem! Let’s see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

19 They hurried to the village and found Mary and Joseph. And there was the baby, lying in the manger. 20 After seeing him, the shepherds told everyone what had happened and what the angel had said to them about this child. 21 All who heard the shepherds’ story were astonished, 22 but Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.

The Prophecy of Simeon

23 Eight days later, when the baby was circumcised, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel even before he was conceived.

24 Then it was time for their purification offering, as required by the law of Moses after the birth of a child; so his parents took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord. 25 The law of the Lord says, “If a woman’s first child is a boy, he must be dedicated to the Lord.” 26 So they offered the sacrifice required in the law of the Lord—“either a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons.”

27 That day the Spirit led him to the Temple. So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, 28 Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, 29 as you have promised.

30 I have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared for all people.

32 He is a light to reveal God to the nations,

and he is the glory of your people Israel!”

33 Jesus’ parents were amazed at what was being said about him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and he said to Mary, the baby’s mother, “This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but he will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose him. 35 As a result, the deepest thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your very soul.”

2:23-24 Jewish families went through several ceremonies soon after a baby’s birth: (1) Circumcision. Every boy was circumcised and named on the eighth day after birth (Leviticus 12:3; Luke 1:59, 60). Circumcision symbolized the Jews’ separation from Gentiles and their unique relationship with God (see the note on 1:59). (2) Redemption of the firstborn. A firstborn son was presented to God one month after birth (Exodus 13:2, 12, 15; Numbers 18:15, 16). The ceremony included buying back—“redeeming”—the child from God through an offering. This way, the parents acknowledged that the child belonged to God, who alone has the power to give life. (3) Purification of the mother. For 40 days after the birth of a son and 80 days after the birth of a daughter, the mother was ceremonially unclean and could not enter the Temple. At the end of her time of separation, the parents were to bring a lamb for a burnt offering and a dove or pigeon for a sin offering. The priest would sacrifice these animals and declare her to be clean. If a lamb was too expensive, the parents could bring a second dove or pigeon instead. This is what Mary and Joseph did.

Jesus was God’s Son, but his family carried out these ceremonies according to God’s law. Jesus was not born above the law; instead, he fulfilled it perfectly.

2:28-32 When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to be dedicated to God, they met an old man who told them what their child would become. Simeon’s song is often called the Nunc Dimittis, from the first words of its Latin translation. Simeon could die in peace because he had seen the Messiah.

2:30-31 The Jews were well acquainted with the Old Testament prophecies that spoke of the Messiah’s blessings to their nation. They did not always give equal attention to the prophecies stating that he would bring salvation to the entire world, not just the Jews (see, for example, Isaiah 49:6). Many thought that Christ had come to save only his own people. Luke made sure his Greek audience understood that Christ had come to save all who believe, Gentiles as well as Jews.

2:33 Joseph and Mary were amazed when this old man took their son into his arms and spoke such stunning words. Simeon said that Jesus was a gift from God, and he recognized Jesus as the Messiah who would be a light to the entire world. This was at least the second time that Mary had been greeted with a prophecy about her son; the first time was when Elizabeth had welcomed her as the mother of her Lord (1:42-45).

2:34, 35 Simeon prophesied that Jesus would have a paradoxical effect on Israel. Some would fall because of him (see Isaiah 8:14, 15), while others would rise (see Malachi 4:2). With Jesus, there would be no neutral ground: People would either joyfully accept him or totally reject him. As Jesus’ mother, Mary would be grieved by the widespread rejection he would face. This is the first note of sorrow in Luke’s Gospel.
The Prophecy of Anna

36 Anna, a prophet, was also there in the Temple. She was the daughter of Phanuel from the tribe of Asher, and she was very old. Her husband died when they had been married only seven years. 37 Then she lived as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer. 38 She came along just as Simeon was talking with Mary and Joseph, and she began praising God. She talked about the child to everyone who had been waiting expectantly for God to rescue Jerusalem.

39 When Jesus’ parents had fulfilled all the requirements of the law of the Lord, they returned home to Nazareth in Galilee. 40 There the child grew up healthy and strong. He was filled with wisdom, and God’s favor was on him.

Jesus Speaks with the Religious Teachers (15)

41 Every year Jesus’ parents went to Jerusalem for the Passover festival. 42 When Jesus was twelve years old, they attended the festival as usual. 43 After the celebration was over, they started home to Nazareth, but Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents didn’t miss him at first, 44 because they assumed he was among the other travelers. But when he didn’t show up that evening, they started looking for him among their relatives and friends.

45 When they couldn’t find him, they went back to Jerusalem to search for him there. 46 Three days later they finally discovered him in the Temple, sitting among the religious teachers, listening to them and asking questions. 47 All who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

2:37 Or She had been a widow for eighty-four years.

TO FEAR OR NOT TO FEAR

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Person</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abraham</td>
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<td>Mary</td>
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People in the Bible who were confronted by God or his angels all had one consistent response—fear. To each of them, God’s response was always the same—don’t be afraid. As soon as they sensed that God accepted them and wanted to communicate with them, their fear subsided. He had given them freedom to be his friends. He has given you the same freedom.

2:36 Although Simeon and Anna were very old, they had never lost their hope that they would see the Messiah. Led by the Holy Spirit, they were among the first to bear witness to Jesus. In the Jewish culture, elders were respected; thus, because of Simeon’s and Anna’s ages, their prophecies carried extra weight. In contrast, our society values youthfulness over wisdom, and contributions by the elderly are often ignored. As Christians, we should reverse those values wherever we can. Encourage older people to share their wisdom and experience. Listen carefully when they speak. Offer them your friendship, and help them find ways to continue to serve God.

2:36, 37 Anna was called a prophet, indicating that she was unusually close to God. Prophets did not necessarily predict the future. Their main role was to speak for God, proclaiming his truth.

2:39 Did Mary and Joseph return immediately to Nazareth, or did they remain in Bethlehem for a time (as implied in Matthew 2)? Apparently there is a gap of several years between verses 38 and 39—ample time for them to find a place to live in Bethlehem, flee to Egypt to escape Herod’s wrath, and return to Nazareth when it was safe to do so.

2:41, 42 According to God’s law, every male was required to go to Jerusalem three times a year for the great festivals (Deuteronomy 16:16). In the spring, the Passover was celebrated, followed immediately by the weeklong Festival of Unleavened Bread. Passover commemorated the night of the Jews’ escape from Egypt when God had killed the Egyptian firstborn but had passed over Israelite homes (see Exodus 12:21-36). Passover was the most important of the three annual festivals.

2:43-45 At age 12, Jesus was considered almost an adult, so he probably didn’t spend a lot of time with his parents during the festival. Those who attended these festivals often traveled in caravans for protection from robbers along the Palestine roads. The women and children usually would travel at the front of the caravan, with the men bringing up the rear. A 12-year-old boy conceivably could have been in either group, so both Mary and Joseph probably assumed that Jesus was with the other one. But when the caravan left Jerusalem, Jesus stayed behind, absorbed in his discussion with the religious leaders.

2:46, 47 The Temple courts were famous throughout Judea as a place of learning. The apostle Paul studied in Jerusalem, perhaps in the Temple courts, under Gamaliel, one of its foremost teachers (Acts 22:3). At the time of the Passover, the greatest rabbis of the land would assemble to teach and to discuss great truths among themselves. The coming Messiah would no doubt have been a popular discussion topic, for everyone was expecting him soon. Jesus would have been eager to listen and to ask probing questions. It was not his youth but the depth of his wisdom that astounded these teachers.
Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.

John the Baptist Prepares the Way for Jesus (16/Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8)

It was now the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius, the Roman emperor. Pontius Pilate was governor over Judea; Herod Antipas was ruler* over Galilee; his brother Philip was ruler* over Iturea and Trachonitis; Lysanias was ruler over Abilene. 2Annaas and Caiaphas were the high priests. At this time a message from God came to John son of Zechariah, who was living in the wilderness. 3Then John went from place to place on both sides of the Jordan River, preaching that people should be baptized to show that they had repented of their sins and turned to God to be forgiven. 4Isaiah had spoken of John when he said,

“'He is a voice shouting in the wilderness,
Prepare the way for the Lord’s coming!
Clear the road for him!’

2:49 Or ‘Didn’t you realize that I should be involved with my Father’s affairs?’ 3:1a Greek Herod was tetrarch. Herod Antipas was a son of King Herod. 3:1b Greek tetrarch; also in 3:1c.

2:48 Mary had to let go of her child and let him become a man, God’s Son, the Messiah. Fearful that she hadn’t been careful enough with this God-given child, she searched frantically for him. But she was looking for a boy, not the young man who was in the Temple astounding the religious leaders with his questions. Letting go of people or projects we have nurtured can be very difficult. It is both sweet and painful to see our children growing into adults, our students into teachers, our subordinates into managers, our inspirations into institutions. But when the time comes we must step back and let go—in spite of the hurt. Then our protégés can exercise their wings, take flight, and soar to the heights God intended for them.

• 2:49, 50 This is the first mention of Jesus’ awareness that he was God’s Son. But even though he knew his real Father, Jesus did not reject his earthly parents. He went back to Nazareth with them and lived under their authority for another 18 years. God’s people do not despise human relationships or family responsibilities. If the Son of God obeyed his human parents, how much more should we honor our family members! Don’t use commitment to God’s work to justify neglecting your family.

2:50 Jesus’ parents didn’t understand what he meant about his Father’s house. They didn’t realize he was making a distinction between his earthly father and his heavenly Father. Jesus knew that he had a unique relationship with God. Although Mary and Joseph knew he was God’s Son, they didn’t understand what his mission would involve. Besides, they had to raise him, along with his brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55, 56), as a normal child. They knew he was unique, but they did not know what was going on in his mind.

• 2:52 The Bible does not record any events of the next 18 years of Jesus’ life, but Jesus undoubtedly was learning and maturing. As the oldest in a large family, he undoubtedly assisted Joseph in his carpentry work. Joseph may have died during this time, leaving Jesus to provide for the family. The normal routines of daily life gave Jesus a solid understanding of the Judean people.

2:52 The second chapter of Luke shows us that although Jesus was unique, he had a normal childhood and adolescence. In terms of development, he went through the same progression we do. He grew physically and mentally, he related to other people, and he was loved by God. A full human life is balanced. Thus it was important to Jesus—and it should be important to all believers—to develop fully and harmoniously in each of these key areas: physical, mental, social, and spiritual.

3:1 Tiberius, the Roman emperor, ruled from A.D. 14 to 37. Pilate was the Roman governor responsible for the province of Judea; Herod Antipas and Philip were half brothers and sons of the cruel Herod the Great, who had been dead more than 20 years. Antipas, Philip, Pilate, and Lysanias apparently had equal powers in governing their separate territories. All were subject to Rome and responsible for keeping peace in their respective lands.

3:2 Jewish law provided for only one high priest. He was appointed from Aaron’s line and held his position for life. By this time, however, the religious system had been corrupted, and the Roman government was appointing its own religious leaders to maintain greater control over the Jews. Apparently the Roman authorities had deposed the Jewish-appointed Annas and had replaced him with Annaas’s son-in-law, Caiaphas. Nevertheless, Annas retained his title (see Acts 4:6) and probably also much of the power it carried. Because the Jews believed the high priest’s position to be for life, they would have continued to call Annas their high priest.

3:2 This is John the Baptist, whose birth story is told in chapter 1. See his Profile in John 1, p. 1749.

3:2 Pilate, Herod, and Caiaphas were the most powerful leaders in Palestine, but they were upstaged by a wilderness prophet from rural Judea. God chose to speak through the loner, John the Baptist, who has gone down in history as greater than any of the rulers of his day. How often people judge others by the superficial standards of power, wealth, and beauty, and miss the truly great people through whom God works! Greatness is measured not by what you have but by your faith in God. Like John, give yourself entirely to God so God’s power can work through you.

3:3 To turn to God to receive forgiveness from sins implies turning away from sins. We can’t just say we believe and then live any way we choose (see 3:7, 8); neither can we simply live a morally correct life without a personal relationship with God because that cannot bring forgiveness from sin. Determine to rid your life of any sins God points out, and then determine to live in a way that pleases him.

3:4, 5 In John’s day, before a king would take a trip, messengers would tell those he was planning to visit to prepare the roads for him. Similarly, John told his listeners to make their lives ready so the Lord could come to them. This does not mean that you must get rid of all your sin or wrongdoing before you can accept Christ; rather, when you accept him, he takes care of all your sinfulness. To “prepare the way” means clearing aside the baggage of the past and the doubts of the present in order to let the King come into your life. He’ll take it from there.
5 The valleys will be filled,  
and the mountains and hills made level.  
The curves will be straightened,  
and the rough places made smooth.  
6 And then all people will see  
the salvation sent from God.”**

7 When the crowds came to John for baptism, he said, “You brood of snakes! Who warned you to flee God’s coming wrath?  
8 Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your

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Elizabeth

In societies like Israel, in which a woman’s value was largely measured by her ability to bear children, to be without children often led to personal hardship and public shame. For Elizabeth, a childless old age was a painful and lonely time but still she remained faithful to God. Both Elizabeth and Zechariah came from priestly families. For two weeks each year, Zechariah had to go to the Temple in Jerusalem to attend to his priestly duties. After one of those trips, Zechariah returned home excited but speechless. He had to write down his good news, because he couldn’t give it any other way. And what a wonderful surprise he had for his wife: Their faded dream would become an exciting reality! Soon Elizabeth became pregnant, and she knew her child was a long-hoped-for gift from God.

News traveled fast among the family. Seventy miles to the north, in Nazareth, Elizabeth’s relative Mary also unexpectedly became pregnant. Within days after the angel’s message that she would bear the Messiah, Mary went to visit Elizabeth. They were instantly bound together by the unique gifts God had given them. Elizabeth knew that Mary’s son would be even greater than her own, for John would be the messenger for Mary’s son.

When her baby was born, Elizabeth insisted on his God-given name: John. Zechariah’s written agreement freed his tongue, and everyone in town wondered what would become of this obviously special child.

Elizabeth whispered her praise as she cared for God’s gift. Knowing about Mary must have made her marvel at God’s timing. Things had worked out even better than she could have planned. We, too, need to remember that God is in control of every situation. When did you last pause to recognize God’s timing in the events of your life?

Strengths and accomplishments

- Known as a deeply spiritual woman
- Showed no doubts about God’s ability to fulfill his promise
- Mother of John the Baptist
- The first woman besides Mary to hear of the coming Savior

Lessons from her life

- God does not forget those who have been faithful to him
- God’s timetable and methods do not have to conform to what we expect

Vital statistics

- Occupation: Homemaker
- Contemporaries: Joseph, Herod the Great

Key verses

“Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said” (Luke 1:43-45).

Elizabeth’s story is told in Luke 1:5-80.

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3:6 This book was written to a non-Jewish audience. Luke quoted from Isaiah to show that salvation is for “all people,” not just the Jews (Isaiah 40:3-5; 52:10). John the Baptist called everyone to prepare to meet Jesus. That includes you, no matter what your nationality, social standing, religious affiliation, or political position. God is calling to all people. Don’t let feelings of being an outsider cause you to hold back. No one who wants to follow Jesus is an outsider in God’s Kingdom.

3:7-9 Some people wanted to be baptized by John so they could escape eternal punishment, but they were not really repenting from sin nor were they willing to change the way they lived. John had harsh words for such people. He knew that God values reformation above ritual. Confession of sins and a changed life are inseparable. Faith without deeds is dead (James 2:14-26). Jesus also spoke harsh words to the respectable religious leaders who lacked the willingness to repent. They wanted to be known as religious authorities and they wanted eternal life, but they didn’t want to repent of their sins. Thus, their lives were unproductive. Turning from sin must be tied to action. Following Jesus means more than saying the right words; it means acting on what he says.

3:8 Many of John’s hearers were shocked when he said that being Abraham’s descendants was not enough to ensure salvation. The religious leaders relied more on family lines than on faith for their standing with God. For them, religion was inherited. But a personal relationship with God cannot be handed down from parents to children. Everyone has to make a personal decision of whether or not to trust Christ. Don’t rely on someone else’s faith for your salvation. Have you made that personal decision to trust Christ?
sins and turned to God. Don’t just say to each other, ‘We’re safe, for we are descendants of Abraham.’ That means nothing, for I tell you, God can create children of Abraham from these very stones. 10 Even now the ax of God’s judgment is poised, ready to sever the roots of the trees. Yes, every tree that does not produce good fruit will be chopped down and thrown into the fire.”

11 The crowds asked, “What should we do?”

12 John replied, “If you have two shirts, give one to the poor. If you have food, share it with those who are hungry.”

13 Even corrupt tax collectors came to be baptized and asked, “Teacher, what should we do?”

14 He replied, “Collect no more taxes than the government requires.”

15 What should we do?” asked some soldiers.

16 John replied, “Don’t extort money or make false accusations. And be content with your pay.”

17 Everyone was expecting the Messiah to come soon, and they were eager to know whether John might be the Messiah. 18 John answered their questions by saying, “I baptize you with water; but someone is coming soon who is greater than I am—so much greater that I’m not even worthy to be his slave and untie the straps of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.”

19 He is ready to separate the chaff from the wheat with his winnowing fork. Then he will clean up the threshing area, gathering the wheat into his barn but burning the chaff with never-ending fire.”

20 John used many such warnings as he announced the Good News to the people.

Herod Puts John in Prison (26)

19 John also publicly criticized Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee,* for marrying Herodias, his brother’s wife, and for many other wrongs he had done. 20 So Herod put John in prison, adding this sin to his many others.

3:11-14 John’s message demanded at least three specific responses: (1) Share what you have with those who need it, (2) whatever your job is, do it well and with fairness, and (3) be content with your earnings. John had not been commissioned to bring comforting messages to those who lived sinful lives; he was calling the people to right living as he prepared the way for their Messiah. What changes can you make in sharing what you have, doing your work honestly and well, and being content?

3:12 Tax collectors were notorious for their dishonesty. Romans gathered funds for their government by farming out the collection privilege. Tax collectors earned their own living by adding a sizable sum—whatever they could get away with—to the total and keeping money for themselves. Unless the people revolted and asked Roman retaliation, they had to pay whatever was demanded. Obviously the people hated the tax collectors, who were generally corrupt and greedy. Yet, said John, God would accept even these men; God desires to pour out mercy on those who confess their sins and then to give them strength to live changed lives.

3:15-14 John’s message took root in unexpected places—among the poor, the dishonest, and even the hated occupation army. These people were painfully aware of their needs and they were honestly seeking to know what to do to change their lives. Did anyone follow John’s advice? Surely some did, and their softened hearts became ready to receive the message of the One who was to come.

3:14 These soldiers were the Roman troops sent to keep peace in this distant province. Many of them oppressed the poor and used their power to take advantage of all the people. John called them to turn from their sins and change their ways.

3:15 Israel had not seen a prophet for more than 400 years. It was widely believed that when the Messiah would come, prophecy would reappear (Joel 2:28, 29; Malachi 3:1-4,5). When John burst onto the scene, the people were excited. He was obviously a great prophet, and they were sure that the eagerly awaited age of the Messiah had come. Some, in fact, thought John himself was the Messiah. John spoke like the prophets of old, saying that the people must turn from their sin to God to avoid punishment and to experience his mercy and approval. This is a message for all times and places, but John spoke it with particular urgency; he was preparing the people for the coming Messiah.

3:16 John’s baptism with water symbolized the washing away of sins. His baptism followed his message of repentance and reformation. Jesus’ baptism with fire equips one with power to do God’s will. The baptism with the Holy Spirit was first given at Pentecost (Acts 2) when the Holy Spirit came upon believers in the form of tongues of fire, empowering them to proclaim Jesus’ resurrection in many languages. The baptism with fire also symbolizes the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing God’s judgment on those who refuse to repent.

3:17 John warned of impending judgment by comparing those who refuse to live for God to chaff, the useless outer husk of the grain. By contrast, John compared those who repent and reform their lives to the nourishing wheat itself. The winnowing fork was a pitchfork used to toss wheat so that the kernels would separate from the husks. Those who refuse to be used by God will be discarded because they have no value in furthering God’s work. Those who repent and believe, however, hold great value in God’s eyes because they are beginning a new life of productive service for him.

3:18, 20 In these two verses Luke flashes forward to continue his explanation about John the Baptist. (See the Harmony of the Gospels for the chronological order of events.) This is Herod Antipas (see Mark 6, p. 1629 for his Profile). Herodias was Herod’s niece and also his brother’s wife. She would treacherously plot John the Baptist’s death (Matthew 14:1-12). The Herods were a murderous and deceitful family. Rebuffing a tyrannical Roman official who could imprison and execute him was extremely dangerous, yet that is what John did. Herod seemingly would have the last word, but the story is not finished. At the Last Judgment, Herod, not John, will face God’s punishment—for eternity.
The Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11)

One day when the crowds were being baptized, Jesus himself was baptized. As he was praying, the heavens opened, and the Holy Spirit, in bodily form, descended on him like a dove. And a voice from heaven said, “You are my dearly loved Son, and you bring me great joy.”

3:21 Some manuscripts read “my Son, and today I have become your Father.”

When Joseph and Mary took the eight-day-old Jesus to the Temple for his circumcision, they had two unexpected but delightful encounters. Well-worn examples of patient waiting met them—Simeon and Anna. Both of these godly saints recognized Jesus’ identity as the Messiah. Simeon and Anna give us a picture of godly expectation in an environment ripe with expectations.

Simeon was certain he would see the Messiah before he died. We don’t know how surprised he was to discover the Savior as a baby in Mary’s arms. We do know that he recognized Jesus and gave God praise for his faithfulness. When Simeon saw the baby, he considered his life complete.

Simeon’s exuberance caught Anna’s attention. She was another regular in the Temple. Anna’s brief marriage ended in widowhood and she spent the remainder of her eighty-four plus years serving as a prophetess. Anna overheard Simeon’s prophecy about Jesus and immediately added her own excited words of praise for the Savior.

Anna discovered that God can make every passage of life meaningful and useful. The long years of widowhood were also effective years of worship and service. Both she and Simeon dedicated their lives to God and were rewarded in ways we can only fully appreciate if we are willing to live the same way.

As you interact with people at various stages of life today, think about the development of your relationship with God. When talking to a younger person, ask yourself: “How was God involved in my life at that age?” When noticing someone older ask: “How do I want my relationship with God to mature by that point in my life?”

Strengths and accomplishments
- Exercised faithful anticipation regarding God’s promised Messiah
- Did not hesitate to give praise to God for his work in the world
- Both spoke from the powerful authority of their faith and age

Lessons from their lives
- God does give to some of his faithful followers a deeper insight and clarity about his plans
- There were those in Israel who did recognize Jesus
- Advancing age does not invalidate a person’s usefulness in God’s purposes

Vital statistics
- Where: Jerusalem
- Contemporaries: Joseph, Mary, Herod the Great

Key verses
“The Holy Spirit was upon [Simeon] and had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord’s Messiah....[Anna] never left the Temple but stayed there day and night, worshiping God with fasting and prayer” (Luke 2:25-26, 37).

Simeon and Anna’s stories are told in Luke 2:21-38.
The Record of Jesus’ Ancestors (Matthew 1:1-17)

23 Jesus was about thirty years old when he began his public ministry.

24 Heli was the son of Matthat.
Matthat was the son of Levi.
Levi was the son of Melki.
Melki was the son of Jannai.
Jannai was the son of Joseph.

25 Joseph was the son of Mattathias.
Mattathias was the son of Amos.
Amos was the son of Nahum.
Nahum was the son of Esli.
Esli was the son of Naggai.

26 Naggai was the son of Maath.
Maath was the son of Mattathias.
Mattathias was the son of Semein.
Semein was the son of Josech.
Josech was the son of Joda.

27 Joda was the son of Joanan.
Joanan was the son of Rhesa.
Rhesa was the son of Zerubbabel.
Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel.
Shealtiel was the son of Neri.

28 Neri was the son of Melki.
Melki was the son of Addi.
Addi was the son of Cosam.
Cosam was the son of Elmadam.
Elmadam was the son of Er.

29 Er was the son of Joshua.
Joshua was the son of Eliezer.
Eliezer was the son of Jorim.
Jorim was the son of Matthat.
Matthat was the son of Levi.

30 Levi was the son of Simeon.
Simeon was the son of Judah.
Judah was the son of Joseph.
Joseph was the son of Jonam.
Jonam was the son of Eliakim.

31 Eliakim was the son of Melea.
Melea was the son of Menna.
Menna was the son of Mattatha.
Mattatha was the son of Nathan.
Nathan was the son of David.

32 David was the son of Jesse.
Jesse was the son of Obed.
Obed was the son of Boaz.

Imagine the Savior of the world working in a small-town carpenter’s shop until he was 30 years old! It seems incredible that Jesus would have been content to remain in Nazareth all that time, but he patiently trusted his Father’s timing for his life and ministry. Thirty was the prescribed age for priests to begin their ministry (Numbers 4:3). Joseph was 30 years old when he began serving the king of Egypt (Genesis 41:46), and David was 30 years old when he began to reign over Judah (2 Samuel 5:4). Age 30, then, was a good time to begin an important task in the Jewish culture. Like Jesus, we need to resist the temptation to jump ahead before receiving the Spirit’s direction. Are you waiting and wondering what your next step should be? Don’t jump ahead—trust God’s timing.

Matthew’s genealogy goes back to Abraham and shows that Jesus was related to all Jews (Matthew 1). Luke’s genealogy goes back to Adam, showing that Jesus is related to all human beings. This is consistent with Luke’s picture of Jesus as the Savior of the whole world.
Boaz was the son of Salmon.*
Salmon was the son of Nahshon.
Nahshon was the son of Amminadab.
Amminadab was the son of Admin.
Admin was the son of Arni.*
Arni was the son of Hezron.
Hezron was the son of Perez.
Perez was the son of Judah.
Judah was the son of Jacob.
Jacob was the son of Isaac.
Isaac was the son of Abraham.
Abraham was the son of Terah.
Terah was the son of Nahor.
Nahor was the son of Serug.
Serug was the son of Reu.
Reu was the son of Peleg.
Peleg was the son of Eber.
Eber was the son of Shelah.

Mary

Motherhood is a painful privilege. Young Mary of Nazareth had the unique privilege of being mother to the very Son of God. Yet the pains and pleasures of her motherhood can be understood by mothers everywhere. Mary was the only human present at Jesus’ birth who also witnessed his death. She saw him arrive as her baby son, and she watched him die as her Savior.

Until Gabriel’s unexpected visit, Mary’s life was quite satisfactory. She had recently become engaged to a carpenter, Joseph, and was anticipating married life. But her life was about to change forever.

Angels don’t usually make appointments before visiting. Feeling as if she were being congratulated for winning the grand prize in a contest she had never entered, Mary found the angel’s greeting puzzling and his presence frightening. What she heard next was the news almost every woman in Israel hoped to hear—that her child would be the Messiah, God’s promised Savior. Mary did not doubt the message but rather asked how pregnancy would be possible. Gabriel told her the baby would be God’s Son. Her answer was the one God waits in vain to hear from so many other people: “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true” (Luke 1:38). Later her song of joy shows us how well she knew God, for her thoughts were filled with his words from the Old Testament.

When he was eight days old Jesus was taken to the Temple to be dedicated to God. There Joseph and Mary were met by two devout people, Simeon and Anna, who recognized the child as the Messiah and praised God. Simeon directed some words to Mary that must have come to her mind many times in the years that followed: “A sword will pierce your very soul” (Luke 2:35). A big part of her painful privilege of motherhood would be to see her son rejected and crucified by the people he came to save.

We can imagine that even if she had known all she would suffer as Jesus’ mother, Mary would still have given the same response. Are you, like Mary, available to be used by God?

Strengths and accomplishments
- The mother of Jesus, the Messiah
- The one human who was with Jesus from birth to death
- Willing to be available to God
- Knew and applied Old Testament Scriptures

Lessons from her life
- God’s best servants are often ordinary people who make themselves available to him
- God’s plans involve extraordinary events in ordinary people’s lives
- A person’s character is revealed by his or her response to the unexpected

Vital statistics
- Where: Nazareth, Bethlehem
- Occupation: Homemaker

Key verse
“Mary responded, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.’ And then the angel left her” (Luke 1:38).

Mary’s story is told throughout the Gospels. She is also mentioned in Acts 1:14.
4:1 Sometimes we feel that if the Holy Spirit leads us, it will always be "beside peaceful streams" (Psalm 23:2). But that is not necessarily true. He led Jesus into the wilderness for a long and difficult time of testing, and he may also lead us into difficult situations. When facing trials, first make sure you haven't brought them on yourself through sin or unwise choices. If you find no sin to confess or unwise behavior to change, then ask God to strengthen you for your test. Finally, be careful to follow faithfully wherever the Holy Spirit leads.

4:1, 2 The devil, who tempted Adam and Eve in the garden, also tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Satan is a real being, a created but rebellious fallen angel, and not a symbol or an idea. He constantly fights against God and those who follow and obey God. Jesus was a prime target for the devil’s temptations. Satan had succeeded with Adam and Eve, and he hoped to succeed with Jesus as well.

4:1-13 Knowing and obeying God’s Word is an effective weapon against temptation, the only offensive weapon provided in the Christian’s “armor” (Ephesians 6:17). Jesus used Scripture to counter Satan’s attacks, and so should we. But to use it effectively, we must have faith in God’s promises because Satan also knows Scripture and is adept at twisting it to suit his purposes. Obeying the Scriptures is more important than simply having a verse to quote, so read them daily and apply them to your life. Then your “sword” will always be sharp.

4:2 Why was it necessary for Jesus to be tempted? First, temptation is part of the human experience. For Jesus to be fully human, for him to understand us completely, he had to face temptation (see Hebrews 4:15). Second, Jesus had to undo Adam's work. Adam, though created perfect, gave in to temptation and passed sin on to the whole human race. Jesus, by contrast, resisted Satan. His victory offers salvation to all of Adam’s descendants (see Romans 5:12-19).

4:3 Satan may tempt us to doubt Christ’s true identity. He knows that once we begin to question whether or not Jesus is God, it’s far easier to get us to do what he wants. Times of questioning can help us sort out our beliefs and strengthen our faith, but those times can also be dangerous. If you are dealing with doubt, be aware that you are especially vulnerable to temptation. Even as you search for answers, protect yourself by meditating on the unshakable truths of God’s Word.

4:3 Sometimes we are tempted to do isn’t wrong in itself. Turning a stone into bread wasn’t necessarily bad. The sin was not in the act but in the reason behind it. The devil was trying to get Jesus to take a shortcut, to solve Jesus’ immediate problem at the expense of his long-range goals, to seek comfort at the sacrifice of his discipline. Satan often works that way—persuading us to take action, even right action, for the wrong reason or at the wrong time. The fact that something is not wrong in itself does not mean that it is good for you at a given time. Many people sin by attempting to fulfill legitimate desires outside of God’s will or ahead of his timetable. First ask: Is the Holy Spirit leading me to do this or is Satan trying to get me off the track? 4:3ff Often we are tempted not through our weaknesses, but through our strengths. The devil tempted Jesus where he was strong. Jesus had power over stones, the kingdoms of the world, and even angels, and Satan wanted him to use that power without regard for his mission. When we give in to the devil and wrongly use our strengths, we become proud and self-reliant. Trusting in our own powers, we feel little need of God. To avoid this trap, we
4:4

*Deut 8:3*

4:5

Matt 28:18
John 12:31; 14:30
1 Jn 5:19
Rev 13:2

4:6

*Deut 6:13; 10:20*

4:7

Heb 4:15

4:8

†Deut 6:16

4:9

††Deut 6:16

4:10-11

†Ps 91:11-12

4:12

†††Deut 6:16

4:13

Heb 4:15

**But Jesus told him, “No! The Scriptures say, ‘People do not live by bread alone.’**

5 Then the devil took him up and revealed to him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. “I will give you the glory of these kingdoms and authority over them,” the devil said, “because they are mine to give to anyone I please. I will give it all to you if you will worship me.”

6 Jesus replied, “The Scriptures say, ‘You must worship the Lord your God and serve only him.’”

7 Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, to the highest point of the Temple, and said, “If you are the Son of God, jump off! For the Scriptures say, ‘He will command his angels to protect you. And they will hold you up with their hands so you won’t even hurt your foot on a stone.’”

8 Jesus responded, “The Scriptures also say, ‘You must not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

9 When the devil had finished tempting Jesus, he left him until the next opportunity came.


Luke accurately records the actions and teachings of Christ, helping us understand the way of salvation. Much unique material appears in Luke, especially the parables of Jesus. Jesus came to teach us how to live and how to find salvation. How carefully, then, we should study the words and life of our Savior.

1. **Jesus’ ministry in Galilee**

**Jesus Preaches in Galilee (30)** Matthew 4:12-17; Mark 1:14-15; John 4:43-45)

14 When Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit’s power, Reports about him spread quickly through the whole region. He taught regularly in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

**Jesus Is Rejected at Nazareth (32)**

16 When he came to the village of Nazareth, his boyhood home, he went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where this was written:

4:16

†††Deut 6:16

4:17-21

John 4:43-45

4:17-21

Jesus was quoting from Isaiah 61:1, 2. Isaiah pictures the deliverance of Israel from exile in Babylon as a Year of Jubilee when all debts are cancelled, all slaves are freed, and all property is returned to original owners (Leviticus 25). But the release from Babylonian exile had not brought the expected fulfillment: they were still a conquered and oppressed people. So Isaiah must have been referring to a future messianic age. Jesus boldly announced, “The Scripture you’re just heard has been fulfilled this very day!” Jesus was proclaiming himself as the one who would bring this Good News to pass, but he would do so in a way that the people were not yet able to grasp.
Jesus Teaches with Authority (Mark 1:21-28)

Then Jesus went to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and taught there in the synagogue every Sabbath day. There, too, the people were amazed at his teaching, for he spoke with authority.

Once when he was in the synagogue, a man possessed by a demon—an evil spirit—began shouting at Jesus, "Go away! Why are you interfering with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!"

Jesus cut him short. "Be quiet! Come out of the man," he ordered. At that, the demon threw the man to the floor as the crowd watched; then it came out of him without hurting him further.

Amazed, the people exclaimed, "What authority and power this man's words possess! Even evil spirits obey him, and they flee at his command!" The news about Jesus spread through every village in the entire region.

4:33 A man possessed by a demon was in the synagogue where Jesus was teaching. This man made his way into the place of worship and verbally abused Jesus. It is naive to think that we will be sheltered from evil in the church. Satan is happy to invade our presence wherever and whenever he can. But Jesus' authority is much greater than Satan's, and where Jesus is present, demons cannot stay for long.

4:34-36 The people were amazed at Jesus' authority to drive out demons—evil spirits ruled by Satan and sent to harass people, tempt them to sin, and ultimately destroy them. Demons are fallen angels who have joined Satan in rebellion against God. Jesus faced many demons during his time on earth, and he always exerted authority over them. Not only did the evil spirit leave this man: Luke records that the man was not even injured. While we may not often see cases of demon possession today, it does still exist. However, we would not doubt that evil permeates our world. We need not be fearful, however. Jesus' power is far greater than Satan's. The first step toward conquering fear of evil is to recognize Jesus' authority and power. He has overcome all evil, including Satan himself.
Jesus Heals Peter’s Mother-in-Law and Many Others (35/Mark 8:14-17; Mark 1:29-34)
After leaving the synagogue that day, Jesus went to Simon’s home, where he found Simon’s mother-in-law very sick with a high fever. “Please heal her,” everyone begged. 39Standing at her bedside, he rebuked the fever, and it left her. And she got up at once and prepared a meal for them.
40As the sun went down that evening, people throughout the village brought sick family members to Jesus. No matter what their diseases were, the touch of his hand healed every one. 41Many were possessed by demons; and the demons came out at his command, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But because they knew he was the Messiah, he rebuked them and refused to let them speak.

Jesus Preaches throughout Galilee (36/Matthew 4:23-25; Mark 1:35-39)
42Early the next morning Jesus went out to an isolated place. The crowds searched everywhere for him, and when they finally found him, they begged him not to leave them. 43But he replied, “I must preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns, too, because that is why I was sent.” 44So he continued to travel around, preaching in synagogues throughout Judea.

Jesus Provides a Miraculous Catch of Fish (37)
5One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee,* great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2He noticed two empty boats at the water’s edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon,* its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there.
4When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.” 5Simon replied, “Master, we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” 6And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! 7A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

4:44 Some manuscripts read Galilee. 5:1 Greek Lake Gennesaret, another name for the Sea of Galilee.
5:3 Simon is called “Peter” in 6:14 and thereafter.

• 4:39 Jesus healed Simon’s (Peter’s) mother-in-law so completely that not only did the fever leave but her strength was restored, and immediately she got up and took care of others’ needs. What a beautiful attitude of service she showed! God gives us health so that we may serve others.
• 4:46 The people came to Jesus when the sun was setting because this was the Sabbath (4:31), their day of rest. Sabbath lasted from sunset on Friday to sunset on Saturday. The people didn’t want to break the law that prohibited travel on the Sabbath, so they waited until the sun set on the Sabbath before coming to Jesus. Then, as Luke the physician notes, they came with all kinds of diseases, and Jesus healed each one.
• 4:40 When you’ve faced a particularly difficult time, what helped you most? While some may have said kind words, most likely it was the presence of a friend and his or her touch. A hug, an arm around your shoulder, or even just a hand laid gently on top of yours—these simple wordless gestures mean so much to those in pain. In healing the sick and the demon possessed, Jesus had already demonstrated that he could heal with just a word (4:39). Yet here in Capernaum, Luke records that the touch of Jesus’ hand healed the sick. Why not just speak a word and heal the whole crowd at once? Why go to all the trouble of treating each person individually, face-to-face? Because human touch is so very important. Does someone need a touch from you today?
• 4:41 Why didn’t Jesus want the demons to reveal who he was? (1) Jesus commanded them to remain silent to show his authority over them. (2) Jesus wanted his listeners to believe he was the Messiah because of his words, not because of the demons’ words. (3) Jesus was going to reveal his identity according to God’s timetable, and he would not be pushed by Satan’s evil plans. The demons called Jesus “Son of God” or “the Holy One sent from God” (4:34) because they knew he was the Christ. But Jesus was going to show himself to be the suffering servant before he became the great King. To reveal his identity as King too soon would stir up the crowds with the wrong expectations of what he had come to do.
4:42 Jesus had to get up very early just to get some time alone. If Jesus needed solitude for prayer and refreshment, how much more is this true for us? Don’t become so busy that life turns into a flurry of activity leaving no room for quiet fellowship alone with God. No matter how much you have to do, you should always have time for prayer.
4:43 The Kingdom of God is Good News! It was Good News to the Jews because they had been awaiting the coming of the promised Messiah ever since the Babylonian captivity. It is Good News for us also because it means freedom from slavery to sin and selfishness. The Kingdom of God is here and now because the Holy Spirit lives in the hearts of believers. Yet it is also in the future because Jesus will return to reign over a perfect Kingdom, where sin and evil will no longer exist.
5:2 Fishermen on the Sea of Galilee used nets, often bell-shaped ones with lead weights around the edges. A net would be thrown flat onto the water, and the lead weights would cause it to sink around the fish. Then the fishermen would pull on a cord, drawing the net around the fish. Nets had to be kept in good condition, so they would be washed to remove weeds and then mended.
Jesus Heals a Man with Leprosy (38/Matthew 8:1-4; Mark 1:40-45)

In one of the villages, Jesus met a man with an advanced case of leprosy. When the man saw Jesus, he bowed with his face to the ground, begging to be healed. “Lord,” he said, “if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean.”

Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly the leprosy disappeared. Then Jesus instructed him not to tell anyone what had happened. He said, “Go to the priest and let him examine you. Take along the offering required in the law of Moses for those who have been healed of leprosy.” This will be a public testimony that you have been cleansed.

But despite Jesus’ instructions, the report of his power spread even faster, and vast crowds came to hear him preach and to be healed of their diseases. But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.

Jesus Heals a Paralyzed Man (39/Matthew 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12)

One day while Jesus was teaching, some Pharisees and teachers of religious law were sitting nearby. (It seemed that these men showed up from every village in all Galilee and Judea, as well as from Jerusalem.) And the Lord’s healing power was strongly with Jesus.

Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, but they couldn’t reach him because of the crowd. So they went up to the roof and took off some tiles. Then they lowered the sick man on his mat down into the crowd, right in front of Jesus. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, “Young man, your sins are forgiven.”

5:14 See Lev 14:2-32.
5:21 According to the Jewish leaders, the act of forgiving sins was blasphemy. Jesus, however, claimed to have the authority to forgive sins. What makes this claim so significant is that it challenges the idea that only God has the power to forgive sins.

5:22 Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts?” Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk’? So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God. Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!”

Jesus Eats with Sinners at Matthew’s House (Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2:13-17)

27 Later, as Jesus left the town, he saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. 28 So Levi got up, left everything, and followed him.

Matthew 9, p. 1557.

29 Later, Levi held a banquet in his home with Jesus as the guest of honor. Many of Levi’s fellow tax collectors and other guests also ate with them. 30 But the Pharisees and their teachers of religious law complained bitterly to Jesus’ disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with such scum?”

Jesus answered them, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent.”

Religious Leaders Ask Jesus about Fasting (Matthew 9:14-17; Mark 2:18-22)

31 One day some people said to Jesus, “John the Baptist’s disciples fast and pray regularly, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees. Why are your disciples always eating and drinking?”

32 Jesus responded, “Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

33 Then Jesus gave them this illustration: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment to use it to patch an old garment. For then the new garment would be ruined, and the new patch wouldn’t even match the old garment.

5:24 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 5:30 Greek with tax collectors and sinners?
Jesus was teaching. So the man held out his hand, and it was restored!

At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Here are their names:

6:13 John 6:70

6:6, 7 According to the tradition of the religious leaders, no healing could be done on the Sabbath. Healing, they said, was practicing medicine, and a person could not practice his or her profession on the Sabbath. The religious leaders were more concerned about protecting their laws than freeing a person from painful suffering. The religious leaders were more concerned with negatives: what rules should not be broken, what activities should not be done. Jesus was positive: doing good and helping those in need.

Which would an objective observer say is more characteristic of your Christianity—the positives or the negatives? Are you more concerned about what people shouldn’t be doing than you are about advancing God’s Kingdom? Is your way of being a Christian the only way? And what about your church? The Pharisees thought their religious system had all the answers. They could not accept Jesus because he did not fit into their system. Beware of thinking that you or your church has all the answers. No religious system is big enough to contain Christ completely or to fulfill perfectly all his desires for the world. Christianity is the most positive force to ever hit this planet. Make sure you don’t let it degenerate into a bunch of negatives.

Jesus’ enemies were furious. Not only had he read their minds; he also had flouted their laws and exposed the hatred in their hearts. Ironically, their hatred, combined with their zeal for the law, drove them to plot murder—an act that was clearly against their law.

The Gospel writers note that before every important event in Jesus’ life, he would take time to go off by himself and pray. This time Jesus was preparing to choose his inner circle, the 12 apostles. Make sure that all your important decisions are grounded in prayer.

Jesus had many disciples (learners), but he chose only 12 apostles (messengers). The apostles were his inner circle to whom he gave special training and whom he sent out with his own authority. These were the men who started the Christian church. In the Gospels these 12 men are usually called the disciples, but in the book of Acts they are called apostles.

6:13-16 Jesus selected “ordinary” men with a mixture of backgrounds and personalities to be his disciples. Today, God calls “ordinary” people together to build his church, teach salvation’s
Simon (whom he named Peter),
Andrew (Peter's brother),
James,
John,
Philip,
Bartholomew,
Matthew,
Thomas,
James (son of Alphaeus),
Simon (who was called the zealot),
Judas (son of James),
Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

Jesus Gives the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12)

When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon.

They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil spirits were healed. Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.

Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

"God blesses you who are poor,
for the Kingdom of God is yours.

God blesses you who are hungry now,
for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now,
for in due time you will laugh.

What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man.

When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.

What sorrow awaits you who are rich,
for you have your only happiness now.

What sorrow awaits you who are fat and prosperous now,
for a time of awful hunger awaits you.

What sorrow awaits you who laugh now,
for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow.

• 6:20ff This may be Luke’s account of the sermon that Matthew records in Matthew 5–7, or it may be that Jesus gave similar sermons on several different occasions. Some believe that this was not one sermon, but a composite based on Jesus’ customary teachings.

• 6:21 Some believe that the hunger about which Jesus spoke is a hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:6). Others say this is physical hunger. In any case, in a nation where riches were seen as a sign of God's favor, Jesus startled his hearers by pronouncing blessings on the hungry. In doing so, however, he was in line with an ancient tradition. The Old Testament is filled with texts proclaiming God's concern for the poor and needy. See, for example, 1 Samuel 2:5; Psalm 146:7; Isaiah 58:6, 7; and Jesus’ own mother’s prayer in Luke 1:53.

• 6:24 If you are trying to find fulfillment only through riches, wealth may be the only reward you will ever get—and it does not last. We should not seek comfort now at the expense of eternal life.
6:26 What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.

Jesus Teaches about Loving Enemies (Matthew 5:43-48)
6:27 *But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. 6:28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. 6:29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. 6:30 Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. 6:31 Do to others as you would like them to do to you.
6:32 *If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! 6:33 And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.
6:34 *“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. 6:35 You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

Jesus Teaches about Judging Others (Matthew 7:1-6)
6:36 *“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. 6:37 Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”
6:38 *Then Jesus gave the following illustration: “Can one blind person lead another? Won’t they both fall into a ditch? 6:39 Students* are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.
6:40 *“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye* when you have a log in your own? 6:41 How can you think of saying, ‘Friend,* let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

Jesus Teaches about Fruit in People’s Lives (Matthew 7:15-20)
6:42 *A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. 6:43 A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from thornbushes.
6:44 *“Make sure you’re following the right teachers and leaders, because you will go no farther than they do. Look for leaders who will show you more about faith and whose guidance you can trust.

Jesus Teaches about Hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-18)
6:45 *Jesus says that we should not be afraid of the label hypocrite that we stand still in our Christian life, hiding our faith and making no attempts to grow. A person who tries to do right but often fails is not a hypocrite. Neither are those who fulfill their duty even when they don’t feel like doing it. Often it is necessary and good to set aside our desires in order to do what needs to be done. It is not hypocrisy to be weak in faith. A hypocrite is a person who only puts on religious behavior in order to gain attention, approval, or admiration from others.

6:46 Jesus reminds us that our speech and actions reveal our true underlying beliefs, attitudes, and motivations. The good impressions we try to make cannot last if we are being deceptive. What is in your heart will come out in your speech and behavior.
from bramble bushes. A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

Jesus Teaches about Building on a Solid Foundation (Matthew 7:21-29)

So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. It is like a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. But anyone who hears and doesn’t obey is like a person who builds a house without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins.”

A Roman Officer Demonstrates Faith (Matthew 8:5-13)

7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people, he returned to Capernaum. At that time the highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. So when the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. So they earnestly begged Jesus to help the man. “If anyone deserves your help, he does,” they said, “for he loves the Jewish people and even built a synagogue for us.”

6 So Jesus went with them. But just before they arrived at the house, the officer sent some friends to say, “Lord, don’t trouble yourself by coming to my home, for I am not worthy of such an honor. I am not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. I know this because I am under the authority of my superior officers, and I have authority over my soldiers. I only need to say, ‘Go,’ and they go, or ‘Come,’ and they come. And if I say to my slaves, ‘Do this,’ they do it.”

When Jesus heard this, he was amazed. Turning to the crowd that was following him, he said, “I tell you, I haven’t seen faith like this in all Israel.” And when the officer’s friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed.

6:46-49 Why would people build a house without a foundation? Perhaps to save time and avoid the hard work of preparing the stone. Possibly because the waterfront scenery is more attractive or because beach houses have higher social status than cliff houses. Perhaps because they want to join their friends who have already settled in sandy areas. Maybe because they haven’t heard about the violent storms coming, because they have discounted the reports, or because they think disaster can’t happen to them. Whatever their reason, those with no foundation are shortsighted, and they will be sorry. Obeying God is like building a house on a strong, solid foundation that stands firm when storms come. When life is calm, our foundations don’t seem to matter. But when crises come, our foundations are tested. Be sure your life is built on the solid foundation of knowing and trusting Jesus Christ.

7:10 This passage marks a turning point in Luke’s account of Jesus’ ministry. Up to this point, Jesus has dealt exclusively with the Jews; here he begins to include the Gentiles. Notice who the main characters are in this short drama: the Jewish elders, a Roman officer, and the officer’s slave—very different racial and religious backgrounds, and vastly different standings on the social ladder. Jesus broke through all those barriers, all the way to the sick man’s need. The gospel travels well across ethnic, racial, national, and religious barriers. Are you willing to work through them as well? Jesus was no respecter of artificial divisions, and we should follow his example. Reach out to those whom Jesus came to save.

7:2 This Roman officer was a centurion, meaning he was a captain in charge of 100 men. The officer heard about Jesus, so obviously also heard about Jesus’ healing power. He sent a request through some of the Jewish elders on behalf of his slave. He may have heard about the healing of the Roman official’s son (which probably occurred earlier, see John 4:46-54). He knew Jesus had the power to heal his slave.

3 Matthew 8:5 says the Roman officer visited Jesus himself, while Luke 7:3 says he sent Jewish elders to present his request to Jesus. In those days, dealing with a person’s messengers was considered the same as dealing with the one who had sent them. Thus, in dealing with the messengers, Jesus was dealing with the officer. For his Jewish audience, Matthew emphasized the Roman soldier’s faith. For his Gentile audience, Luke highlighted the good relationship between the Jewish elders and the Roman officer. This army captain daily delegated work and sent groups on missions, so this was how he chose to get his message to Jesus.

7:9 The Roman officer didn’t come to Jesus, and he didn’t expect Jesus to come to him. Just as this officer did not need to be present to have his orders carried out, so Jesus didn’t need to be present to heal. The officer’s faith was especially amazing because he was a Gentile who had not been brought up to know a loving God. Hence Jesus’ comment.
Jesus Raises a Widow’s Son from the Dead (69)

11 Soon afterward Jesus went with his disciples to the village of Nain, and a large crowd followed him. 12 A funeral procession was coming out as he approached the village gate. The young man who had died was a widow’s only son, and a large crowd from the village was with her. 13 When the Lord saw her, his heart overflowed with compassion. “Don’t cry!” he said. 14 Then he walked over to the coffin and touched it, and the bearers stopped. “Young man,” he said, “I tell you, get up.” 15 Then the dead boy sat up and began to talk! And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

16 Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, “A mighty prophet has risen among us,” and “God has visited his people today.” 17 And the news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding countryside.

Jesus Eases John’s Doubt (70/Matthew 11:1-19)

The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, 18 and he sent them to the Lord to ask him, “Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting,* or should we keep looking for someone else?” 19 John’s two disciples found Jesus and said to him, “John the Baptist sent us to ask, ‘Are you the Messiah we’ve been expecting, or should we keep looking for someone else?’” 20 At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. 21 Then he told John’s disciples, “Go back to John and tell him what you have seen and heard—the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor. 22 And tell him, ‘God blesses those who do not turn away because of me.’” 23 After John’s disciples left, Jesus began talking about him to the crowds. “What kind of man did you go into the wilderness to see? Was he a weak reed, swayed by every breath of the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!”

7:11-16 1 Kgs 17:17-24 2 Kgs 4:32-37

7:13 Luke 8:52

7:14 Luke 8:54

John 11:43

Acts 9:40

7:16 1 Luke 1:65-68

7:22 Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:18; 61:1

Luke 4:18

7:26 Luke 1:76

7:27 1Exod 23:20 1Mal 3:1

7:28 Luke 1:15

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• 7:11-15 The widow’s situation was serious. She had lost her husband, and now her only son had died—her last means of support. The crowd of mourners would go home, and she would be left penniless and alone. The widow was probably past the age of childbearing and would not marry again. Unless a relative came to her aid, her future was bleak. She would be an easy prey for swindlers, and she would likely be reduced to begging for food. In fact, as Luke repeatedly emphasizes, this woman was just the kind of person Jesus had come to help—and help her he did. Jesus has great compassion on your pain, and he has the power to bring hope out of any tragedy.

7:11-17 This story illustrates salvation. The whole world was dead in sin (Ephesians 2:1), just as the widow’s son was dead. Being dead, we could do nothing to help ourselves—we couldn’t even ask for help. But God had compassion on us, and he sent Jesus to raise us to life with him (Ephesians 2:4-7). The dead man did not earn his second chance at life, and we cannot earn our new life in Christ. But we can accept God’s gift of life, praise God for it, and use our lives to do his will.

7:12 Honoring the dead was important in Jewish tradition. A funeral procession, with relatives of the dead person following the body that was wrapped and carried on a kind of stretcher, would make its way through town, and bystanders would be expected to join the procession. In addition, hired mourners would cry aloud and draw attention to the procession. The family’s mourning would continue for 30 days.

7:16 The people thought of Jesus as a prophet because, like the Old Testament prophets, he boldly proclaimed God’s message and sometimes raised the dead. Both Elijah and Elisha raised children from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:18-37). The people were correct in thinking that Jesus was a prophet, but he is much more—he was God himself.

7:18-23 John was confused because the reports he received about Jesus were unexpected and incomplete. John’s doubts were natural, and Jesus didn’t rebuke him for them. Instead, he responded in a way that John would understand. Jesus explained that he had accomplished what the Messiah was supposed to accomplish. God can handle our doubts, and he welcomes our questions. Do you have questions about Jesus—about who he is or what he expects of you? Admit them to yourself and to God, and begin looking for answers. Only as you face your doubts honestly can you begin to resolve them.

7:20-22 The proofs listed here for Jesus being the Messiah are significant. They consist of observable deeds, not theories—actions that Jesus’ contemporaries saw and reported for us to read today. The prophets had said that the Messiah would do these very acts (see Isaiah 35:5; 6:61-61). These physical proofs helped John—and will help all of us—to recognize who Jesus is.

7:28 Of all people, no one fulfilled his God-given purpose better than John. Yet in God’s Kingdom, all who come after John have a greater spiritual heritage because they have clearer knowledge of the purpose of Jesus’ death and resurrection. John was the last to
When they heard this, all the people—even the tax collectors—agreed that God’s way was right,* for they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and experts in religious law rejected God’s plan for them, for they had refused John’s baptism.

31 “To what can I compare the people of this generation?” Jesus asked. “How can I describe them? 32 They are like children playing a game in the public square. They complain to their friends,

’We played wedding songs, and you didn’t dance, so we played funeral songs, and you didn’t weep.’

33 For John the Baptist didn’t spend his time eating bread or drinking wine, and you say, ‘He’s possessed by a demon.’ 34 The Son of Man,* on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, ‘He’s a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!’ But wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it.**

A Sinful Woman Anoints Jesus’ Feet (72)

36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.* 37 When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume. 38 Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She’s a sinner!”

40 Then Jesus answered his thoughts. “Simon,” he said to the Pharisee, “I have something to say to you.”

“Go ahead, Teacher,” Simon replied.

41 Then Jesus told him this story: ‘A man loaned money to two people—one for 500 pieces of silver* to one and 50 pieces to the other. 42 But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?’

43 Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.”

44 “That’s right,” Jesus said. 45 Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

function like the Old Testament prophets, the last to prepare the people for the coming messianic age. Jesus was not contrasting the man John with individual Christians: he was contrasting life before Christ with life in the fullness of Christ’s Kingdom.

7:29-30 The common people, including the tax collectors (who embodied evil in most people’s minds) heard John’s message and repented. In contrast, the Pharisees and experts in the law—religious leaders—rejected his words. Wanting to live their own way, they justified their own point of view and refused to listen to other ideas. They “rejected God’s plan for them.” They were so close to Jesus, and yet so far away. The truth stood before them, and they rejected it. What have you done with the truth you read in God’s Word?

7:31-35 The religious leaders hated both John and Jesus, but they did not bother to be consistent in their faultfinding. They criticized John the Baptist because he fasted and drank no wine; they criticized Jesus because he ate heartily and drank wine with tax collectors and sinners. Their real objection to both men, of course, had nothing to do with dietary habits. What the Pharisees and experts in the law couldn’t stand was being exposed for their hypocrisy.

7:33, 34 The Pharisees weren’t troubled by their inconsistency toward John the Baptist and Jesus. They were good at justifying their “wisdom.” Most of us can find compelling reasons to do or believe whatever suits our purposes. If we do not examine our ideas in the light of God’s truth, however, we may be just as obviously self-serving as the Pharisees.

7:36ff A similar incident occurred later in Jesus’ ministry (see Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-11).

7:38 Although the woman was not an invited guest, she entered the house anyway and knelt behind Jesus at his feet. In Jesus’ day, it was customary to recline while eating. Dinner guests would lie on couches with their heads near the table, propping themselves up on one elbow and stretching their feet out behind them. The woman could easily anoint Jesus’ feet without approaching the table. 7:41 Greek 500 denarii. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer’s full day’s wage.

7:44a Or and reclined. 7:36 Or But wisdom is justified by all her children.
You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet. 43You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume. 44“Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”

And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Soon afterward Jesus began a tour of the nearby towns and villages, preaching and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom of God. He took his twelve disciples with him, along with some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom he had cast out seven demons; Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod’s business manager; Susanna; and many others who were contributing from their own resources to support Jesus and his disciples.

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Four Soils (77/Matthew 13:1-9; Mark 4:1-9)

One day Jesus told a story in the form of a parable to a large crowd that had gathered from many towns to hear him. 5A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. 6Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. 7Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. 8Still other seed fell on fertile soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted! When he had said this, he called out, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”

Jesus Explains the Parable of the Four Soils (78/Matthew 13:10-23; Mark 4:10-25)

His disciples asked him what this parable meant. 10He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets* of the Kingdom of God, but I use parables to teach the others so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled:

‘When they look, they won’t really see. When they hear, they won’t understand.’ *

8:10a Greek mysteries. 8:10b Isa 6:9 (Greek version).

Overflowing love is the natural response to forgiveness and the appropriate consequence of faith. But only those who realize the depth of their sin can appreciate the complete forgiveness that God offers them. Jesus has rescued all of his followers, whether they were once extremely wicked or conventionally good, from eternal death. Do you appreciate the wideness of God’s mercy? Are you grateful for his forgiveness?

The Pharisees believed that only God could forgive sins, so they wondered why this man, Jesus, was saying that the woman’s sins were forgiven. They did not grasp the fact that Jesus was indeed God. (See also 5:17-26 and notes there.)

Jesus lifted women up from degradation and servitude to the joy of fellowship and service. In Jewish culture, women were not supposed to learn from rabbis. By allowing these women to travel with him, Jesus was showing that all people are equal under God. These women supported Jesus’ ministry with their own money. They owed a great debt to him because he had driven demons out of some and had healed others.

Here we catch a glimpse of a few of the people behind the scenes in Jesus’ ministry. The ministry of those in the foreground is often supported by those whose work is less visible but just as essential. Offer your resources to God, whether or not you will be on center stage.

Jesus often communicated spiritual truth through short stories (called parables). These stories describe a familiar object or situation and give it a startling new twist. By linking the known with the hidden and forcing listeners to think, parables can point to spiritual truths. A parable compels listeners to discover the truth for themselves, and it conceals the truth from those too lazy or dull to understand it. In reading Jesus’ parables, we must be careful not to read too much into them. Most have only one point and one meaning.

Why would a farmer allow precious seed to land on the footpath, on rocks, or among thorns? This is not an irresponsible farmer scattering seeds at random. He is using the acceptable method of seeding a large field—tossing it by handfuls as he walks through the field. His goal is to get as much seed as possible to take root in good soil, but waste is inevitable as some falls or is blown into less productive areas. That some of the seed produces no crop is not the fault of the faithful farmer or of the seed. The yield depends on the condition of the soil where the seed falls. It is our responsibility to spread the seed (God’s message), but we should not give up when some of our efforts fail. Remember, not every seed falls on good soil.

Why didn’t the crowds understand Jesus’ words? Perhaps they were looking for a military leader or a political Messiah and could not fit his gentle teaching style into their preconceived idea. Perhaps they were afraid of pressure from religious leaders and did not want to look too deeply into Jesus’ words. God told Isaiah that people would listen without understanding and watch without learning anything (Isaiah 6:9), and that kind of reaction confronted Jesus. The story of the farmer was an accurate picture of the people’s reaction to the rest of his stories.
Applying God’s Word helps us grow. This is a principle 

8:18
shine your light when unbelievers need help to see.

to be helpful, we need to be well placed. Seek opportunities to

benefits for ourselves alone but pass them on to others. In order 

for Christ should be public, not hidden. We should not keep the

we have the duty to shine that light to help others. Our witness

When the light of the truth about Jesus illuminates us,

are you?

groups, follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Which type of soil

come by worries and the lure of materialism, leave no room in

the crowds who followed Jesus, believe his message but never

refuse to believe God’s message. “Rocky soil” people, like many in

Jesus appears to other women after his resurrection . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Matthew 28:8-10
Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Mark 16:9-11
Jesus’ mother and other women gather at the cross. . . . . . . . . . . . . . John 19:25-27
Weeping women follow Jesus on his way to the cross . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 23:27-31
Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Mark 7:24-30
Jesus visits Mary and Martha . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 10:38-42
Jesus heals the daughter of a Gentile woman . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 10:38-42
Jesus heals a crippled woman . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 13:10-17
A group of women travels with Jesus . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 8:1-3
Jesus forgives an adulterous woman . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 7:36-50
A sinful woman anoints Jesus’ feet . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 7:11-17
Jesus raises a widow’s son from the dead . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Luke 7:11-17
Jesus talks to a Samaritan woman at the well. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . John 4:4-26
Jesus Describes His True Family (76) /Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they couldn’t get to him because of

the crowd. 20 Someone told Jesus, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, and they

want to see you.”

21 Jesus replied, “My mother and my brothers are all those who hear God’s word and

obey it.”

Jesus and women

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Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Mark 16:9-11
Jesus appears to other women after his resurrection . . . . . . . . . . . . . . Matthew 28:8-10

As a non-Jew recording the words and works of Jesus’ life, Luke demonstrates a special

sensitivity to other “outsiders” with whom Jesus came into contact. For instance, Luke records

five events involving women that are not mentioned in the other Gospels. In first-century

Jewish culture, women were usually treated as second-class citizens with few of the rights

they never grow into maturity. They are shallow-rooted, and when they hear God’s word,

they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation.

The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. 13 The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation.

The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. 15 And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.

“No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a bowl or hides it under a bed. A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house. 17 For all that is secret will eventually be brought into the open, and everything that is concealed will be brought to light and made known to all.

“So pay attention to how you hear. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given. But for those who are not listening, even what they think they understand will be taken away from them.”

Jesus Describes His True Family (76) /Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35)

Then Jesus’ mother and brothers came to see him, but they couldn’t get to him because of

the crowd. 20 Someone told Jesus, “Your mother and your brothers are outside, and they

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21 Jesus replied, “My mother and my brothers are all those who hear God’s word and

obey it.”

8:11-15 “Footpath” people, like many of the religious leaders, refuse to believe God’s message. “Rocky soil” people, like many in the crowds who followed Jesus, believe his message but never get around to doing anything about it. “Thorn patch” people, overcome by worries and the lure of materialism, leave no room in their lives for God. “Good soil” people, in contrast to all the other groups, follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Which type of soil are you?

8:16, 17 When the light of the truth about Jesus illuminates us, we have the duty to shine that light to help others. Our witness for Christ should be public, not hidden. We should not keep the benefits for ourselves alone but pass them on to others. In order to be helpful, we need to be well placed. Seek opportunities to shine your light when unbelievers need help to see.

8:18 Applying God’s Word helps us grow. This is a principle of growth in physical, mental, and spiritual life. For example, a muscle, when exercised, will grow stronger, but an unused muscle will grow weak and flabby. If you are not growing stronger, you are growing weaker; it is impossible for you to stand still. How are you using what God has taught you?

8:21 Jesus’ true family is comprised of those who hear and obey his words. Hearing without obeying is not enough. As Jesus loved his mother (see John 19:25-27), so he loves us. Christ offers us an intimate family relationship with him (Romans 8:14-16).
Jesus Calms the Storm (87/Matthew 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41)

22 One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let’s cross to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and started out. 23 As they sailed across, Jesus settled down for a nap. But soon a fierce storm came down on the lake. The boat was filling with water, and they were in real danger.

24 The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Master, Master, we’re going to drown!"

When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and the raging waves. Suddenly the storm stopped and all was calm. 25 Then he asked them, "Where is your faith?"

The disciples were terrified and amazed. "Who is this man?” they asked each other. "When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!"

Jesus Sends Demons into a Herd of Pigs (88/Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 5:1-20)

26 So they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes,* across the lake from Galilee. 27 As Jesus was climbing out of the boat, a man who was possessed by demons came out to meet him. For a long time he had been homeless and naked, living in a cemetery outside the town.

28 As soon as he saw Jesus, he shrieked and fell down in front of him. Then he screamed, "Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? Please, I beg you, don’t torture me!" 29 For Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit to come out of him. This spirit had often taken control of the man. Even when he was placed under guard and put in chains and shackles, he simply broke them and rushed out into the wilderness, completely under the demon’s power.

30 Jesus demanded, "What is your name?"

"Legion," he replied, for he was filled with many demons. 31 The demons kept begging Jesus not to send them into the bottomless pit.*

32 There happened to be a large herd of pigs feeding on the hillside nearby, and the demons begged him to let them enter into the pigs.

So Jesus gave them permission. 33 Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the entire herd plunged down the steep hillside into the lake and drowned.

8:28 Other manuscripts read Gadarenes; still others read Gergesenes; also in 8:37. See Matt 8:28; Mark 5:1.
8:29 Greek unclean. 8:31 Or the abyss, or the underworld.

8:23 The Sea of Galilee (actually a large lake) is even today the scene of fierce storms, sometimes with waves as high as 20 feet. Jesus’ disciples were not frightened without cause. Even though several of them were expert fishermen and knew how to handle a boat, their peril was real.

8:23-25 When caught in the storms of life, it is easy to think that God has lost control and that we are at the mercy of the winds of fate. In reality, God is sovereign. He controls the history of the world as well as our personal destiny. Just as Jesus calmed the waves, he can calm whatever storms you may face.

8:26 The region of the Gerasenes was a Gentile region south-east of the Sea of Galilee, location of the Ten Towns. These were Greek cities that belonged to no country and were self-governing. Although Jews would not have raised pigs because the Jewish religion labeled them unclean, the Gentiles had no such aversion.

8:27, 28 These demons recognized Jesus and his authority immediately. They knew who Jesus was and what his great power could do to them. Demons, Satan’s messengers, are powerful and destructive. Still active today, they attempt to distort and destroy people’s relationship with God. Demons and demon possession are real. It is vital that believers recognize the power of Satan and his demons, but we shouldn’t let curiosity lead us to get involved with demonic forces (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Demons are powerless against those who trust in Jesus. If we resist the devil, he will leave us alone (James 4:7).

8:29-31 The demons begged Jesus to spare them from the bottomless pit, which is also mentioned in Revelation 9:1 and 20:1-3 as the place of confinement for Satan and his messengers. The demons, of course, knew all about this place of confinement, and they didn’t want to go there.

8:30 The demon’s name was Legion. A legion was the largest unit in the Roman army, having between 3,000 and 6,000 soldiers. The man was possessed by not one but many demons.

8:33 Why didn’t Jesus just destroy these demons—or send them to the bottomless pit? Because the time for such work had not yet come. He healed many people of the destructive effects of demon possession, but he did not yet destroy demons. The same question could be asked today—why doesn’t Jesus stop all the evil in the world? His time for that has not yet come. But it will come. The book of Revelation portrays the future victory of Jesus over Satan, his demons, and all evil.

8:33-37 A man had been freed from the devil’s power, but the people in the town thought only about their livestock. People have...
When the herdsmen saw it, they fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. People rushed out to see what had happened. A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been freed from the demons. He was sitting at Jesus’ feet, fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.

Then those who had seen what happened told the others how the demon-possessed man had been healed. And all the people in the region of the Gerasenes begged Jesus to go away and leave them alone, for a great wave of fear swept over them.

So Jesus returned to the boat and left, crossing back to the other side of the lake.

The man who had been freed from the demons begged to go with him. But Jesus sent him home, saying, “No, go back to your family, and tell them everything God has done for you.” So he went all through the town proclaiming the great things Jesus had done for him.

Jesus Heals a Bleeding Woman and Restores a Girl to Life

(89/Mark 5:21-43)

On the other side of the lake the crowds welcomed Jesus, because they had been waiting for him. Then a man named Jairus, a leader of the local synagogue, came and fell at Jesus’ feet, pleading with him to come home with him. His only daughter,* who was about twelve years old, was dying.

As Jesus went with him, he was surrounded by the crowds. A woman in the crowd had suffered for twelve years with constant bleeding,* and she could find no cure. Coming up behind Jesus, she touched the fringe of his robe. Immediately, the bleeding stopped.

“Who touched me?” Jesus asked.

Everyone denied it, and Peter said, “Master, this whole crowd is pressing up against you.”

But Jesus said, “Someone deliberately touched me, for I felt healing power go out from me.” When the woman realized that she could not stay hidden, she began to tremble and fell to her knees in front of him. The whole crowd heard her explain why she had touched him and that she had been immediately healed. “Daughter,” he said to her, “your faith has made you well. Go in peace.”

While he was still speaking to her, a messenger arrived from the home of Jairus, the leader of the synagogue. He told him, “Your daughter is dead. There’s no use troubling the Teacher now.”

8:42 Or His only child, a daughter. 8:43 Some manuscripts add having spent everything she had on doctors.

always tended to value financial gain above needy people. Much injustice and oppression, both at home and abroad, is the direct result of some individual’s or company’s urge to get rich. People are continually being sacrificed to the god of money. Don’t think more highly of “pigs” than of people.

8:38, 39 Often Jesus would ask those he healed to be quiet about the healing, but he urged this man to return to his family and tell them what God had done for him. Why? (1) Jesus knew the man would be an effective witness to those who knew his previous condition and could attest to the miraculous healing. (2) Jesus wanted to expand his ministry by introducing his message into this Gentile area. (3) Jesus knew that the Gentiles, since they were not expecting a Messiah, would not divert his ministry by trying to crown him king. (In fact, the people in this region had asked him to go away.) When God touches your life, don’t be afraid to share the wonderful events with your family and friends.

8:41 The synagogue was the local center of worship. The synagogue leader was responsible for administration, building maintenance, and worship supervision. It would have been quite unusual for a respected synagogue leader to fall at the feet of an itinerant preacher and beg him to heal his daughter. Jesus honored this man’s humble faith (8:50, 54-56).

8:43-48 Many people surrounded Jesus as he made his way toward Jairus’s house. It was virtually impossible to get through the multitude, but one woman fought her way desperately through the crowd in order to touch Jesus. As soon as she did so, she was healed. What a difference there is between the crowds that are curious about Jesus and the few who reach out and touch him! Today, many people are familiar with who Jesus is, but nothing in their lives is changed by knowing he is God’s Son. It is only faith in Christ that releases God’s healing power. Are you just curious about God, or do you reach out to him in faith, knowing that his mercy will bring healing to your body, soul, and spirit?

8:45, 46 Certainly Jesus knew who had touched him—he knew that someone had intentionally touched him in order to receive some sort of healing. Jesus wanted the woman to step forward and identify herself. To let her slip away would have meant a lost opportunity for Jesus to teach her that his cloak did not have magical properties, it had been her faith in him that had healed her. He may also have wanted to teach the crowds a lesson.

According to Jewish law, a man who touched a menstruating woman became ceremonially unclean (Leviticus 15:19-28). This was true whether her bleeding was normal or, as in this woman’s case, the result of an abnormal condition. To protect themselves from such defilement, Jewish men carefully avoided touching, speaking to, or even looking at women. By contrast, Jesus proclaimed to hundreds of people that this “unclean” woman had touched him—and then he healed her. In Jesus’ mind, this suffering woman was not to be overlooked. As God’s creation, she deserved attention and respect.
8:56 But when Jesus heard what had happened, he said to Jairus, “Don’t be afraid. Just have faith, and she will be healed.”

8:57 When they arrived at the house, Jesus wouldn’t let anyone go in with him except Peter, John, James, and the little girl’s father and mother. The house was filled with people weeping and wailing, but he said, “Stop the weeping! She isn’t dead; she’s only asleep.”

8:58 But the crowd laughed at him because they all knew she had died. Then Jesus took her by the hand and said in a loud voice, “My child, get up!” And at that moment her life returned, and she immediately stood up! Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were overwhelmed, but Jesus insisted that they not tell anyone what had happened.

耶稣派遣十二门徒（93/马可10:1-15；马太6:7-13）

9 有一天，耶稣叫他的十二个门徒和他一起去传扬福音，为了把所有的鬼赶出去，把所有的病治好。2 然后，他让他们告诉每一个人关于上帝的国度和治疗的病。3 “不要为了你的旅程而带东西去。”他教导他们。“不要带一个行走的背包，一个旅行者的包，食物，钱”，或者改变你的衣服。4 “无论你在哪里，你要住在你父母的房子。5 而且，如果你的城市拒绝迎接你，你要把他们的尘土从你的脚上抖下来，因为他们的尘土没有带来好处，因为耶稣的门徒的提供的生活。”

所以，他们开始他们的巡回，传扬好消息，治疗的病。

希律杀约翰•巴教士（95/马可14:1-12；马太6:14-29）

7 当时，当希律安提帕，加利利的统治者，听说关于耶稣的一切，他非常生气，因为所有人都知道她已经死了。8 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。9 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。10 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。11 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。12 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。13 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。14 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。15 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。16 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。17 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。18 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。19 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。20 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。21 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。22 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。23 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。24 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。25 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。26 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。27 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。28 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。29 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。30 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。31 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。32 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。33 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。34 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。35 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。36 有些人说，约翰•巴教士已经从死里复活。
9:9
Luke 23:8

"I beheaded John," Herod said, "so who is this man about whom I hear such stories?"
And he kept trying to see him.

Jesus Feeds Five Thousand (96/Matthew 14:13-21; Mark 6:30-44; John 6:1-15)

10When the apostles returned, they told Jesus everything they had done. Then he slipped
quietly away with them toward the town of Bethsaida. 11But the crowds found out where he
was going, and they followed him. He welcomed them and taught them about the Kingdom
of God, and he healed those who were sick.
12Late in the afternoon the twelve disciples came to him and said, "Send the crowds away
to the nearby villages and farms, so they can find food and lodging for the night. There is
nothing to eat here in this remote place."

Jesus singled out three of his 12 disciples for special training. James, his brother John, and
Peter made up this inner circle. Each eventually played a key role in the early church. Peter
became a great speaker, John became a major writer, and James was the first of the 12
disciples to die for his faith.

The fact that his name is always mentioned before John’s indicates that James was the
older brother. Zebedee, their father, owned a fishing business in which they worked alongside
Peter and Andrew. When Peter, Andrew, and John left Galilee to see John the Baptist, James
stayed back with the boats and fishing nets. Later, when Jesus called them, James was as
eager as his partners to follow.

James enjoyed being in the inner circle of Jesus’ disciples, but he misunderstood Jesus’
purpose. He and his brother even tried to secure their role in Jesus’ Kingdom by asking Jesus
to promise them each a special position. Like the other disciples, James had a limited view
of what Jesus was doing on earth, picturing only an earthly kingdom that would overthrow
Rome and restore Israel’s former glory. But above all, James wanted to be with Jesus. He had
found the right leader, even though he was still on the wrong timetable. It took Jesus’ death
and resurrection to correct his view.

James was the first of the 12 disciples to die for the gospel. He was willing to die because
he knew Jesus had conquered death, the doorway to eternal life. Our expectations about
life will be limited if this life is all we can see. Jesus promised eternal life to those willing to
trust him. If we believe this promise, he will give us the courage to stand for him even during
dangerous times.

Strengths and
accomplishments

- One of the 12 disciples
- One of a special inner circle of three with Peter and John
- First of the 12 disciples to be killed for his faith

Weaknesses
and mistakes

- Two outbursts from James indicate struggles with temper (Luke
  9:54) and selfishness (Mark 10:37). Both times, he and his brother,
  John, spoke as one

Lesson from his life

- Loss of life is not too heavy a price to pay for following Jesus

Vital statistics

- Where: Galilee
- Occupations: Fisherman, disciple
- Contemporaries: Jesus, Pilate, Herod Agrippa

Key verses

"Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came over and spoke
to him. 'Teacher,' they said, 'we want you to do us a favor.' 'What is
your request?' he asked. They replied, 'When you sit on your glorious
throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right
and the other on your left'" (Mark 10:35-37).

James’s story is told in the Gospels. He is also mentioned in Acts 1:13 and 12:2.
Jesus replied, "Tell them to sit down in groups of about fifty each." So the people all sat down. Jesus took the five loaves and two fish, looked up toward heaven, and blessed them. Then, breaking the loaves into pieces, he kept giving the bread and fish to the disciples so they could distribute it to the people. They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers!

Peter Says Jesus Is the Messiah (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30)

One day Jesus left the crowds to pray alone. Only his disciples were with him, and he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

"Well," they replied, "some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say you are one of the other ancient prophets risen from the dead."

Then he asked them, "But who do you say I am?"

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah* sent from God!"

Jesus Predicts His Death the First Time (Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31–9:1)

Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone who he was. "The Son of Man* must suffer many terrible things," he said. "He will be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He will be killed, but on the third day he will be raised from the dead."

Then he said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he comes again. But one day he will return in great glory to set up his eternal Kingdom.

For there were about 5,000 men among the crowd, along with women and children. The disciples picked up twelve baskets of the leftovers! (Matthew 16:9-12; Mark 8:19-21; Luke 9:16-17; John 6:11-13)

Peter replied, "You are the Messiah* sent from God!"

The Christian faith goes beyond knowing what others believe. It requires us to hold beliefs for ourselves. When Jesus asks, "Who do you say I am?" he wants us to take a stand. Who do you say Jesus is?

Jesus told his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ because at this point they didn't fully understand the significance of that confession—nor would anyone else. Everyone still expected the Messiah to come as a conquering king. But even though Jesus was the Messiah, he still had to suffer, be rejected by the leaders, be killed, and rise from the dead. When the disciples saw all this happen to Jesus, they would understand what the Messiah had come to do. Only then would they be equipped to share the Good News that the Messiah had come and brought his Kingdom to people's hearts.

This was the turning point in Jesus' instruction to his disciples. From then on he began teaching clearly and specifically what they could expect, so that they would not be surprised when it happened. He explained that he would not now be the conquering Messiah because he first had to suffer, die, and rise again. But one day he would return in great glory to set up his eternal Kingdom.

To take up the cross meant to carry one's own cross to the place of crucifixion. Many Galileans had been killed that way by the Romans—and Jesus would face it as well. With this word picture, Christ presented a clear and challenging description of the Christian life. Being his disciple means putting aside selfish desires, shouldering one's "cross" every day, and following him. It is simple and yet so demanding. For the original Twelve, this meant literal suffering and death. For believers today, it means understanding that we belong to him and that we live to serve his purposes. Consider this: Do you think of your relationship with God primarily in terms of what's in it for you (which is considerable) or in terms of what you can do for him? Are you willing to deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow him? Anything less is not discipleship; it is merely superficial lip service. (See also the note on 14:27.)

If this present life is most important to you, you will do everything you can to protect it. You will not want to do anything that might endanger your safety, health, or comfort. By contrast, if following Jesus is most important, you may find yourself in unsafe, unhealthy, and uncomfortable places. You may risk death, but you will not fear it because you know that Jesus will raise you to eternal life. Nothing material can compensate for the loss of eternal life. Jesus' disciples are not to use their lives on earth merely to please themselves; they should spend their lives serving God and others.

Luke's Greek audience would have had difficulty understanding a God who could die, just as Jesus' Jewish audience would have been perplexed by a Messiah who would let himself be captured and killed. Both would be ashamed of Jesus if they did not look past his death to his glorious resurrection and second coming. Then they would see Jesus, not as a loser,
returns in his glory and in the glory of the Father and the holy angels. 27 I tell you the truth, some standing here right now will not die before they see the Kingdom of God.

Jesus Is Transfigured on the Mountain (111/Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13) 28 About eight days later Jesus took Peter, John, and James up on a mountain to pray. 29 And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was transformed, and his clothes became dazzling white. 30 Suddenly, two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared and began talking with Jesus. 31 They were glorious to see. And they were speaking about his exodus from this world, which was about to be fulfilled in Jerusalem.

Peter and the others had fallen asleep. When they woke up, they saw Jesus' glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As Moses and Elijah were starting to leave, Peter, not even knowing what he was saying, blurted out, "Master, it's wonderful for us to be here! Let's make three shelters as memorials—one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 34 But even as he was saying this, a cloud overshadowed them, and terror gripped them as the cloud covered them.

Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One.* Listen to him." 35 When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

Jesus Heals a Demon-Possessed Boy (112/Matthew 17:14-21; Mark 9:14-29) 36 The next day, after they had come down the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. 37 A man in the crowd called out to him, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, my only child. 38 An evil spirit keeps seizing him, making him scream. It throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It batters him and hardly ever leaves him alone. 40 I begged your disciples to cast out the spirit, but they couldn't do it."

Jesus said, "You faithless and corrupt people! How long must I be with you and put up with you?" Then he said to the man, "Bring your son here." 41 As the boy came forward, the demon knocked him to the ground and threw him into a violent convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil* spirit and healed the boy. Then he gave him back to his father. 42 Awe gripped the people as they saw this majestic display of God's power.

Jesus Predicts His Death the Second Time (113/ Matthew 17:22-23; Mark 9:30-32) 43 While everyone was marveling at everything he was doing, Jesus said to his disciples, 44 "Listen to me and remember what I say. The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of his enemies." 45 But they didn't know what he meant. Its significance was hidden from them, so they couldn't understand it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

Jesus Heals a Blind Man (114/Mark 9:33-43) 46 Some time after this, Jesus set out toward the region of Tyre and Sidon. 47 As he was going through the town of Sidon, Jesus was met by a man from Greece named Philip, a member of the Jewish faith. 48 This man asked Jesus for help.

Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem

Jesus Predicts the Destruction of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:1-28) 49 Jesus knew they were thinking about the splendid temple, with its magnificent columns and lofty roof. 50 So he told them, "Do you see all this? Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another. Everything must be thrown to the ground." 51 Then the disciples asked, "When will this happen? And what will be the sign that this is about to come about?"

Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Temple

Jesus' prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Temple was a warning to his followers about the impending destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. He told them that not one stone would be left standing. The prophecy was fulfilled in AD 70 when the Roman army destroyed the temple. The destruction of the temple was a significant event in Jewish history and had a profound impact on the lives of the Jewish people. The prophecy of Jesus about the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the Temple is a reminder of the importance of faith and perseverance in the face of adversity.
The Disciples Argue about Who Would Be the Greatest (115/Matthew 18:1–6; Mark 9:33–37)

46 Then his disciples began arguing about which of them was the greatest. 47 But Jesus knew their thoughts, so he brought a little child to his side. 48 Then he said to them, “Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me also welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest.”

The Disciples Forbid Another to Use Jesus’ Name (116/Mark 9:38–41)

49 John said to Jesus, “Master, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he isn’t in our group.” 50 But Jesus said, “Don’t stop him! Anyone who is not against you is for you.”

2. Jesus’ ministry on the way to Jerusalem

Jesus Teaches about the Cost of Following Him (122/Matthew 8:18–22)

As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. 51 He sent messengers ahead to a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival. 52 But the people of the village did not welcome Jesus because he was on his way to Jerusalem. 53 When James and John saw this, they said to Jesus, “Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?” 54 But Jesus turned and rebuked them. 55 So they went on to another village.

As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.” 56 But Jesus replied, “Foxes have dens to live in, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place even to lay his head.” 57 He said to another person, “Come, follow me.”

The man agreed, but he said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” 58 But Jesus told him, “Any human, if he puts a hand to the plow and then looks back, is not fit for the kingdom of God.” 59 Another said, “Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.”

60 But Jesus told him, “Anyone who puts a hand to the plow and then looks back is not fit for the kingdom of God.”

Our care for others is a measure of our greatness. How much concern do you show for others? This is a vital question that can accurately measure your greatness in God’s eyes. How have you expressed your care for others lately, especially the helpless, the needy, the poor—those who can’t return your love and concern? Your honest answer to that question will give you a good idea of your real greatness.

The disciples were jealous. Nine of them together had been unable to cast out a single evil spirit (9:40), but when they saw a man who was not one of their group casting out demons, they told him to stop. Our pride is hurt when someone else succeeds where we have failed, but Jesus says there is no room for such jealousy in the spiritual warfare of his Kingdom. Share Jesus’ open-arms attitude toward Christian workers outside your group. Rejoice when they are able to bring people to Christ.

Although Jesus knew he would face persecution and death in Jerusalem, he was determined to go there. That kind of resolve should characterize our lives as well. When God gives us a course of action, we must move steadily toward our destination, regardless of the potential hazards that await us there.

After Assyria invaded Israel, the northern kingdom, and resettled it with its own people (2 Kings 17:24–41), the mixed race that developed became known as the Samaritans. “Pure-bred” Jews hated these “half-breeds,” and the Samaritans in turn hated the Jews. So many tensions arose between the two peoples that Jewish travelers between Galilee and southern Judea often would walk around rather than through Samaritan territory, even though this would lengthen their trip considerably. Jesus held no such prejudices, and he sent messengers ahead to get things ready in a Samaritan village. But the village refused to welcome these Jewish travelers who were headed for Jerusalem.

Luke does not say whether the father is already dead or terminally ill. It seems likely that if the father were dead, the son would have been fulfilling the burial duties. Jesus was saying that true discipleship requires instant action. Jesus did not teach people to forsake responsibilities to family, but he often gave commands to people in light of their real motives. Perhaps this man wanted to delay following Christ and was using his father as an excuse. Following Jesus has a cost, and each of us must be ready to serve, even when it requires sacrifice.

What does Jesus want from us? Total dedication, not half-hearted commitment. We can’t pick and choose among Jesus’ ideas and follow him selectively; we have to accept the cross along with the crown. We must count the cost and be willing to abandon everything else that has given us security—without looking back. With our focus on Jesus, we should allow nothing to distract us from following him.
Jesus Sends Out Seventy-Two Messengers (130)

10 The Lord now chose. Twenty-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit. 2 These were his instructions to them: “The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. 3 Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves. 4 Don’t take any money with you, nor a traveler’s bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don’t stop to greet anyone on the road.

5 “Whenever you enter someone’s home, first say, ‘May God’s peace be on this house.’ 6 If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you. 7 Don’t move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide. Don’t hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve their pay.

8 “If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you. 9 Heal the sick, and tell them, ‘The Kingdom of God is near you now.’ 10 But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say, 11 ‘We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!’ 12 Assure you, even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a town on judgment day.

A COLLECTION OF ATTITUDES ABOUT OTHERS’ NEEDS

To the expert in religious law ……….. the wounded man was a subject to discuss.
To the bandits ……………………. the wounded man was someone to use and exploit.
To the religious men ……………….. the wounded man was a problem to be avoided.
To the innkeeper ……………………. the wounded man was a customer to serve for a fee.
To the Samaritan ……………………. the wounded man was a human being worth being cared for and loved.
To Jesus …………………………… all of them and all of us were worth dying for.

Confronting the needs of others brings out various attitudes in us. Jesus used the story of the good but despised Samaritan to make clear what attitude was acceptable to him. If we are honest, we often will find ourselves in the place of the expert in religious law, needing to learn again who our neighbor is. Note these different attitudes toward the wounded man.
LUKE 10

13 “What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. 14 Yes, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you. 15 And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead. 16 Then he said to the disciples, “Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting God, who sent me.”

The Seventy-Two Messengers Return (131)

17 When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, “Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!” 18 “Yes,” he told them, “I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! 19 Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. 20 But don’t rejoice because evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven.” 21 At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to choose to reveal him.” 22 “My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.” 23 Then when they were alone, he turned to the disciples and said, “Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. 24 I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn’t see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn’t hear it.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Good Samaritan (132)

25 One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” 26 Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

10:15 Greek to Hades.

10:13 Korazin was a city near the Sea of Galilee, probably about two miles north of Capernaum. Tyre and Sidon were cities destroyed by God as punishment for their wickedness (see Ezekiel 26–28).

10:15 Capernaum was Jesus’ base for his Galilean ministry. The city was located at an important crossroads used by traders and the Roman army, so a message proclaimed in Capernaum was likely to go far. Many people of Capernaum did not understand Jesus’ miracles or believe his teaching, however, and the city was included among those who would be judged for rejecting him.

10:17-20 The disciples had seen tremendous results as they ministered in Jesus’ name and with his authority. They were elated by the victories they had witnessed, and Jesus shared their enthusiasm. He helped them get their priorities right, however, by reminding them of their most important victory—that their names were registered in heaven. This honor was more important than any of their accomplishments. As we see God’s wonders at work in and through us, we should not lose sight of the greatest wonder of all—our heavenly citizenship.

10:18, 19 Jesus may have been looking ahead to his victory over Satan at the cross. John 12:31, 32 indicates that Satan would be judged and driven out at the time of Jesus’ death. On the other hand, Jesus may have been warning his disciples against pride. Perhaps he was referring to Isaiah 14:12-17, which begins, “How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star, son of the morning!” Some interpreters identify this verse with Satan and explain that Satan’s pride led to all the evil we see on earth today. To Jesus’ disciples, who were thrilled with their power over evil spirits (“snakes and scorpions”), he may have been giving this stern warning: “Yours is the kind of pride that led to Satan’s downfall. Be careful!”

10:21 Jesus thanked God that spiritual truth was for everyone and not just for the elite. Many of life’s rewards seem to go to the intelligent, the rich, the good looking, or the powerful, but the Kingdom of God is equally available to all, regardless of position or abilities. We come to Jesus, not through strength or brains, but through childlike trust. Jesus is not opposed to engaging in scholarly pursuits; he is opposed to spiritual pride (being wise in one’s own eyes). Join Jesus in thanking God that we all have equal access to him. Trust in God’s grace, not in your personal qualifications, for your citizenship in the Kingdom.

10:22 Christ’s mission was to reveal God the Father to people. His words brought difficult ideas down to earth. He explained God’s love through stories, teachings, and, most of all, his life. By examining Jesus’ actions, principles, and attitudes, we can understand God more clearly.

10:23, 24 Old Testament men of God, such as David and Isaiah, made many God-inspired predictions that Jesus fulfilled. As Peter later wrote, these prophets wondered what their words meant and when they would be fulfilled (1 Peter 1:10-13). The disciples had the fantastic opportunity of being eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of those prophecies. For many months, however, they took Jesus for granted; not really listening to him or obeying him. We also have a privileged position: the legacy of 2,000 years of church history, the availability of the Bible in hundreds of languages and translations, and access to many excellent pastors and speakers. Yet often we take these for granted, not really listening to him or obeying him. Because we are privileged to know so much about Christ, we must be careful to follow him.
27 The man answered, ‘“You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.”’

28 “Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

29 The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

LUKE 10

Many older brothers and sisters have an irritating tendency to take charge, a habit developed while growing up. We can easily see this pattern in Martha, the older sister of Mary and Lazarus. She was used to being in control.

The fact that Martha, Mary, and Lazarus are remembered for their hospitality takes on added significance when we note that hospitality was a social requirement in their culture. It was considered shameful to turn anyone away from your door. Apparently Martha’s family met this requirement very well. Martha worried about details. She wished to please, to serve, to do the right thing—but she often succeeded in making everyone around her uncomfortable. Perhaps as the oldest she feared shame if her home did not measure up to expectations. She tried to do everything she could to make sure that it wouldn’t happen. As a result, she found it hard to relax and enjoy her guests and even harder to accept Mary’s lack of cooperation in all the preparations. Martha’s frustration was so intense that she finally asked Jesus to settle the matter. He gently corrected her attitude and showed her that her priorities, though good, were not the best. The personal attention she gave her guests should be more important than the comforts she tried to provide for them.

Later, following her brother Lazarus’s death, Martha could hardly help being herself. When she heard Jesus was finally coming, she rushed out to meet him and expressed her inner conflict of disappointment and hope. Jesus pointed out that her hope was too limited. He was not only Lord over death; he was the resurrection and the life! Moments later, Martha again spoke without thinking, pointing out that four-day-old corpses are well on their way to decomposition. Her awareness of details sometimes kept her from seeing the whole picture, but Jesus was consistently patient with her.

In our last picture of Martha, she is once again serving a meal to Jesus and his disciples. She has not stopped serving. But the Bible records her silence this time. She has begun to learn what her younger sister already knew—that worship begins with silence and listening.

Strengths and accomplishments
- Known as a hospitable homemaker
- Believed in Jesus with growing faith
- Had a strong desire to do everything exactly right

Weaknesses and mistakes
- Expected others to agree with her priorities
- Was overly concerned with details
- Tended to feel sorry for herself when her efforts were not recognized
- Limited Jesus’ power to this life

Lessons from her life
- Getting caught up in details can make us forget the main reasons for our actions
- There is a proper time to listen to Jesus and a proper time to work for him

Vital statistics
- Where: Bethany

Key verse
“But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, ‘Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me’” (Luke 10:40).


10:27 This expert in religious law was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. He correctly understood that the law demanded total devotion to God and love for one’s neighbor. Jesus talked more about these laws elsewhere (see Matthew 19:16-22 and Mark 10:17-22).

10:27-37 The legal expert viewed the wounded man as a topic for discussion; the bandits, as an object to exploit; the priest, as a problem to avoid; and the Temple assistant, as an object of curiosity. Only the Samaritan treated him as a person to love.

From the illustration we learn three principles about loving our neighbor: (1) Lack of love is often easy to justify, even though it is never right; (2) our neighbor is anyone of any race, creed, or social background who is in need; (3) love means acting to meet the person’s need. Wherever you live, needy people are close by. There is no good reason for refusing to help.
Luke 11

11 “By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. 2 A Temple assistant* walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

3 Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. 4 Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. 5 The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins,* telling him, ‘Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I’ll pay you the next time I’m here.’

6 “Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

7 The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

8 Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”

Jesus Visits Martha and Mary (133)

38 As Jesus and the disciples continued on their way to Jerusalem, they came to a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. 39 Her sister, Mary, sat at the Lord’s feet, listening to what he taught. 40 But Martha was distracted by the big dinner she was preparing. She came to Jesus and said, “Lord, doesn’t it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come and help me.”

41 But the Lord said to her, “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! 42 There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Jesus Teaches His Disciples about Prayer (134)

11 Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

2 Jesus said, “This is how you should pray:*

   “Father, may your name be kept holy.
   May your Kingdom come soon.
3 Give us each day the food we need,*
4 and forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
And don’t let us yield to temptation.*”

10:31 Lev 21:1-3
10:32 Greek [Levi-ite]. 10:35 Greek two denarii. A denarius was equivalent to a laborer’s full day’s wage.
10:38 John 11:1; 12:2-3
10:41 Mark 11:25-34
10:42 Ps 27:4
Phil 3:13-14
11:1 Luke 3:21
11:2-4 Matt 6:9-13
11:4 Matt 18:35
Mark 11:25

JESUS VISITS MARY AND MARTHA

After teaching throughout Galilee, Jesus returned to Jerusalem for the Festival of Shelters (John 7:2ff). He spoke in Jerusalem and then visited his friends Mary and Martha in Bethany, a tiny village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives.

- 10:33 A deep hatred existed between Jews and Samaritans. The Jews saw themselves as pure descendants of Abraham, while the Samaritans were a mixed race produced when Jews from the northern kingdom intermarried with other peoples after Israel’s exile (see also the note on 9:53). To this legal expert, the person least likely to act correctly would be the Samaritan. In fact, he did not even say the word Samaritan in answer to Jesus’ question. This expert’s attitude betrayed his lack of the very thing that he had earlier said the law commanded—love.

- 10:38-42 Mary and Martha both loved Jesus. On this occasion they were both serving him. But Martha thought Mary’s style of serving was inferior to hers. She didn’t realize that in her desire to serve, she was actually neglecting her guest. Are you so busy doing things for Jesus that you’re not spending any time with him? Don’t let your service become self-serving. Jesus did not blame Martha for being concerned about household chores. He was only asking her to set priorities. Service to Christ can degenerate into mere busyness that is totally devoid of devotion to God.

11:2-13 Notice the order in this prayer. First, Jesus praised God; then he made his requests. Praising God first puts us in the right frame of mind to tell him about our needs. Too often our prayers are more like shopping lists than conversations. These verses focus on three aspects of prayer: its content (11:2-4), our persistence (11:5-10), and God’s faithfulness (11:11-13).

11:3 God’s provision is daily, not all at once. We cannot store it up and then cut off communication with God. And we dare not be self-satisfied. If you are running low on strength, ask yourself, “How long have I been away from the Source?”

11:4 When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he made forgiveness the cornerstone of their relationship with God. God has forgiven our sins; we must now forgive those who have wronged us. To remain unforgiving shows we have not understood that we
5 Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: “Suppose you went to a friend's house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, 6 ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat. 7 And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, 'Don't bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can't help you.' 8 But I tell you this—though he won't do it for friendship's sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.*

9 “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. 10 For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

11 “You fathers—if your children ask* for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? 12 Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! 13 So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.”

Jesus Answers Hostile Accusations (135)

14 One day Jesus cast out a demon from a man who couldn't speak, and when the demon was gone, the man began to speak. The crowds were amazed, 15 but some of them said, “No wonder he can cast out demons. He gets his power from Satan,* the prince of demons.”

16 Others, trying to test Jesus, demanded that he show them a miraculous sign from heaven to prove his authority.

17 He knew their thoughts, so he said, "Any kingdom divided by civil war is doomed. A family splintered by feuding will fall apart. 18 You say I am empowered by Satan. But if Satan is divided and fighting against himself, how can his kingdom survive? 19 And if I am empowered by Satan, what about your own exorcists? They cast out demons, too, so they will condemn you for what you have said. 20 But if I am casting out demons by the power of God,* then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you. 21 For when a strong man like Satan is fully armed and guards his palace, his possessions are safe—22 until someone even stronger attacks and overpowers him, strips him of his weapons, and carries off his belongings.

23 “Anyone who isn't with me opposes me, and anyone who isn't working with me is actually working against me.

Our Hearts Deeply Need to Be Forgiven

11:8 Persistence, or boldness, in prayer overcomes our insensitivity, not God's. To practice persistence does more to change our heart and mind than his, and it helps us understand and express the intensity of our need. Persistence in prayer helps us recognize God’s work.

11:13 Even though good fathers make mistakes, they treat their children well. How much better our perfect heavenly Father treats his children! The most important gift he could ever give us is the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), whom he promised to give all believers after his death, resurrection, and return to heaven (John 15:26).

A similar and possibly separate event is reported in Matthew 12:22-45 and Mark 3:20-30. The event described by Luke happened in Judea, while the other took place in Galilee. According to Luke, Jesus spoke to the crowds; in Matthew and Mark, he accused the Pharisees.

Some of the Pharisees' followers also were exorcists— that is, they drove out demons. The Pharisees' accusations were becoming more desperate. To accuse Jesus of being empowered by Satan, the prince of demons, because Jesus was driving out demons was also to say that the Pharisees' own exorcists were doing Satan's work. Jesus turned the religious leaders' accusation against them. Jesus first dismissed their claim as absurd (What would the devil drive out his own demons?). Then he engaged in a little irony ("What about your own exorcists?"). Finally, he concluded that his work of driving out demons proved that the Kingdom of God had arrived.

Satan, who had controlled the kingdom of this world for thousands of years, was now being controlled and overpowered by Jesus and the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus’ Kingdom began to come into power at Jesus’ birth and grew as he resisted the wilderness temptations. It established itself through his teachings and healings, blossomed in victory at his resurrection and at Pentecost, and will become permanent and universal at his second coming.

Jesus may have been referring to Isaiah 49:24-26. Regardless of how great Satan’s power is, Jesus is stronger still. He will overpower Satan and dispose of him for eternity (see Revelation 20:2, 10).

How does this verse relate to 9:50: “Anyone who is not against you is for you”? In the earlier passage, Jesus was talking about a person who was driving out demons in Jesus’ name. Those who fight evil, he was saying, are on the same side as the one driving out demons in Jesus’ name. Here, by contrast, he was talking about the conflict between God and the devil. In this battle, if a person is not on God’s side, he or she is on Satan's. There is no neutral ground. Because God has already won the battle, why be on the losing side? If you aren’t actively for Christ, you are against him.
24 "When an evil spirit leaves a person, it goes into the desert, searching for rest. But when it finds none, it says, ‘I will return to the person I came from.’ So it returns and finds that its former home is all swept and in order. Then in the spirit finds seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they all enter the person and live there. And so that person is worse off than before."

27 As he was speaking, a woman in the crowd called out, “God bless your mother—the womb from which you came, and the breasts that nursed you!”

28 Jesus replied, “But even more blessed are all who hear the word of God and put it into practice.”

Jesus Warns against Unbelief (136)

29 As the crowd pressed in on Jesus, he said, “This evil generation keeps asking me to show them a miraculous sign. But the only sign I will give them is the sign of Jonah. 30 What happened to him was a sign to the people of Nineveh that God had sent him. What happens to the Son of Man* will be a sign to these people that he was sent by God. 31 "The queen of Sheba* will stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for she came from a distant land to hear the wisdom of Solomon. Now someone greater than Solomon is here—but you refuse to listen. 32 The people of Nineveh will also stand up against this generation on judgment day and condemn it, for they repented of their sins at the preaching of Jonah. Now someone greater than Jonah is here—but you refuse to repent.

Jesus Teaches about the Light Within (137)

33 "No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket.* Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.

34 “Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is bad, your body is filled with darkness. 35 Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. 36 If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.”

Jesus Criticizes the Religious Leaders (138)

37 As Jesus was speaking, one of the Pharisees invited him home for a meal. So he went in and took his place at the table.* 38 His host was amazed to see that he sat down to eat without first performing the hand-washing ceremony required by Jewish custom. 39 Then the Lord said to him, "You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and wickedness! 40 Fool! Didn’t God make the inside as well as the outside? 41 So clean the inside by giving gifts to the poor, and you will be clean all over.

11:24-26 Jesus was illustrating an unfortunate human tendency: Our desire to reform often does not last long. In Israel’s history, almost as soon as a good king would pull down idols, a bad king would set them up again. It is not enough to be emptied of evil; we must then be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish God’s new purpose in our life (see also Matthew 12:43-45; Galatians 5:22).

11:27, 28 Jesus was speaking to people who put extremely high value on family ties. Their genealogies were important guarantees that they were part of God’s chosen people. A man’s value came from his ancestors, and a woman’s value came from the sons she bore. Jesus’ response to the woman meant that a person’s obedience to God is more important than his or her place on the family tree. Consistent obedience is more important than the honor of bearing a respected son.

11:29, 30 What was the sign of Jonah? God had asked Jonah to preach repentance to the Gentiles (non-Jews). Jesus was affirming Jonah’s message. Salvation is not only for Jews but for all people. Matthew 12:40 adds another explanation: Jesus would die and rise after three days, just as the prophet Jonah was rescued after three days in the belly of the great fish.

11:29-32 The cruel, warlike men of Nineveh, capital of Assyria, repented when Jonah preached to them—and Jonah did not even care about them. The pagan queen of Sheba praised the God of Israel when she heard Solomon’s wisdom, and Solomon was full of faults. By contrast, Jesus, the perfect Son of God, came to people that he loved dearly—but they rejected him. Thus, God’s chosen people made themselves more liable to judgment than either a notoriously wicked nation or a powerful pagan queen. Compare 10:12-15, where Jesus says the evil cities of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon will be judged less harshly than the cities in Judea and Galilee that rejected Jesus’ message.

11:31, 32 The people of Nineveh and the queen of Sheba had turned to God with far less evidence than Jesus was giving his listeners—and far less than we have today. We have eyewitness reports of the risen Jesus, the continuing power of the Holy Spirit unleashed at Pentecost, easy access to the Bible, and knowledge of 2,000 years of Christ’s acts through his church. With the knowledge and insight available to us, our response to Christ ought to be even more complete and wholehearted.

11:33-36 The lamp is Christ; the eye represents spiritual understanding and insight. Evil desires make the eye less sensitive and blot out the light of Christ’s presence. If you have a hard time seeing God at work in the world and in your life, check your vision. Are any sinful desires blinding you to Christ?

11:37-39 The hand-washing ceremony was done not for health reasons but as a symbol of washing away any contamination from touching anything unclean. Not only did the Pharisees make
11:42 It was not from the Old Testament. Jesus, the greatest prophet of all, was directly giving them God’s message. 11:49 God’s prophets have been persecuted and murdered throughout history. But this generation was rejecting more than a human prophet—they were rejecting God himself. This quotation is not from the Old Testament. Jesus, the greatest prophet of all, was directly giving them God’s message. 11:51 Abel’s death is recorded in Genesis 4:8. For more about him, see his Profile in Genesis 5, p. 15. Zechariah’s death is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 (the last book in the Hebrew canon). Why would all these sins come upon this particular generation? Because they were rejecting the Messiah himself, the one to whom all their history and prophecy were pointing. 11:53, 54 The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees hoped to arrest Jesus for blasphemy, heresy, and lawbreaking. They were enraged by Jesus’ words about them, but they couldn’t arrest him for merely speaking words. They had to find a legal way to get rid of Jesus.

a public show of their washing, but they also commanded everyone else to follow a practice originally intended only for the priests.
• 11:41 The Pharisees loved to think of themselves as “clean,” but their stinginess toward God and the poor proved that they were not as clean as they thought. How do you use the resources God has entrusted to you? Are you generous in meeting the needs around you? Your generosity reveals much about the purity of your heart.
• 11:42 Rationalizing not helping others is easy because we have already given to the church, but a person who follows Jesus to the life of the church, our compassion must not stop there. Where we can help, we should help.
• 11:42-52 Jesus criticized the Pharisees and the experts in religious law harshly because they (1) washed their outsides but not their insides, (2) remembered to give a tenth of even their garden herbs but neglected justice, (3) loved praise and attention, (4) loaded people down with burdensome religious demands, and (5) prevented others from believing the truth. They went wrong by focusing on outward appearances and ignoring the inner condition of their hearts. People do the same when their service comes from a desire to be seen rather than from a pure heart that is full of love for others. People may sometimes be fooled, but God isn’t. Don’t be a Christian on the outside only. Bring your inner life under God’s control and your outer life will naturally reflect him.
• 11:44 The Old Testament laws said a person who touched a grave was unclean (Numbers 19:16). Jesus accused the Pharisees of making others unclean by their spiritual rottenness. Like unmarked graves hidden in a field, the Pharisees corrupted everyone who came in contact with them.
• 11:46 These “religious demands” were the details the Pharisees had added to God’s law. To the commandment, “Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Exodus 20:8), for example, they had added instructions regarding how far a person could walk on the Sabbath, which kinds of knots could be tied, and how much weight could be carried. Healing a person was considered unlawful work on the Sabbath although rescuing a trapped animal was permitted (14:5). No wonder Jesus condemned their additions to the law.
• 11:49 God’s prophets have been persecuted and murdered throughout history. But this generation was rejecting more than a human prophet—they were rejecting God himself. This quotation is not from the Old Testament. Jesus, the greatest prophet of all, was directly giving them God’s message.
• 11:51 Abel’s death is recorded in Genesis 4:8. For more about him, see his Profile in Genesis 5, p. 15. Zechariah’s death is recorded in 2 Chronicles 24:20-22 (the last book in the Hebrew canon). Why would all these sins come upon this particular generation? Because they were rejecting the Messiah himself, the one to whom all their history and prophecy were pointing.
Jesus Speaks against Hypocrisy (139)

12 Meanwhile, the crowds grew until thousands were milling about and stepping on each other. Jesus turned first to his disciples and warned them, “Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees—their hypocrisy. 2 The time is coming when everything that is covered up will be revealed, and all that is secret will be made known to all. 3 Whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be shouted from the housetops for all to hear! 4 Dear friends, don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot do any more to you after that. 5 But I’ll tell you whom to fear. Fear God, who has the power to kill you and then throw you into hell. * Yes, he’s the one to fear.

6 “What is the price of five sparrows—two copper coins? Yet God does not forget a single one of them. 7 And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.

8 “I tell you the truth, everyone who acknowledges me publicly here on earth, the Son of Man * will also acknowledge in the presence of God’s angels. 9 But anyone who denies me here on earth will be denied before God’s angels. 10 Anyone who speaks against the Son of Man can be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven.

11 “And when you are brought to trial in the synagogues and before rulers and authorities, don’t worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, 12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what needs to be said.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Rich Fool (140)

13 Then someone called from the crowd, “Teacher, please tell my brother to divide our father’s estate with me.”

12:6 Greek Gehenna. 12:8 ‘Son of Man’ is a title Jesus used for himself.

• 12:1, 2 As Jesus watched the huge crowds waiting to hear him, he warned his disciples against hypocrisy—trying to appear holy when one’s heart is far from God. The Pharisees could not keep their attitudes hidden forever. Their selfishness would act like yeast, and soon they would expose themselves for what they really were—power-hungry impostors, not devoted religious leaders. It is easy to be angry at the blatant hypocrisy of the Pharisees, but each of us must resist the temptation to settle for the appearance of respectability when our hearts are far from God.

12:1, 2 What are the signs of hypocrisy? (1) Hypocrisy is knowing the truth but not obeying it. People can say they follow Jesus, but not be obedient to his Word. (2) Hypocrisy is living a self-serving life. People may desire leadership only because they love position and control, not because they want to serve others. (3) Hypocrisy reduces faith to rigid rules. People can end up worshipping their own rules and regulations about what they think God wants instead of worshipping God himself. (4) Hypocrisy is outward conformity without inner reality. People can obey the details but still be disobedient in general behavior. For example, a person may carefully tithe his income, but be rude and obnoxious to his coworkers.

Many non-Christians use the supposed (or real) hypocrisy of Christians as an excuse to stay away from God and the church. Look carefully at your life. You are not perfect; therefore, at times an action or behavior might provide the ammunition for someone to label you a hypocrite. However, you must discern your own heart. Consider the signs of hypocrisy noted above and make sure you are not guilty. Then ask God to help you live rightly.

12:4, 5 Fear of opposition or ridicule can weaken our witness for Christ. Often we cling to peace and comfort, even at the cost of our walk with God. Jesus reminds us here that we should fear God who controls eternal, not merely temporal, consequences. Don’t allow fear of a person or group to keep you from standing up for Christ.

12:7 Our true value is God’s estimate of our worth, not our peers’ estimate. Other people evaluate and categorize us according to how we perform, what we achieve, and how we look. But God cares for us, as he does for all of his creatures, because we belong to him. Thus, we can face life without fear; we are very valuable to God.

12:8, 9 We deny Jesus when we (1) hope no one will find out we are Christians, (2) decide not to speak up for what is right, (3) are silent about our relationship with God, (4) blend into society, and (5) accept our culture’s non-Christian values. By contrast, we acknowledge him when we (1) live moral, upright, Christ-honoring lives, (2) look for opportunities to share our faith with others, (3) help others in need, (4) take a stand for justice, (5) love others, (6) acknowledge our loyalty to Christ, and (7) use our lives and resources to carry out his desires rather than our own.

12:10 Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. This has worried many sincere Christians, but it does not need to. The unforgivable sin is attributing to Satan the work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes (see the notes on Matthew 12:31, 32; Mark 3:28, 29). Thus, it is the deliberate and ongoing rejection of the Holy Spirit’s work and even of God himself. A person who has committed this sin is far from God and totally unaware of any sin at all. If you fear you have committed this sin, be assured that your very concern shows that you have not sinned in this way.

12:11-12 The disciples knew they could never get the upper hand in a religious dispute with the well-educated Jewish leaders. Nevertheless, they would not be left unprepared. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would give them the appropriate words in their time of need. The disciples’ testimony might not make them look impressive, but it would still point out God’s work in the world through Jesus’ life. We need to pray for opportunities to witness for Christ, and then trust him to help us with our words. This promise of the Spirit’s help, however, does not compensate for lack of preparation. Remember that these disciples had three years of personal instruction and practical application. We need to study God’s Word. Then God will bring his truths to mind when we most need them, helping us present them in the most effective way.

12:13 Problems like this were often brought to rabbis for them to settle. Jesus’ response, though not directed to the topic, is not a change of subject. Rather, Jesus is pointing to a higher issue—a correct attitude toward the accumulation of wealth. Life is more than material goods; far more important is our relationship with God. Jesus put his finger on this questioner’s heart. When we bring problems to God in prayer, he often responds in the same way, showing us how we need to change and grow in our attitude.
Jesus replied, "Friend, who made me a judge over you to decide such things as that?"

Then he said, "Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much you own."

Then he told them a story: "A rich man had a fertile farm that produced fine crops. He said to himself, 'What should I do? I don't have room for all my crops.' Then he said, 'I know! I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. Then I'll have room enough to store all my wheat and other goods. And I'll sit back and say to myself, 'My friend, you have enough stored away for years to come. Now take it easy! Eat, drink, and be merry!'"

"But God said to him, 'You fool! You will die this very night. Then who will get everything you worked for?'

"Yes, a person is a fool to store up earthly wealth but not have a rich relationship with God."

Jesus Warns about Worry

Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. Look at the ravens. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? And if worry can't accomplish a little thing like that, what's the use of worrying over bigger things?

"Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

"And don't be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don't worry about such things. These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

"So don't be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom."

Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe;
no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. 34 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

**Jesus Warns about Preparing for His Coming (142)**

35 Be dressed for service and keep your lamps burning, 36 as though you were waiting for your master to return from the wedding feast. Then you will be ready to open the door and let him in the moment he arrives and knocks. 37 The servants who are ready and waiting for his return will be rewarded. I tell you the truth, he himself will seat them, put on an apron, and serve them as they sit and eat! 38 He may come in the middle of the night or just before dawn. 39 But whenever he comes, he will reward the servants who are ready.

40 Peter asked, “Lord, is that illustration just for us or for everyone?”

41 And the Lord replied, “A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. 42 If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. 43 I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. 44 But what if the servant thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? 45 The master will return unannounced and unexpected, and he will cut the servant in pieces and banish him with the unfaithful.

46 And a servant who knows what the master wants, but isn’t prepared and doesn’t carry out those instructions, will be severely punished. 47 But someone who does not know, and then does something wrong, will be punished only lightly. When someone has been given much, much will be required in return; and when someone has been entrusted with much, even more will be required.

**Jesus Warns about Coming Division (143)**

48 “I have come to bring peace to the earth? No, I have come to divide people against each other! 49 From now on families will be split apart, three in favor of me, and two against—or two in favor and three against.”

12:34 If you concentrate your money in your business, your thoughts will center on making the business profitable. If you direct it toward other people, you will become concerned with their welfare. Where do you put your time, money, and energy? What do you think about most? How should you change the way you use your resources in order to reflect Kingdom values more accurately?

12:35-40 Jesus repeatedly said that he would leave this world but would return at some future time (see Matthew 24–25, John 14:1-3). He also said that a Kingdom was being prepared for his followers. Many Greeks envisioned this as a heavenly, idealized, spiritual Kingdom. Jews—like Isaiah and John, the writer of Revelation—saw it as a restored earthly Kingdom.

12:40 Christ’s return at an unexpected time is not a trap, a trick by which God hopes to catch us off guard. In fact, God is delaying his return so more people will have the opportunity to follow him (see 2 Peter 3:9). Before Christ’s return, we have time to live out our beliefs and to reflect Jesus’ love as we relate to others.

People who are ready for their Lord’s return are (1) not hypocritical but sincere (12:1), (2) not fearful but ready to witness (12:4-9), (3) not worried but trusting (12:25, 26), (4) not greedy but generous (12:34), (5) not lazy but diligent (12:37). May your life be more like Christ’s so that when he comes, you will be ready to greet him joyfully.

12:42-44 Jesus promises a reward for those who have been faithful to the Master. While we sometimes experience immediate and material rewards for our obedience to God, this is not always the case. If so, we would be tempted to boast about our achievements and only do good for what we get. Jesus said that if we look for rewards now, we will lose them later (see Mark 8:36). Our heavenly rewards will be the most accurate reflection of what we have done on earth, and they will be far greater than we can imagine.

12:48 Jesus has told us how to live until he comes: We must watch for him, work diligently, and obey his commands. Such attitudes are especially necessary for leaders. Watchful and faithful leaders will be given increased opportunities and responsibilities. The more resources, talents, and understanding we have, the more we are required to use them effectively. God will not hold us responsible for gifts he has not given us, but all of us have been given enough gifts and duties to keep us busy until Jesus returns.

12:50 The “baptism of suffering” to which Jesus referred was his coming crucifixion. Jesus was dreading the physical pain, of course, but even worse would be the spiritual pain of complete separation from God that would accompany his death for the sins of the world.

12:51-53 In these strange and unsettling words, Jesus revealed that his coming often results in conflict. Because he demands a response, families may be split apart when some choose to follow him and others refuse to do so. Jesus allows no middle ground. He demands loyalty and commitment, sometimes to the point of severing other relationships. Are you willing to risk your family’s disapproval in order to follow the Lord?

12:54-57 For most of recorded history, the world’s principal occupation was farming. The farmer depended directly on the weather for his livelihood. He needed just the right amounts of sun and rain—not too much, not too little—to make his living, and he grew skilled at interpreting natural signs. Jesus was
\textbf{SEVEN SABBATH MIRACLES}

- Jesus sends a demon out of a man \( \text{(Mark 1:21-28)} \)
- Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law \( \text{(Mark 1:29-31)} \)
- Jesus heals a lame man by the pool of Bethesda \( \text{(John 5:1-18)} \)
- Jesus heals a man with a deformed hand \( \text{(Mark 3:1-6)} \)
- Jesus restores a crippled woman \( \text{(Luke 13:10-17)} \)
- Jesus heals a man with swollen arms and legs \( \text{(Luke 14:1-6)} \)
- Jesus heals a man born blind \( \text{(John 9:1-16)} \)

Over the centuries, the Jewish religious leaders had added rule after rule to God’s law. For example, God’s law said the Sabbath is a day of rest (Exodus 20:10, 11). But the religious leaders added to that law, creating one that said, “You cannot heal on the Sabbath” because that is “work.” Seven times Jesus healed people on the Sabbath. In doing this, he was challenging these religious leaders to look beyond their rules to their true purpose—to honor God by helping those in need. Would God have been pleased if Jesus had ignored these people?

announcing an earthshaking event that would be much more important than the year’s crops—the coming of God’s Kingdom. Just as dark clouds forewarn of a rainstorm, there were signs that the Kingdom would soon arrive. But Jesus’ hearers, though skilled at interpreting weather signs, were intentionally ignoring the signs of the times.

13:1-5 Pilate may have killed the Galileans because he thought they were rebelling against Rome; those killed by the tower in Siloam may have been working for the Romans on an aqueduct there. The Pharisees, who were opposed to using force to deal with Rome, would have said that the Galileans killed by Pilate deserved to die for rebelling. The Zealots, a group of anti-Roman terrorists, would have said the aqueduct workers deserved to die for cooperating. Jesus dismissed the idea that accidents or human cruelties were God’s judgment on especially bad sinners. Neither the Galileans nor the workers should be blamed for their calamities. Whether a person is killed in a tragic accident or miraculously survives is not a measure of righteousness. Everyone one has to die. Jesus did not explain why some live and some die tragically; instead he pointed to everyone’s need for repentance. No matter how or when it occurs, death is not the end. Jesus promised that those who believe in him will not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

13:6-9 In the Old Testament, a fruitful tree was often used as a symbol of godly living (see, for example, Psalm 1:3 and Jeremiah 17:7, 8). Jesus pointed out what would happen to the other kind of tree—the kind that took valuable time and space and still produced nothing for the patient gardener. By this illustration Jesus warned his listeners that God would not tolerate forever their lack of productivity. (Luke 3:9 records John the Baptist’s version of the same message.) Have you been enjoying God’s special treatment without giving anything in return? If so, respond to the Gardener’s patient care and begin to bear the fruit God has created you to produce.
his gardener, ‘I’ve waited three years, and there hasn’t been a single fig! Cut it down. It’s just
taking up space in the garden.’
8 “The gardener answered, ‘Sir, give it one more chance. Leave it another year, and I’ll give
it special attention and plenty of fertilizer. 9 If we get figs next year, fine. If not, then you can
cut it down.’”

Jesus Heals the Crippled Woman (146)
10 One Sabbath day as Jesus was teaching in a synagogue, 11 he saw a woman who had been
crippled by an evil spirit. She had been bent double for eighteen years and was unable to
stand up straight. 12 When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, “Dear woman, you are
healed of your sickness!” 13 Then he touched her, and instantly she could stand straight.
How she praised God!
14 But the leader in charge of the synagogue was indignant that Jesus had healed her on
the Sabbath day. “There are six days of the week for working,” he said to the crowd. “Come
on those days to be healed, not on the Sabbath.”
15 But the Lord replied, “You hypocrites! Each of you works on the Sabbath day! Don’t you
untie your ox or your donkey from its stall on the Sabbath and lead it out for water?” 16 This
dear woman, a daughter of Abraham, has been held in bondage by Satan for eighteen years.
Isn’t it right that she be released, even on the Sabbath?”
17 This shamed his enemies, but all the people rejoiced at the wonderful things he did.

Jesus Teaches about the Kingdom of God (147)
18 Then Jesus said, “What is the Kingdom of God like? How can I illustrate it? 19 It is like a tiny
mustard seed that a man planted in a garden; it grows and becomes a tree, and the birds
make nests in its branches.”
20 He also asked, “What else is the Kingdom of God like? 21 It is like the yeast a woman used
in making bread. Even though she put only a little yeast in three measures of flour, it perme-
ated every part of the dough.”

Jesus Teaches about Entering the Kingdom (153)
22 Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he went, always pressing on toward
Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, “Lord, will only a few be saved?”
24 He replied, “Work hard to enter the narrow door to God’s Kingdom, for many will try to
enter but will fail. 25 When the master of the house has locked the door, it will be too late.
You will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Lord, open the door for us!’ But he will reply,
‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’” 26 Then you will say, ‘But we ate and drank with
you, and you taught in our streets.’ 27 And he will reply, ‘I tell you, I don’t know you or where
you come from. Get away from me, all you who do evil.’

• 13:10-17 Why was healing considered work? The religious lead-
ers saw healing as part of a doctor’s profession, and practicing
one’s profession on the Sabbath was prohibited. The synagogue
leader could not see beyond the law to Jesus’ compassion in heal-
ing this crippled woman. Jesus shamed him and the other leaders
by pointing out their hypocrisy. They would untie their animals
and care for them, but they refused to rejoice when a human
being was freed from Satan’s bondage.
13:16 In our fallen world, disease and disability are common.
Their causes are many and often multiple—inadequate nutrition,
contact with a source of infection, lowered defenses, and even
direct attack by Satan. Whatever the immediate cause of our
illness, we can trace its original source to Satan, the author of
all the evil in our world. The Good News is that Jesus is more
powerful than the devil or any disease. He often brings physical
healing in this life; and when he returns, he will put an end to all
disease and disability.
13:18-21 The general expectation among Jesus’ hearers was
that the Messiah would come as a great king and leader, freeing
the nation from Rome and restoring Israel’s former glory. But
Jesus said his Kingdom was beginning quietly. Like the tiny
mustard seed that grows into an enormous tree, or the spoonful
of yeast that makes the bread dough double in size, the Kingdom
of God would eventually push outward until the whole world was
changed.
13:22 This is the second time Luke reminds us that Jesus was
intentionally going to Jerusalem (the other time is in 9:51). Jesus
knew he was on his way to die, but he continued preaching to
large crowds. The prospect of death did not deter Jesus from his
mission.
13:24, 25 Finding salvation requires more concentrated effort
than most people are willing to put forth. Obviously we cannot
save ourselves—there is no way we can work ourselves into
God’s favor. We “work hard to enter” through the narrow door
by earnestly desiring to know Jesus and diligently striving to
follow him whatever the cost. We dare not put off making this
decision because the door will not stay open forever.
13:26, 27 The people were eager to know who would be in
God’s Kingdom. Jesus explained that, although many people
know something about God, only a few have acknowledged their
sins and accepted his forgiveness. We may not necessarily see
the people we expect to find in the Kingdom of God. Some per-
fectly respectable religious leaders claiming allegiance to Jesus
will not be there because they were not true followers and
secretly were morally corrupt. Just listening to Jesus’ words or
admiring his miracles is not enough. We must turn from sin and
trust in God to save us.
God’s Kingdom will include people from every part of the world. Israel’s rejection of Jesus as Messiah would not stop God’s plan. True Israel includes all people who believe in Christ. How do your values match those of the Bible? Put God first, and you will join people from all over the world—from east and west, north and south—to take their places in the Kingdom of God. And note this: Some who seem least important now will be the greatest then, and some who are the greatest now will be least important then.**

Jesus Grieves over Jerusalem (154)

At that time some Pharisees said to him, “Get away from here if you want to live! Herod Antipas wants to kill you!”

Jesus replied, “Go tell that fox that I will keep on casting out demons and healing people today and tomorrow; and the third day I will accomplish my purpose. Yes, today, tomorrow, and the next day I must proceed on my way. For it wouldn’t do for a prophet of God to be killed except in Jerusalem! O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones God’s messengers! How often I have wanted to gather your children together as a hen protects her chicks beneath her wings, but you wouldn’t let me. And now, look, your house is abandoned. And you will never see me again until you say, ‘Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

Jesus Heals a Man with Swollen Limbs (155)

One Sabbath day Jesus went to eat dinner in the home of a leader of the Pharisees, and the people were watching him closely. There was a man there whose arms and legs were swollen. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in religious law, “Is it permitted in the law to heal people on the Sabbath day, or not?” When they refused to answer, Jesus touched the sick man and healed him and sent him away. Then he turned to them and said, “Which of you doesn’t work on the Sabbath? If your son* or your cow falls into a pit, don’t you rush to get him out?” Again they could not answer.

Jesus Teaches about Humility (156)

When Jesus noticed that all who had come to the dinner were trying to sit in the seats of honor near the head of the table, he gave them this advice: “When you are invited to a wedding feast, don’t sit in the seat of honor. What if someone who is more distinguished than you has also been invited? Then the host will come and say, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then you will be embarrassed, and you will have to take whatever seat is left at the foot of the table!*

*Instead, take the lowest place at the foot of the table. Then when your host sees you, he will come and say, ‘Friend, we have a better place for you!’ Then you will be honored in front...”

Jesus advised people not to rush for the best places at a feast. People today are just as eager to raise their social status, whether by being with the right people, dressing for success, or driving the right car. Whom do you try to impress? Rather than aiming for prestige, look for a place where you can serve. If God wants you to serve on a wider scale, he will invite you to take a higher place.

Jesus taught two lessons here. First, he spoke to the guests, telling them not to seek places of honor. Service is more important in God’s Kingdom than status. Second, he told the host not to be exclusive about whom he invited. God opens his Kingdom to everyone.
of all the other guests. 11 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

12 Then he turned to his host. “When you put on a luncheon or a banquet,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will invite you back, and that will be your only reward. 13 Instead, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.

14 Then at the resurrection of the righteous, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Great Feast (157)

15 Hearing this, a man sitting at the table with Jesus exclaimed, “What a blessing it will be to attend a banquet* in the Kingdom of God!”

16 Jesus replied with this story: “A man prepared a great feast and sent out many invitations. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servant to tell the guests, ‘Come, the banquet is ready!’ But they all began making excuses. One said, ‘I have just bought a field and must inspect it. Please excuse me.’ 17 Another said, ‘I have just bought five pairs of oxen, and I want to try them out. Please excuse me.’ 18 Another said, ‘I now have a wife, so I can’t come.’

19 “The servant returned and told his master what they had said. His master was furious and said, ‘Go quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.’ 20 After the servant had done this, he reported, ‘There is still room for more.’ 21 So his master said, ‘Go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come, so that the house will be full.’ 22 For none of those I first invited will get even the smallest taste of my banquet.”

Jesus Teaches about the Cost of Being a Disciple (158)

23 A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. 24 And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple. 25 But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? 26 Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. 27 They would say, ‘There’s the person who started building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’

14:11 How can we humble ourselves? Some people try to give the appearance of humility in order to manipulate others. Others think that humility means putting themselves down. Truly humble people compare themselves only with Christ, realize their sinfulness, and understand their limitations. On the other hand, they also recognize their gifts and strengths and are willing to use them as Christ directs. Humility is not self-degradation; it is realistic self-assessment and commitment to serve. 14:15-24 The man sitting at the table with Jesus envisioned the glory of God’s Kingdom, but he did not yet understand how to have a share in it. In Jesus’ story, many people turned down the invitation to the banquet because the timing was inconvenient. We, too, may resist or delay responding to God’s invitation, and our excuses may sound reasonable—work duties, family responsibilities, financial needs, or other reasons. Nevertheless, God’s invitation is the most important event in your life, no matter how inconveniently it may be timed. Are you making excuses to avoid responding to God’s call? Jesus reminds us that the time will come when God will pull his invitation and offer it to others—then it will be too late to get into the banquet.

14:16f The custom was to send two invitations to a party: the first to announce the event and the second to tell the guests that everything was ready. The guests in Jesus’ story insulted the host by making excuses when he issued the second invitation. In Israel’s history, God’s first invitation came from Moses and the prophets; the second came from his Son. The religious leaders accepted the first invitation. They believed that God had called them to be his people, but they insulted God by refusing to accept his Son. Thus, as the master in the story sent his servant into the streets to invite the needy to his banquet, so God sent his Son to a whole world of needy people to tell them that God’s Kingdom had arrived and was ready for them.

14:18f In this chapter we read Jesus’ words against seeking status and in favor of hard work and even suffering. Let us not lose sight of the end result of all our humility and self-sacrifice—a joyous banquet with our Lord! God never asks us to suffer for the sake of suffering. He never asks us to give up something good unless he plans to replace it with something even better. Jesus is not calling us to join him in a labor camp but in a feast—the wedding feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-9), when God and his beloved church will be joined forever. 14:27 Jesus’ audience was well aware of what it meant to carry one’s own cross. When the Romans led a criminal to his execution site, he was forced to carry the cross on which he would die. This showed his submission to Rome and warned observers that they had better submit, too. Jesus made this statement to get the crowds to think through their enthusiasm for him. He encouraged those who were superficial either to go deeper or to turn back. Following Christ means total submission to him—perhaps even to the point of death. (See also the note on 9:23.)

14:28-30 When a builder doesn’t count the cost or estimates it inaccurately, the building may be left uncompleted. Will you abandon the Christian life after a little while because you did not count the cost of commitment to Jesus? What are those costs? Christians may face loss of social status or wealth. They may have to give up control of their money, their time, or their career. They may be hated, separated from their family, and even put to death. Following Christ does not mean a trouble-free life. We must care-
15:3-6

Or what kind would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? 4 And if he can't, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the enemy is still far away. So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.

34 Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? 35 Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. It is thrown away. Anyone with ears should listen and understand!

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Sheep (159)

15 Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. 2 This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

3 So Jesus told them this story: 4 “If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, what will he do? Won't he leave the ninety-nine others in the wilderness and go to search for the one that is lost until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he will joyfully carry it home on his shoulders. 6 When he arrives, he will call together his friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost sheep.' 7 In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and haven't strayed away!

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Coin (160)

8 Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Won't she light a lamp and sweep the entire house and search carefully until she finds it? 9 And when she finds it, she will call in her friends and neighbors and say, 'Rejoice with me because I have found my lost coin!' 10 In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Lost Son (161)

11 To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: 'A man had two sons. 12 The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

15:8 Greek ten drachmas. A drachma was the equivalent of a full day's wage.
Luke 15

13 A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. 14 About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. 15 He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. 16 The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

17 “When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, ‘At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will go home to my father and say, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.’ ”

20 “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. 21 His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ ”

22 “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. 23 And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, 24 for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

25 Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house. 26 And he asked one of the servants what was going on. 27 ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’

28 “The older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in. His father came out and begged him, 29 but he replied, ‘All these years I’ve slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. 30 Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’

31 “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. 32 We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has now come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’ ”

15:15, 16 According to Moses’ law, pigs were unclean animals (Leviticus 11:2-8, Deuteronomy 14:8). This meant that pigs could not be eaten or used for sacrifices. To protect themselves from defilement, Jews would not even touch pigs. For a Jew to stoop to feeding pigs was a great humiliation, and for this young man to eat food that the pigs had touched was to be degraded beyond belief. The younger son had truly sunk to the depths.

15:17 The younger son, like many who are rebellious and immature, wanted to be free to live as he pleased, and he had to hit bottom before he came to his senses. It often takes great sorrow and tragedy to cause people to look to the only One who can help them—Jesus. Are you trying to live life your own way, selfishly pushing aside any responsibility or commitment that gets in your way? Stop and look before you hit bottom. You will save yourself and your family much grief.

• 15:20 In the two preceding stories, the seeker actively looked for the coin and the sheep, which could not return by themselves. In this story, the father watched and waited. He was dealing with a human being with a will of his own, but he was ready to greet his son if he returned. In the same way, God’s love is constant and patient and welcoming. He will search for us and give us opportunities to respond, but he will not force us to come to him. Like the father in this story, God waits patiently for us to come to our senses.

• 15:24 The sheep was lost because it foolishly wandered away (15:4); the coin was lost through no fault of its own (15:8); and the son left out of selfishness (15:12). God’s great love reaches out and finds sinners no matter why or how they got lost.

• 15:25-31 The older brother found great difficulty in accepting his younger brother when he returned, and it is just as difficult to accept “younger brothers and sisters” today. People who repent after leading notoriously sinful lives are often held in suspicion; churches are sometimes unwilling to admit them to membership. Instead, we should rejoice like the angels in heaven when an unbeliever repents and turns to God. Like the father, accept repentant sinners wholeheartedly and give them the support and encouragement that they need to grow in Christ.

• 15:30 In the story of the lost son, the father’s response is contrasted with the older brother’s. The father forgave because he was filled with love. The son refused to forgive because he was bitter. His resentment rendered him just as lost to the father’s love as his younger brother had been. Don’t let anything keep you from forgiving others. If you are refusing to forgive people, you are missing a wonderful opportunity to experience joy and share it with others. Make your joy grow: Forgive somebody who has hurt you.

• 15:32 In Jesus’ story, the older brother represents the Pharisees, who were angry and resentful that sinners were being welcomed into God’s Kingdom. “After all,” the Pharisees must have thought, “we have sacrificed and done so much for God.” How easy it is to resent God’s gracious forgiveness of others whom we consider to be far worse sinners than ourselves. But if our self-righteousness gets in the way of rejoicing when others come to Jesus, we are no better than the Pharisees.
Jesus Tells the Parable of the Shrewd Manager (162)

16 Jesus told this story to his disciples: "There was a certain rich man who had a manager handling his affairs. One day a report came that the manager was wasting his employer's money. So the employer called him in and said, 'What's this I hear about you? Get your report in order, because you are going to be fired.'

3 "The manager thought to himself, 'Now what? My boss has fired me. I don't have the strength to dig ditches, and I'm too proud to beg. 4 Ah, I know how to ensure that I'll have plenty of friends who will give me a home when I am fired.'

5 "So he invited each person who owed money to his employer to come and discuss the situation. He asked the first one, 'How much do you owe him?' 6 The man replied, 'I owe him 800 gallons of olive oil.' So the manager told him, 'Take the bill and quickly change it to 400 gallons.'

7 "And how much do you owe my employer?' he asked the next man. 'I owe him 1,000 bushels of wheat,' was the reply. 'Here,' the manager said, 'take the bill and change it to 800 bushels.'

8 "The rich man had to admire the dishonest rascal for being so shrewd. And it is true that the children of this world are more shrewd in dealing with the world around them than are the children of the light. 9 Here's the lesson: Use your worldly resources to benefit others and make friends. Then, when your earthly possessions are gone, they will welcome you to an eternal home.*

10 If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities. 11 And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?

12 "But if we are not trustworthy with our money here (no matter how much or little we have), we will be unfit to handle the vast riches of God's Kingdom. See that you maintain your integrity in all matters, whether big or small.

13 "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.*

14 "The Pharisees, who dearly loved their money, heard all this and scoffed at him. 15 Then he said to them, "You like to appear righteous in public, but God knows your hearts. What this world honors is detestable in the sight of God.

16 "Until John the Baptist, the law of Moses and the messages of the prophets were your guides. But now the Good News of the Kingdom of God is preached, and everyone is eager to get in.* 17 But that doesn't mean that the law has lost its force. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the smallest point of God's law to be overturned.

16:1-8 Our use of money is a good test of the lordship of Christ. (1) Money belongs to God, not us; let us use our resources wisely. (2) Money can be used for good or evil; let us use ours for good. (3) Money has a lot of power, let us use it carefully and thoughtfully. We must use our material goods in a way that will foster faith and obedience (see 12:23-34).

16:9 We are to make wise use of the financial opportunities we have, not to earn heaven but to help people find Christ. If we use our money to help those in need or to help others find Christ, our earthly investment will bring eternal benefit. When we obey God's will, the unselfish use of possessions will follow.

16:10, 11 Our integrity is often put on the line in money matters. God calls us to be honest even in small details we could easily ignore. Heaven's riches are far more valuable than earthly wealth. But if we are not trustworthy with our money here (no matter how much or little we have), we will be unfit to handle the vast riches of God's Kingdom. See that you maintain your integrity in all matters, whether big or small.

16:13 Money can easily take God's place in your life. It can become your master. How can you tell if you are a slave to money? Ask yourself: Do I think and worry about it frequently? Do I give up doing what I should do or would like to do in order to make more money? Do I spend a great deal of my time caring for my possessions? Is it hard for me to give money away? Am I in debt?

Money is a hard and deceptive master. Wealth promises power and control, but often it cannot deliver. Great fortunes can be made—and lost—overnight, and no amount of money can provide health, happiness, or eternal life. How much better it is to let God be your master. His servants have peace of mind and security, both now and forever.

16:14 Because the Pharisees loved money, they took exception to Jesus' teaching. We live in an age that measures people's worth by how much money they make. Do you scoff at Jesus' warnings against serving money? Do you try to explain them away? Do you apply them to someone else? Unless we take Jesus' statements seriously, we may be acting like Pharisees ourselves.

16:15 The Pharisees acted piously to get praise from others, but God knew what was in their hearts. They considered their wealth to be a sign of God's approval. God detested their wealth because it caused them to abandon true spirituality. Though prosperity may earn people's praise, it must never substitute for devotion and service to God.

16:16, 17 John the Baptist's ministry was the dividing line between the Old and New Testaments (John 1:15-18). With the arrival of Jesus came the realization of all the prophets' hopes. Jesus emphasized that his Kingdom fulfilled the law (the Old Testament); it did not cancel it (Matthew 5:17). His was not a new system but the culmination of the old. The same God who worked through Moses was working through Jesus.
LUKE 17

16:18 Most religious leaders of Jesus’ day permitted a man to divorce his wife for nearly any reason. Jesus’ teaching about divorce went beyond Moses’ (Deuteronomy 24:1-4). Stricter than any of the then-current schools of thought, Jesus’ teachings shocked his hearers (see Matthew 19:10) just as they shake today’s readers. Jesus says in no uncertain terms that marriage is a lifelong commitment. To leave your spouse for another person may be legal, but it is adultery in God’s eyes. As you think about marriage, remember that God intends it to be a permanent commitment.

16:19-21 The Pharisees considered wealth to be a proof of a person’s righteousness. Jesus startled them with this story in which a diseased beggar is rewarded and a rich man is punished. The rich man did not go to hell because of his wealth but because he was selfish, refusing to feed Lazarus, take him in, or care for him. The rich man was hard-hearted in spite of his great blessings. The amount of money we have is not as important as the way we use it. What is your attitude toward your money and possessions? Do you hoard them selfishly, or do you use them to help others?

16:20 This Lazarus is merely a character in a story and should not be confused with the Lazarus whom Jesus raised from the dead in John 11.

16:22-23 The rich man thought that his five brothers would surely believe a messenger who had been raised from the dead. But Jesus said that if they did not believe Moses and the proph-

e, who spoke constantly of caring for the poor, not even a resurrection would convince them. Notice the irony in Jesus’ statement; on his way to Jerusalem to die, he was fully aware that even when he had risen from the dead, most of the religious leaders would not accept him. They were set in their ways, and neither Scripture nor God’s Son himself would shake them loose.

17:1-3 Jesus warned about God’s wrath for those who offend, abuse, or lead astray the little ones. Jesus warns any predators who would hurt children in any way. How appropriate such a warning is in this day when corruption enters our homes every day in many television programs or on the internet. While Christians must guard against physical abuse, they also must be aware of and work against the mental and spiritual corruption that unfiltered television and unsupervised internet surfing can bring. Jesus’ warning envisions an additional group, however. The “little ones” can be new disciples. Indifference to the training and treatment of new Christians can leave them theologically vulnerable. Make the follow-through care of recent converts and new members a high priority in your church.

17:3, 4 To rebuke does not mean to point out every sin we see; it means to bring sin to a person’s attention with the purpose of restoring him or her to God and to fellow humans. When you feel you must rebuke another Christian for a sin, check your attitudes before you speak. Do you love that person? Are you willing to forgive? Unless rebuke is tied to forgiveness, it will not help the sinning person.
Jesus sent the 10 lepers to the priest before they were healed—
and to announce their presence if they had to come near. Sometimes leprosy would go into remission. If a leper thought his leprosy had gone away, he was supposed to present himself to a priest, who could declare him clean (Leviticus 14).  

Jesus Heals Ten Men with Leprosy (169)  

As Jesus continued on toward Jerusalem, he reached the border between Galilee and Samaria.  

As he entered a village there, ten lepers stood at a distance, crying out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"  

He looked at them and said, "Go show yourselves to the priests."* And as they went, they were cleansed of their leprosy.  

One of them, when he saw that he was healed, came back to Jesus, shouting, "Praise God!" He fell to the ground at Jesus' feet, thanking him for what he had done. This man was a Samaritan.  

Jesus asked, "Didn't I heal ten men? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" And Jesus said to the man, "Stand up and go. Your faith has healed you."*  

The disciples' request was genuine; they wanted the faith necessary for such radical forgiveness. But Jesus didn't directly answer their question because the amount of faith is not as important as its genuineness. What is faith? It is complete trust and loyalty to God that results in a willingness to do his will. Faith is not something we use to put on a show for others. It is complete and humble obedience to God’s will, readiness to do whatever he calls us to do. The amount of faith isn’t as important as the right kind of faith—faith in our all-powerful God.  

A mustard seed is small, but it is alive and growing. Almost invisible at first, the seed will begin to spread, first under the ground and then visibly. Like a tiny seed, a small amount of genuine faith in God will take root and grow. Although each change will be gradual and imperceptible, soon this faith will have produced major results that will uproot and destroy competing loyalties. We don’t need more faith; a tiny seed of faith is enough if it is alive and growing.  

If we have obeyed God, we have only done our duty, and we should regard it as a privilege. Do you sometimes feel that you deserve extra credit for serving God? Remember, obedience is not something extra we do; it is our duty. Jesus is not suggesting that our service is meaningless or useless, nor is he advocating doing away with rewards. He is attacking unwarranted self-esteem and spiritual pride.  

Because leprosy was contagious, people who had leprosy were required to try to stay away from other people and to announce their presence if they had to come near. Sometimes leprosy would go into remission. If a leper thought his leprosy had gone away, he was supposed to present himself to a priest, who could declare him clean (Leviticus 14). Jesus sent the 10 lepers to the priest before they were healed—and they went! They responded in faith, and Jesus healed them on the way. Is your trust in God so strong that you act on what he says even before you see evidence that it will work?  

Jesus healed all 10 lepers, but only one returned to thank him. It is possible to receive God’s great gifts with an ungrateful spirit—9 of the 10 men did so. Only the thankful man, however, learned that his faith had played a role in his healing; and only grateful Christians grow in understanding God's grace. God does not demand that we thank him, but he is pleased when we do so. And he uses our responsiveness to teach us more about himself.  

Not only was this man a leper, he was also a Samaritan—a race despised by the Jews as idolatrous half-breeds (see the note on 10:33). Once again Luke is pointing out that God’s grace is for everybody.
Jesus Teaches about the Coming of the Kingdom of God (170)

One day the Pharisees asked Jesus, “When will the Kingdom of God come?”

Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God can’t be detected by visible signs. * You won’t be able to say, ‘Here it is!’ or ‘It’s over there!’ For the Kingdom of God is already among you.”

Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns,* but you won’t see it. 23 People will tell you, ‘Look, there is the Son of Man,’ or ‘Here he is,’ but don’t go out and follow them. 24 For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the day when the Son of Man comes. 25 But first the Son of Man must suffer terribly* and be rejected by this generation. 26 When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. 27 In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.

And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the field must not return home. 32 Remember what happened to Lot’s wife! 33 If you curl your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it. 34 That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.*

Where will this happen, Lord?* the disciples asked.

Jesus replied, “Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the Persistent Widow (171)

One day Jesus told his disciples a story to show that they should always pray and never give up. 2 “There was a judge in a certain city,” he said, “who neither feared God nor cared about people. 3 A widow of that city came to him repeatedly, saying, ‘Give me justice in this dispute with my enemy.’ 4 The judge ignored her for a while, but finally he said to himself, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’

So, 5 when the Son of Man returns, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. 6 In that day, the Son of Man will say, ‘I don’t fear God or care about people, but this woman is driving me crazy. I’m going to see that she gets justice, because she is wearing me out with her constant requests!’

For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. Then he said to his disciples, “The time is coming when you will long to see the day when the Son of Man returns, but you won’t see it. People will tell you, ‘Look, there is the Son of Man,’ or ‘Here he is,’ but don’t go out and follow them. For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other, so it will be on the day when the Son of Man comes. But first the Son of Man must suffer terribly and be rejected by this generation. When the Son of Man returns, it will be like it was in Noah’s day. In those days, the people enjoyed banquets and parties and weddings right up to the time Noah entered his boat and the flood came and destroyed them all.

And the world will be as it was in the days of Lot. People went about their daily business—eating and drinking, buying and selling, farming and building—until the morning Lot left Sodom. Then fire and burning sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. Yes, it will be ‘business as usual’ right up to the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day a person out on the deck of a roof must not go down into the house to pack. A person out in the field must not return home. Remember what happened to Lot’s wife! If you curl your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it. That night two people will be asleep in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. Two women will be grinding flour together at the mill; one will be taken, the other left.*

Where will this happen, Lord? the disciples asked.

Jesus replied, “Just as the gathering of vultures shows there is a carcass nearby, so these signs indicate that the end is near.”

17:19 Or by your speculations. 17:21 Or is within you, or is in your grasp. 17:22 Or long for even one day with the Son of Man. 17:23 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 17:25 Or suffer many things. 17:26 Some manuscripts add verse 36. Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Compare Matt 24:40-41. 17:27 Greek “Wherever the carcass is, the vultures gather.” 18:1 Or by your speculations. 18:4 Or is it in your grasp. 18:5 Luke 11:7-8

17:20 Or your speculations. 17:21 Or is within you, or is in your grasp. 17:22 Or long for even one day with the Son of Man. 17:23 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 17:25 Or suffer many things. 17:26 Some manuscripts add verse 36. Two men will be working in the field; one will be taken, the other left. Compare Matt 24:40-41. 17:27 Greek “Wherever the carcass is, the vultures gather.”

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6Then the Lord said, “Learn a lesson from this unjust judge. 7 Even he rendered a just decision in the end. So don't you think God will surely give justice to his chosen people who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? 8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?”

Jesus Tells the Parable of Two Men Who Prayed (172)

8Then Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else: 9 “Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. 10 The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer*: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don't cheat, I don't sin, and I don't commit adultery. I'm certainly not like that tax collector! 11 I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’ 12 “But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, 'O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.' 13 I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

Jesus Blesses the Children (174/Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16)

15One day some parents brought their little children to Jesus so he could touch and bless them. But when the disciples saw this, they scolded the parents for bothering him. 16 Then Jesus called for the children and said to the disciples, “Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to those who are like these children. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who doesn’t receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.”

Jesus Speaks to the Rich Young Man (175/Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31)

18Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: “Good Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?” 19 “Why do you call me good?” Jesus asked him. “Only God is truly good.” 20 But to answer your question, you know the commandments: ‘You must not commit adultery. You must not murder. You must not steal. You must not tell lies. Honor your father and mother.’** 21 The man replied, “I’ve obeyed all these commandments since I was young.”

of all God’s people, and both Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles insisted that these needy people be properly cared for. See, for example, Exodus 22:22-24; Isaiah 1:17; 1 Timothy 5:3; James 1:27.

18:7 If godless judges respond to constant pressure, how much more will a great and loving God respond to us? 8 If we know he loves us, we can believe he will hear our cries for help.

18:10 The people who lived near Jerusalem often would go to the Temple to pray. The Temple was the center of their worship.

18:11-14 The Pharisee did not go to the Temple to pray to God but to announce to all within earshot how good he was. The tax collector went recognizing his sin and begging for mercy. Self-righteousness is dangerous. It leads to pride, causes a person to despise others, and prevents him or her from learning anything from God. The tax collector’s prayer should be our prayer because we all need God’s mercy every day. Don’t let pride in your achievements cut you off from God.

18:15, 16 It was customary for a mother to bring her children to a rabbi for a blessing, and that is why these mothers gathered around Jesus. The disciples, however, thought the children were unworthy of the Master’s time—less important than whatever else he was doing. But Jesus welcomed them because little children have the kind of faith and trust needed to enter God’s Kingdom. It is important that we introduce our children to Jesus.

18:17 How does someone “receive the Kingdom of God like a child”? It means having the simple, trusting attitude that children show to adults on whom they depend. Jesus wants his people to enjoy prayer by delighting in his company. Find ways in a busy day to read the Bible enthusiastically, seek God’s help in any problem, rely on him for guidance, and trust him explicitly. Children do all that with adults who love them. How much more should believers have that attitude toward Jesus, who loves them.

18:18-19 This leader sought reassurance, some way of knowing for sure that he had eternal life. He wanted Jesus to measure and grade his qualifications or to give him some task he could do to assure his own immortality. So Jesus gave him a task—the one thing the rich man knew he could not do. “Then who in the world can be saved?” the bystanders asked. “No one can, by his or her own achievements,” Jesus’ answer implied. “What is impossible for people is possible with God.” Salvation cannot be earned—it is God’s gift (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

18:18, 19 Jesus’ question to the leader who came and called him “Good Teacher” was, in essence, “Do you know who I am?” Undoubtedly the man did not catch the implications of Jesus’ reply—that the man was right in calling him good because Jesus truly is God.
When Jesus heard his answer, he said, “There is still one thing you haven’t done. Sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

But when the man heard this he became very sad, for he was very rich.

When Jesus saw this, he said, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!

In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God!”

Those who heard this said, “Then who in the world can be saved?”

He replied, “What is impossible for people is possible with God.”

Peter said, “We’ve left our homes to follow you.”

“Yes,” Jesus replied, “and I assure you that everyone who has given up house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will be repaid many times over in this life, and will have eternal life in the world to come.”

Jesus Predicts His Death the Third Time (177/Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34)

Taking the twelve disciples aside, Jesus said, “Listen, we’re going up to Jerusalem, where all the predictions of the prophets concerning the Son of Man will come true. He will be handed over to the Romans,* and he will be mocked, treated shamefully, and spit upon. They will flog him with a whip and kill him, but on the third day he will rise again.”

But they didn’t understand any of this. The significance of his words was hidden from them, and they failed to grasp what he was talking about.

Jesus Heals a Blind Beggar (179/Matthew 20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52)

As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind beggar was sitting beside the road. When he heard the noise of a crowd going past, he asked what was happening.

They told him that Jesus the Nazarene* was going by. So he began shouting, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

“Be quiet!” the people in front yelled at him.

But he only shouted louder, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

When Jesus heard him, he stopped and ordered that the man be brought to him. As the man came near, Jesus asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

“Lord,” he said, “I want to see!”

And Jesus said, “All right, receive your sight! Your faith has healed you.”

Instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus, praising God. And all who saw it praised God, too.

Some manuscripts read When Jesus saw how sad the man was. 18:32 Greek the Gentiles. 18:37 Or Jesus of Nazareth.

This man’s wealth made his life comfortable and gave him power and prestige. By telling him to sell everything he owned, Jesus was touching the very basis of his security and identity. The man did not understand that he would be even more secure if he followed Jesus than he was with all his wealth. Jesus does not ask believers to sell everything they have, although this may be his will for some. He does ask us all, however, to get rid of anything that has become more important in life than God. If your possessions take first place in your life, it would be better for you to get rid of them.

Peter and the other disciples had paid a high price—leaving their homes and jobs—to follow Jesus. But Jesus reminded Peter that following him has its benefits as well as its sacrifices. Any believer who has had to give up something to follow Christ will be repaid in this life as well as in the next. For example, if you must give up a secure job, you will find that God offers a secure relationship with himself now and forever. If you must give up your family’s approval, you will gain the love of the family of God. The disciples had begun to pay the price of following Jesus, and he said they would be rewarded. Don’t dwell on what you have given up; think about what you have gained and give thanks for it. You can never outgive God.

Some predictions about what would happen to Jesus are found in Psalm 41:9 (betrayal); Psalm 22:16-18 and Isaiah 53:4-7 (crucifixion); Psalm 16:10 (resurrection). The disciples didn’t understand Jesus, apparently because they were focusing on what he had said about his death and were ignoring what he had said about his resurrection. Even though Jesus had spoken plainly, they would not grasp the significance of his words until they saw the risen Christ face to face.

Beggars often would wait along the roads near cities because that was where they could contact the most people. Usually disabled in some way, beggars were unable to earn a living. Medical help was not available for their problems, and people tended to ignore their obligation to care for the needy (Leviticus 25:35-38). Thus, beggars had little hope of escaping their degrading way of life. But this blind beggar took hope in the Messiah. He shamelessly cried out for Jesus’ attention, and Jesus said that his faith allowed him to see. No matter how desperate your situation may seem, if you call out to Jesus in faith, he will help you.

The blind man called Jesus “Son of David,” a title for the Messiah (Isaiah 11:1-3). This means that he understood Jesus to be the long-awaited Messiah. It is interesting to note that a poor and blind beggar could see that Jesus was the Messiah, while the religious leaders who saw his miracles were blinded to his identity and refused to recognize him as the Messiah.
Jesus Brings Salvation to Zacchaeus’s Home (180)

19 Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town. 2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way.

5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.”

6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.

8 Meanwhile, Zacchaeus stood before the Lord and said, “I will give half my wealth to the poor, Lord, and if I have cheated people on their taxes, I will give them back four times as much!”

9 Jesus responded, “Salvation has come to this home today, for this man has shown himself to be a true son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man* came to seek and save those who are lost.”

Jesus Tells the Parable of the King’s Ten Servants (181)

11 The crowd was listening to everything Jesus said. And because he was nearing Jerusalem, he told them a story to correct the impression that the Kingdom of God would begin right away. 12 For the Son of Man* came to seek and save those who are lost; and if one sinner repents, heaven rejoices over him more than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

13 Or do you think that these few are more than all the others? Not at all! 14 Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. No, I have come to bring questions and arguments. 15 From now on there will be five in one house divided, four against the other and three against the other. 16 And there will be three in one village divided, two against the other and one against the other. 17 And why do I use such a parable? Because how can I use great parables unless I speak to them in parables?

18 With that, he told them a story to make them understand what they were to do during the time between Jesus’ departure and his second coming. This story showed Jesus’ followers what they were to do during the time between Jesus’ departure and his second coming.

19:10 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself.

GOSPEL ACCOUNTS FOUND ONLY IN LUKE

1:5–80 Special events leading up to birth of John the Baptist and Jesus
2:1–52 Events from Jesus’ childhood
3:19, 20 Herod puts John in prison
4:16–30 Jesus is rejected at Nazareth
5:1–11 Jesus provides a miraculous catch of fish
7:11–17 Jesus raises a widow’s son from the dead
7:36–50 A sinful woman anoints Jesus’ feet
8:1–3 Women travel with Jesus
10:1–18:14 Events, miracles, and teachings during the months prior to Christ’s death
19:1–27 Jesus meets Zacchaeus and later tells the parable of the king’s 10 servants
23:6–12 Jesus’ trial before Herod
24:44–49 Some of Jesus’ last words before his ascension

19:10 To finance their great world empire, the Romans levied heavy taxes on all nations under their control. The Jews opposed these taxes because they supported a secular government and its pagan gods, but they were still forced to pay. Tax collectors were among the most unpopular people in Israel. Jews by birth, they chose to work for Rome and were considered traitors. Besides, it was common knowledge that tax collectors were making themselves rich by gouging their fellow Jews. No wonder the people muttered when Jesus went home with the tax collector Zacchaeus.

4:16–30 Jesus is rejected at Nazareth

5:1–11 Jesus provides a miraculous catch of fish

7:11–17 Jesus raises a widow’s son from the dead

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19:1–27 Jesus meets Zacchaeus and later tells the parable of the king’s 10 servants

23:6–12 Jesus’ trial before Herod

24:44–49 Some of Jesus’ last words before his ascension

19:9, 10 When Jesus said Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham and yet was lost, he must have shocked his hearers in at least two ways: (1) They would not have liked to acknowledge that this unpopular tax collector was a fellow son of Abraham, and (2) they would not have wished to admit that sons of Abraham could be lost. But a person is not saved because of a good heritage or condemned by a bad one; faith is more important than genealogy. Jesus came to save all the lost, regardless of their background or previous way of life. Through faith, the lost can be forgiven and made new.

19:11f The people still hoped for a political leader who would set up an earthly kingdom and get rid of Roman domination. Jesus’ story showed that his Kingdom would not take this form right away. First, he would go away for a while, and his followers would need to be faithful and productive during his absence. Upon his return, Jesus would inaugurate a Kingdom more powerful and just than anything they could expect or imagine.

19:11f This story showed Jesus’ followers what they were to do during the time between Jesus’ departure and his second coming. Because we live in that time period, it applies directly to us. We have been given excellent resources to build and expand God’s Kingdom. Jesus expects us to use these talents so that they multiply and the Kingdom grows. He asks each of us to account for what we do with his gifts. While awaiting the coming of the Kingdom of God in glory, we must do Christ’s work.
away. 12 He said, “A nobleman was called away to a distant empire to be crowned king and then return. 13 Before he left, he called together ten of his servants and divided among them ten pounds of silver,* saying, ‘Invest this for me while I am gone.’ 14 But his people hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, ‘We do not want him to be our king.’

15 “After he was crowned king, he returned and called in the servants to whom he had given the money. He wanted to find out what their profits were. 16 The first servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!’

17 “‘Well done!’ the king exclaimed. ‘You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you, so you will be governor of ten cities as your reward.’

18 The next servant reported, ‘Master, I invested your money and made five times the original amount.’

19 “‘Well done!’ the king said. ‘You will be governor over five cities.’

20 “But the third servant brought back only the original amount of money and said, ‘Master, I hid your money and kept it safe. 21 I was afraid because you are a hard man to deal with, taking what isn’t yours and harvesting crops you didn’t plant.’

22 “‘You wicked servant!’ the king roared. ‘Your own words condemn you. If you knew that I’m a hard man who takes what isn’t mine and harvests crops I didn’t plant, 23 why didn’t you deposit my money in the bank? At least I could have gotten some interest on it.’

24 “Then, turning to the others standing nearby, the king ordered, ‘Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who has ten pounds.’

25 “‘But, master,’ they said, ‘he already has ten pounds!’

26 “‘Yes,’ the king replied, ‘and to those who use well what they are given, even more will be given. But from those who do nothing, even what little they have will be taken away. 27 And as for these enemies of mine who didn’t want me to be their king—bring them in and execute them right here in front of me.’

3. Jesus’ ministry in Jerusalem

Jesus Rides into Jerusalem on a Young Donkey

(183/ Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; John 12:12-19)

28 After telling this story, Jesus went on toward Jerusalem, walking ahead of his disciples.

29 As he came to the towns of Bethphage and Bethany on the Mount of Olives, he sent two disciples ahead. 30 Go into that village over there,” he told them. “As you enter it, you will see a young donkey tied there that no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. 31 If anyone asks, ‘Why are you untying that colt?’ just say, ‘The Lord needs it.’”

32 So they went and found the colt, just as Jesus had said. 33 And sure enough, as they were untying it, the owners asked them, “Why are you untying that colt?”

34 And the disciples simply replied, “The Lord needs it.” So they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their garments over it for him to ride on.

19:12 Mark 13:34
19:17 Luke 16:10
19:22 Job 15:6
Mark 12:37
19:26 Matt 13:12
Mark 4:25
Luke 8:18

LAST WEEK IN JERUSALEM

As they approached Jerusalem from Jericho (19:1), Jesus and the disciples came to the villages of Bethany and Bethphage, nestled on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, only a few miles outside Jerusalem. Jesus stayed in Bethany during the nights of that last week, entering Jerusalem during the day.

19:28-27 Why was the king so hard on this man who had not increased the money? He punished the man because (1) he didn’t share his master’s interest in the Kingdom, (2) he didn’t trust his master’s intentions, (3) his only concern was for himself, and (4) he did nothing to use the money. Like the king in this story, God has given you gifts to use for the benefit of his Kingdom. Do you want the Kingdom to grow? Do you trust God to govern it fairly? Are you as concerned for others’ welfare as you are for your own? Are you willing to use faithfully what he has entrusted to you?

19:30-35 By this time Jesus was extremely well known. Everyone coming to Jerusalem for the Passover festival had heard of him, and, for a time, the popular mood was favorable toward him. “The Lord needs it” was all the disciples had to say, and the colt’s owners gladly turned their animal over to them.

19:35-38 Christians celebrate this event on Palm Sunday. The people lined the road, praising God, waving palm branches, and throwing their cloaks in front of the colt as it passed before them. “Long live the King” was the meaning behind their joyful shouts, because they knew that Jesus was intentionally fulfilling the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9: “Look, your king is coming to you. He is righteous and victorious, yet he is humble, riding on a donkey—riding on a donkey’s colt.” To announce that he was indeed the Messiah,
As he rode along, the crowds spread out their garments on the road ahead of him. When he reached the place where the road started down the Mount of Olives, all of his followers began to shout and sing as they walked along, praising God for all the wonderful miracles they had seen.

"Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven, and glory in highest heaven!"

But some of the Pharisees among the crowd said, "Teacher, rebuke your followers for saying things like that!"

He replied, "If they kept quiet, the stones along the road would burst into cheers!"

But as he came closer to Jerusalem and saw the city ahead, he began to weep. After that, he taught daily in the Temple, but the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the other leaders of the people began planning how to kill him. But they could think of nothing, because all the people hung on every word he said.

Religious Leaders Challenge Jesus’ Authority
(189/Matthew 21:23-27; Mark 11:27-33)

One day as Jesus was teaching the people and preaching the Good News in the Temple, the leading priests, the teachers of religious law, and the elders came up to him. They demanded, "By what authority are you doing all these things? Who gave you the right?"

"Let me ask you a question first," he replied. They talked it over among themselves. "If we say it was from heaven, he will ask why we don’t believe John. But if we say it was merely human, the people will stone us because they are convinced John was a prophet." So they finally replied that they didn’t know.

And Jesus responded, "Then I won’t tell you by what authority I do these things."

Jesus chose a time when all Israel would be gathered at Jerusalem, a place where huge crowds could see him, and a way of proclaiming his mission that was unmistakable. The people went wild. They were sure their liberation was at hand.

The people who were praising God for giving them a king had the wrong idea about Jesus. They expected him to be a national leader who would restore their nation to its former glory; whereas, his authority came from God—if he stated openly that he was the Messiah and the Son of God—they would accuse him of blasphemy. Thus, he exposed their ignorance and blasphemous. They didn’t want someone challenging the religious and blasphemous. They didn’t want someone challenging the religious law, and the other leaders of the people began planning how to kill him.

Eternal life is within your reach; accept it while the opportunity is still offered.

About 40 years after Jesus said these words, they came true. In A.D. 66, the Jews revolted against Roman control. Three years later Titus, son of the emperor Vespasian, was sent to crush the rebellion. Roman soldiers attacked Jerusalem and broke through the northern wall but still couldn’t take the city. Finally, they laid siege to it, and in A.D. 70 they were able to enter the severely weakened city and burn it. Six hundred thousand Jews were killed during Titus’s onslaught.

Who were the "other leaders of the people"? This group probably included wealthy leaders in politics, commerce, and law. They had several reasons for wanting to get rid of Jesus. He had damaged business in the Temple by driving the merchants out. In addition, he was preaching against injustice, and his teachings often favored the poor over the rich. Furthermore, his great popularity was in danger of attracting Rome’s attention, and the leaders of Israel wanted as little as possible to do with Rome.

This group of leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus, so they tried to trap him with their question. If Jesus would answer that his authority came from God—if he stated openly that he was the Messiah and the Son of God—they would accuse him of blasphemy and bring him to trial. Jesus did not let himself be caught. Instead, he turned the question on them. Thus, he exposed their motives and avoided their trap.
Jesus Tells the Parable of the Evil Farmers (191/Matthew 21:33–46; Mark 12:1–12)

20:9-19 Now Jesus turned to the people again and told them this story: "A man planted a vineyard, leased it to tenant farmers, and moved to another country to live for several years. At the time of the grape harvest, he sent one of his servants to collect his share of the crop. But the farmers attacked the servant, beat him up, and sent him back empty-handed. So the owner sent another servant, but they also insulted him, beat him up, and sent him away empty-handed. A third man was sent, and they wounded him and chased him away.

13 "What will I do?" the owner asked himself. 'I know! I'll send my cherished son. Surely they will respect him.'

14 'But when the tenant farmers saw his son, they said to each other, 'Here comes the heir to this estate. Let's kill him and get the estate for ourselves!' So they dragged him out of the vineyard and murdered him.

15 "What do you suppose the owner of the vineyard will do to them?" Jesus asked. "I'll tell you—he will come and kill those farmers and lease the vineyard to others."

16 Jesus looked at them and said, "Then what does this Scripture mean? 'The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone.'"

18 Everyone who stumbles over that stone will be broken to pieces, and it will crush anyone it falls on."

19 The teachers of religious law and the leading priests wanted to arrest Jesus immediately because they realized he was telling the story against them—they were the wicked farmers. But they were afraid of the people's reaction.

20:10-12 Religious Leaders Question Jesus about Paying Taxes

(Matthew 22:15–22; Mark 12:13–17)

20:14 Watching for their opportunity, the leaders sent spies pretending to be honest men. They tried to get Jesus to say something that could be reported to the Roman governor so he would arrest Jesus. 21 "Teacher," they said, "we know that you speak and teach what is right and are not influenced by what others think. You teach the way of God truthfully. Now tell us—is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

22 He saw through their trickery and said, "Show me a Roman coin. * Whose picture and title are stamped on it?"

"Caesar's," they replied. 23 "Well then," he said, "give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

24 So they failed to trap him by what he said in front of the people. Instead, they were amazed by his answer, and they became silent.

Jesus turned his enemies' attempt to trap him into a powerful lesson: As God's followers, we have legitimate obligations to both God and the government. But it is important to keep our priorities straight. When the two authorities conflict, our duty to God always must come before our duty to the government.

20:20-26 This was a loaded question. The Jews were enraged at having to pay taxes to Rome, thus supporting the pagan government and its gods. They hated the system that allowed tax collectors to charge exorbitant rates and keep the extra for themselves. If Jesus said they should pay taxes, they would call him a traitor to their nation and their religion. But if he said they should not, they could report him to Rome as a rebel. Jesus' questioners thought they had him this time, but he outwitted them again.

20:24 This Roman coin was a denarius, the usual pay for one day's work.
Then Jesus was approached by some Sadducees—religious leaders who say there is no resurrection from the dead. They posed this question: "Teacher, Moses gave us a law that if a man dies, leaving a wife but no children, his brother should marry the widow and have a child who will carry on the brother’s name." Well, suppose there were seven brothers. The oldest one married and then died without children. So the second brother married the widow, but he also died. Then the third brother married her. This continued with all seven of them, who died without children. Finally, the woman also died. So tell us, whose wife will she be in the resurrection? For all seven were married to her!"

Jesus replied, "Marriage is for people here on earth. But in the age to come, those worthy of being raised from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage. And they will never die again. In this respect they will be like angels. They are children of God and children of the resurrection."

"But now, as to whether the dead will be raised—even Moses proved this when he wrote about the burning bush. Long after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had died, he referred to the Lord as 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' So he is the God of the living, not the dead, for they are all alive to him."

Well said, Teacher! remarked some of the teachers of religious law who were standing there. And then no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Religious Leaders Cannot Answer Jesus’ Question

Then Jesus presented them with a question. "Why is it," he asked, "that the Messiah is said to be the son of David?"

For David himself wrote in the book of Psalms:

The Lord said to my Lord, Sit in the place of honor at my right hand,

until I humble your enemies, making them a footstool under your feet."

Since David called the Messiah ‘Lord,’ how can the Messiah be his son?"

Jesus Warns against the Religious Leaders

Then, with the crowds listening, he turned to his disciples and said, "Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they like to parade around in flowing robes and love to receive the crowds’ applause.  They respect others for the good things they do among the people. And they love what people think of them. And where there is more respect, there is more profit for them."

The central issue of life is what we believe about Jesus. Other spiritual questions are irrelevant unless we first decide to believe that Jesus is who he said he is. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not do this. They remained confused over Jesus’ identity. The Pharisees knew that the Messiah would be a descendant of David, but they did not understand that he would be more than a human descendant—he would be God in the flesh. Jesus quoted from Psalm 110:1 to show that David knew that the Messiah would be both human and divine. The Pharisees expected only a human ruler to restore Israel’s greatness as in the days of David and Solomon.

The central issue of life is what we believe about Jesus. Other spiritual questions are irrelevant unless we first decide to believe that Jesus is who he said he is. The Pharisees and Sadducees could not do this. They remained confused over Jesus’ identity.

The teachers of religious law loved the benefits associated with their position, and they sometimes cheated the poor in order to get even more benefits. Every job has its rewards, but gaining rewards should never become more important than doing the job faithfully. God will punish people who use their position of responsibility to cheat others. Use whatever resources you have been given to help others and not just yourself.
A Poor Widow Gives All She Has (200/Matthew 20:1-47; Mark 13:1-23)

While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins.*

*"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.”

Jesus Tells about the Future (201/Matthew 24:1-25; Mark 13:1-23)

Some of his disciples began talking about the majestic stonework of the Temple and the memorial decorations on the walls. But Jesus said, "The time is coming when all these things will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!”

"Teacher,” they asked, “when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to take place?”

He replied, "Don’t let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,” and saying, 'The time has come!’ But don’t believe them. And when you hear of wars and insurrections, don’t panic. Yes, these things must take place first, but the end won’t follow immediately.” Then he added, "Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven.

"But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me." So don’t worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you. They will even kill some of you. And everyone will hate you because you are my followers.

But not a hair of your head will perish! By standing firm, you will win your souls.

• 20:47 How strange to think that the teachers of religious law would receive the worst punishment. But behind their appearance of holiness and respectability, they were arrogant, crafty, selfish, and uncaring. Jesus exposed their evil hearts. He showed that despite their pious words, they were neglecting God’s laws and doing as they pleased. Religious deeds do not cancel sin. Jesus said that God’s most severe judgment awaited these teachers because they should have been living examples of mercy and justice.

• 21:1, 2 Jesus was in the area of the Temple called the Court of Women. In this area were seven boxes in which worshipers could deposit their Temple tax and six boxes for freewill offerings, like the one this woman gave. This widow was not only poor but had few resources for making money. Her small gift was a sacrifice, but she gave it willingly.

• 21:1-4 In contrast to the way most of us handle our money, this widow gave all she had to live on. When we consider ourselves generous in giving a small percentage of our income to the Lord, we resemble those who gave “a tiny part of their surplus.” Here, Jesus admired the woman’s generous and sacrificial giving. As believers, we should consider increasing our giving—whether money, time, or talents—to a point beyond mere convenience or comfort.

• 21:5, 6 The Temple the disciples were admiring was not Solomon’s Temple—that had been destroyed by the Babylonians early in the sixth century B.C. This Temple had been built by Ezra after the return from exile later in the sixth century B.C., desecrated by the Seleucids in the second century B.C., reconsecrated by the Maccabees soon afterward, and enormously expanded by Herod the Great over a 46-year period. It was a beautiful, imposing structure with a significant history, but Jesus said that it would be completely destroyed. This happened in A.D. 70 when the Roman army burned Jerusalem.

• 21:7f Jesus did not leave his disciples unprepared for the difficult years ahead. He warned them about false messiahs, natural disasters, and persecutions; however, he assured the disciples that he would be with them to protect them and make his Kingdom known through them. In the end, Jesus promised that he would return in power and glory to save them. Jesus’ warnings and promises to his disciples also apply to us as we look forward to his return.

• 21:12, 13 These persecutions soon began. Luke recorded many of them in the book of Acts. Paul wrote from prison that he suffered gladly because it helped him know Christ better and do Christ’s work for the church (Philippians 3:10; Colossians 1:24). The early church thrived despite intense persecution. In fact, late in the second century the church father Tertullian wrote, "The blood of Christians is seed," because opposition helped spread Christianity.

• 21:14-19 Jesus warned that in the coming persecutions his followers would be betrayed by their family members and friends. Christians of every age have had to face this possibility. It is reassuring to know that even when we feel completely abandoned, the Holy Spirit will stay with us. He will comfort us, protect us, and give us the words we need. This assurance can give us the courage and hope to stand firm for Christ no matter how difficult the situation.

• 21:18 Jesus was not saying that believers would be exempt from physical harm or death during the persecutions. Remember that
21:22 The “period of the Gentiles” began with Babylon’s destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. and the exile of the Jewish people. Israel was no longer an independent nation but was under the control of the Gentile rulers. In Jesus’ day, Israel was governed by his enemies, and a Roman general would destroy the city by his enemies would continue until God decided to end it. The “period of the Gentiles” refers not just to the repeated destructions of Jerusalem in the first few centuries of Jewish history, but also to the continuing and mounting persecution of God’s people until the end.  

21:23 How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. For there will be disaster in the land and great anger against this people. They will be killed by the sword or sent away as captives to all the nations of the world. And Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the period of the Gentiles comes to an end.  

Jesus Tells about His Return (202/Matthew 24:26-35; Mark 13:24-31)  
21:24 And there will be strange signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. People will be terrified at what they see coming upon the earth, for the powers in the heavens will be shaken.  
21:25 Then everyone will see the Son of Man* coming on a cloud with power and great glory.* So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!  
21:26 Then he gave them this illustration: “Notice the fig tree, or any other tree. When the leaves come out, you know without being told that summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that the Kingdom of God is near. Tell you the truth, this generation will not pass from the scene until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.  

Jesus Tells about Remaining Watchful (203/Matthew 24:36-51; Mark 13:32-37)  
21:27 Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don’t let that day catch you unaware, like a trap. For that day will come upon everyone living on the earth. Keep alert at all times. And pray that you might be strong enough to escape these coming horrors and stand before the Son of Man.”  

21:28 Every day Jesus went to the Temple to teach, and each evening he returned to spend the night on the Mount of Olives. The crowds gathered at the Temple early each morning to hear him.  

21:27a “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 21:27b See Dan 7:13.  

THE TEMPLE IN JESUS’ DAY  

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<td><strong>COURT OF THE PRIESTS</strong></td>
<td><strong>COURT OF THE GENTILES</strong></td>
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202 And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that the time of its destruction has arrived. Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. Those in Jerusalem must get out, and those out in the country should not return to the city. For those will be days of God’s vengeance, and the prophetic words of the Scriptures will be fulfilled. How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. For there will be disaster in the land and great anger against this people. They will be killed by the sword or sent away as captives to all the nations of the world. And Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the period of the Gentiles comes to an end.  

21:27a “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 21:27b See Dan 7:13.
C. DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JESUS, THE SAVIOR (22:1—24:53)
The perfect man was a high ideal in Greek culture. Written with Greeks in mind, Luke’s Gospel shows how Jesus was the perfect man given as the perfect sacrifice for the sin of all people. Christ is the ideal human—the perfect model for us to follow. We must stand in awe of his character, which met humanity’s highest ideals as well as God’s demand for an atonement for sin. He is, at one and the same time, our model and our Savior.

Religious Leaders Plot to Kill Jesus (207/Matthew 26:1-5; Mark 14:1-2)
22 The Festival of Unleavened Bread, which is also called Passover, was approaching.

Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus (208/Matthew 26:14-16; Mark 14:10-11)
2 Then Satan entered into Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve disciples, and he went to the leading priests and captains of the Temple guard to discuss the best way to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted, and they promised to give him money. So he agreed and began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus so they could arrest him when the crowds weren’t around.

Disciples Prepare for the Passover (209/Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16)
8 Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread arrived, when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John ahead and said, “Go and prepare the Passover meal, so we can eat it together.”

Jesus and the Disciples Share the Last Supper (211/Matthew 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; John 13:21-30)
14 When the time came, Jesus and the apostles sat down together at the table.

22:14 Or reclined together.

22:1 All Jewish males over the age of 12 were required to go to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, which was followed by a seven-day celebration called the Festival of Unleavened Bread. For these festivals, Jews from all over the Roman Empire would converge on Jerusalem to celebrate one of the most important events in their history. To learn more about the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread, see the first note on Mark 14:1.

22:3 Satan’s part in the betrayal of Jesus does not remove any of the responsibility from Judas. Disillusioned because Jesus was talking about dying rather than about setting up his Kingdom, Judas may have been trying to force Jesus’ hand and make him use his power to prove he was the Messiah. Or perhaps Judas, not understanding Jesus’ mission, no longer believed that Jesus was God’s chosen one. (For more information on Judas, see his Profile in Mark 14, p. 165.) Whatever Judas thought, Satan assumed that Jesus’ death would end his mission and thwart God’s plan. Like Judas, he did not know that Jesus’ death and resurrection were the most important parts of God’s plan all along.

22:7 The Passover meal included the sacrifice of a lamb because of the association with the Jews’ exodus from Egypt. When the Jews were getting ready to leave, God told them to kill a lamb and paint its blood on the doorframes of their houses. They then were to prepare the meat for food. Peter and John had to buy and prepare the lamb as well as the unleavened bread, herbs, wine, and other ceremonial food.

22:10 Ordinarily women, not men, would go to the well and bring home the water. So this man with the water pitcher would have stood out in the crowd.

22:14-18 The Passover commemorated Israel’s escape from Egypt when the blood of a lamb painted on their doorframes had saved their firstborn sons from death. This event foreshadowed Jesus’ work on the cross. As the spotless Lamb of God, his blood would be spilled in order to save his people from the penalty of death brought by sin.

22:17, 20 Luke mentions two cups of wine, while Matthew and Mark mention only one. In the traditional Passover meal, wine is served four times. Christ spoke the words about his body and his blood when he offered the fourth and last cup.

22:17-20 Christians differ in their interpretation of the meaning of the commemoration of the Lord’s Supper. There are three main views: (1) The bread and wine actually become Christ’s body and blood; (2) the bread and wine remain unchanged, yet Christ is spiritually present by faith in and through them; (3) the bread and wine, which remain unchanged, are lasting memorials of Christ’s sacrifice. No matter which view they favor, all Christians agree
He took some bread and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and gave it to the disciples, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me." After supper he took another cup of wine and said, "This cup is the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood, which is poured out as a sacrifice for you." But here at this table, sitting among us as a friend, is the man who will betray me. For it has been determined that the Son of Man must die. But what sorrow awaits the one who betrays him." The disciples began to ask each other which of them would ever do such a thing. Then they began to argue among themselves about who would be the greatest among you. 22:22 Some manuscripts do not include 22:19b-20, which is given for you . . . which is poured out as a sacrifice for you. 22:22 "Son of Man" is a title Jesus used for himself.

### JESUS' TRIAL

<table>
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<td>Trial before Annas (powerful ex-high priest)</td>
<td>Although no longer the high priest, he may have still wielded much power</td>
<td>John 18:13-23</td>
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<td>Trial before Caiaphas (the ruling high priest)</td>
<td>To gather evidence for the full high council hearing to follow</td>
<td>Matthew 26:57-68, Mark 14:53-65, Luke 22:54, 63-65, John 18:24</td>
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<td>Trial before the high council (Sanhedrin)</td>
<td>Formal religious trial and condemnation to death</td>
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<td>Trial before Herod (ruler of Galilee)</td>
<td>A courteous and guilt-sharing act by Pilate because Jesus was from Galilee, Herod's district</td>
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Jesus' trial was actually a series of hearings, carefully controlled to accomplish the death of Jesus. The verdict was predecided, but certain "legal" procedures were necessary. A lot of effort went into condemning and crucifying an innocent man. Jesus went through an unfair trial in our place so that we would not have to face a fair trial and receive the well-deserved punishment for our sins.

that the Lord's Supper commemorates Christ's death on the cross for our sins and points to the coming of his Kingdom in glory. When we partake of it, we show our deep gratitude for Christ's work on our behalf, and our faith is strengthened.

- **22:19** Jesus asked the disciples to eat the broken bread to remember him. He wanted them to remember his sacrifice, the basis for forgiveness of sins, and also his friendship, which they could continue to enjoy through the work of the Holy Spirit. Although the exact meaning of Communion has been strongly debated throughout church history, Christians still take bread and wine in order to remember their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Do not neglect participating in the Lord's Supper. Let it remind you of what Christ did for you.

- **22:20** In Old Testament times, God agreed to forgive people's sins if they would bring animals for the priests to sacrifice. When this sacrificial system was inaugurated, the covenant between God and his people was sealed with the blood of animals (Exodus 24:8). But animal blood did not in itself remove sin (only God can forgive sin), and animal sacrifices had to be repeated day after day and year after year. Jesus instituted a "new covenant" (agreement) between God and his people. Under this new covenant, Jesus would die in the place of sinners. Unlike the blood of animals, his blood (because he is God) would remove the sins of all who put their faith in him. Jesus' sacrifice would never have to be repeated; it would be good for all eternity (Hebrews 9:23-28). The prophets looked forward to this new covenant that would fulfill the old sacrificial agreement (Jeremiah 31:31-34), and John the Baptist called Jesus "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

- **22:21** From the accounts of Mark and John, we know that the betrayer was Judas Iscariot. Although the other disciples were confused by Jesus' words, Judas knew what Jesus meant.

- **22:22** The most important event in human history was about to take place, and the disciples were still arguing about their prestige in the Kingdom! Looking back, we see that this was no time to worry about status. But the disciples, wrapped up in their own concerns, did not perceive what Jesus had been trying to tell them about his approaching death and resurrection. What are your major concerns today? Twenty years from now, as you look back, will these worries look petty and inappropriate? Get your eyes off yourself and get ready for Christ's coming into human history for the second time.

- **22:24-27** The world's system of leadership is very different from leadership in God's Kingdom. Worldly leaders are often selfish and arrogant as they claw their way to the top. (Some kings in the ancient world gave themselves the title "Benefactor," friend of the people). But among Christians, the leader is to be the one who serves best. There are different styles of leadership, some lead through public speaking, some through administering, some
the Mount of Olives. 22-31 Then Jesus asked them, "When I sent you out to preach the Good News and you did not have money, a traveler’s bag, or an extra pair of sandals, did you need anything?"

"No," they replied. 32 "But now," he said, "take your money and a traveler’s bag. And if you don’t have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one! 33 For the time has come for this prophecy about me to be fulfilled: ‘He was counted among the rebels.’* Yes, everything written about me by the prophets will come true."

"Look, Lord," they replied, "we have two swords among us."

"That’s enough," he said.

Jesus Agonizes in the Garden (223) (Matthew 26:36-46; Mark 14:32-42)

Then, accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. 40 There he told them, "Pray that you will not give in to temptation."

41 He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed. 42 "Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine." 43 Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. 44 He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.*

45 At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. 46 "Why are you sleeping?" he asked them. "Get up and pray, so that you will not give in to temptation."

verses 43 and 44 are not included in many ancient manuscripts.

verses 22-25 are not included in some ancient manuscripts.

22:37 Is 53:12 22:43-44 Verses 43 and 44 are not included in many ancient manuscripts.

through relationships—but every Christian leader needs a servant’s devotion to Christ and service for him. Don’t be found insensitive to or unprepared for Christ’s work.

22:39 The Mount of Olives was located just to the east of Jerusalem. Jesus went up the southwestern slope to an olive grove called Gethsemane, which means "oil press."

22:40 Jesus asked the disciples to pray that they would not fall into temptation because he knew that he would soon be leaving them. Jesus also knew that they would need extra strength to face the temptations ahead—temptations to run away or to deny their relationship with him. They were about to see Jesus die. Would they still think he was the Messiah? The disciples’ strongest temptation would undoubtedly be to think they had been deceived.

• 22:41, 42 Was Jesus trying to get out of his mission? It is never wrong to express our true feelings to God. Jesus exposed his dread of the coming trials, but he also reaffirmed his commitment to do what God wanted. The cup he spoke of meant the terrible agony he knew he would endure—not only the horror of the crucifixion but, even worse, the total separation from God that he would have to experience in order to die for the world’s sins.

• 22:44 Only Luke tells us that Jesus’ sweat resembled drops of blood. Jesus was in extreme agony, but he did not give up or give in. He went ahead with the mission for which he had come.

22:46 These disciples were asleep. How tragic it is that many Christians act as though they are sound asleep when it comes to devotion to Christ and service for him. Don’t be found insensitive to or unprepared for Christ’s work.
Jesus Is Betrayed and Arrested
(224/Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-52; John 18:1-11)

47 But even as Jesus said this, a crowd approached, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples.
Judas walked over to Jesus to greet him with a kiss. But Jesus said, “Judas, would you betray
the Son of Man with a kiss?”

49 When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, “Lord, should we fight? We brought the swords!”
And one of them struck at the high priest’s slave, slashing off his right ear.

51 But Jesus said, “No more of this.” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

Peter Denies Knowing Jesus
(227/Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; John 18:25-27)

54 So they arrested him and led him to the high priest’s home. And Peter followed at a dis-
tance.

55 The guards lit a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat around it, and Peter
joined them there. A servant girl noticed him in the firelight and began staring at him.
Finally she said, “This man was one of Jesus’ followers!”

57 But Peter denied it. “Woman,” he said, “I don’t even know him!”

58 After a while someone else looked at him and said, “You must be one of them!”

59 “No, man, I’m not!” Peter retorted.

60 But Peter said, “Man, I don’t know what you are talking about.” And immediately, while
he was still speaking, the rooster crowed.

At that moment the Lord turned and looked at Peter. Suddenly, the Lord’s words

A kiss was and still is the traditional greeting among men in certain parts of the world. In this case, it was also the agreed-
upon signal to point out Jesus (Matthew 26:48). It is ironic that a gesture of greeting would be the means of betrayal. It was a
hollow gesture because of Judas’s treachery. Have any of your religious practices become empty gestures? We still betray Christ
when our acts of service or giving are insincere or carried out merely for show.

We learn from the Gospel of John that the man who cut off the servant’s ear was Peter (John 18:10).

The religious leaders had not arrested Jesus in the Temple for fear of a riot. Instead, they came secretly at night, under the
influence of the power of darkness, Satan himself. Although it looked as if Satan was getting the upper hand, everything was
proceeding according to God’s plan. It was time for Jesus to die.

Jesus was immediately taken to the high priest’s home, even though this was the middle of the night. The Jewish leaders
were in a hurry—they wanted to complete the execution before the Sabbath and get on with the Passover celebration. This residence
was a palace with outer walls enclosing a courtyard, where servants and soldiers warmed themselves around a fire.

Peter’s experiences in the next few hours would change his life. He would change from a halfhearted follower to a repen-
tant disciple, and finally to the kind of person Christ could use to build his church. For more information on Peter, see his Profile
in Matthew 27, p. 1603.

Sin, like cancer, has a way of growing if unchecked. Notice the progression of Peter’s denials: In 22:57, he denied knowing
Jesus; in 22:58, he denied being one of his followers; in 22:60, he denied even knowing what they were talking about. Sin has a way
of spreading. As it does, the cover-up gets bigger as well. The time to get a grip on sin and its cancerous effects is in the very begin-
ning, before it has time to multiply its poisons in your life. Better yet, kill it before it even begins. Confess your sins or your desire
to sin to the Lord, and ask his help to avoid Peter’s mistakes.
flashed through Peter’s mind: “Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.” 62 And Peter left the courtyard, weeping bitterly. 63 The guards in charge of Jesus began mocking and beating him. 64 They blindfolded him and said, “Prophesy to us! Who hit you that time?” 65 And they hurled all sorts of terrible insults at him.

The Council of Religious Leaders Condemns Jesus (228)

At daybreak all the elders of the people assembled, including the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. Jesus was led before this high council, 66 and they said, “Tell us, are you the Messiah?”

But he replied, “If I tell you, you won’t believe me. 68 And if I ask you a question, you won’t answer. 69 But from now on the Son of Man will be seated in the place of power at God’s right hand.”

They all shouted, “So, are you claiming to be the Son of God?”

And he replied, “You say that I am.”

Why do we need other witnesses?” they said. “We ourselves heard him say it.”

Jesus Stands Trial before Pilate

Then the entire council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. 2 They began to state their case: “This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king.”

So Pilate asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?”

Jesus replied, “You have said it.”

Pilate turned to the leading priests and to the crowd and said, “I find nothing wrong with this man!”

Then they became insistent. “But he is causing riots by his teaching wherever he goes—all over Judea, from Galilee to Jerusalem!”

Jesus Stands Trial before Herod (231)

“Oh, is he a Galilean?” Pilate asked. When they said that he was, Pilate sent him to Herod Antipas, because Galilee was under Herod’s jurisdiction, and Herod happened to be in Jerusalem at the time.

Herod was delighted at the opportunity to see Jesus, because he had heard about him and had been hoping for a long time to see him perform a miracle. He asked Jesus question after question, but Jesus refused to answer. Meanwhile, the leading priests and the teachers of religious law stood there shouting their accusations. Then Herod and his soldiers began mocking and ridiculing Jesus. Finally, they put a royal robe on him and sent him back to Pilate.

Then Herod and Pilate, who had been enemies before, became friends that day.

\[\text{Ps 8:9:1; Dan 7:13; Acts 7:56; Matt 4:3}\]

Pilate Hands Jesus Over to Be Crucified

13 Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. 14 Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. 15 So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

16 Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!” 17 Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) 18 Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. 19 But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

20 For the third time he demanded, “Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

21 But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed. 22 So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. 23 As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he turned Jesus over to them to do as they wished.

Jesus Is Led Away to Be Crucified
(23:24; Matthew 27:32-34; Mark 15:21-24; John 19:17)

24 As they led Jesus away, a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene,* happened to be coming in from the countryside. The soldiers seized him and put the cross on him and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent. 14 Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. 15 So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

25 But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed. 26 So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he turned Jesus over to them to do as they wished.

Provinces, together with several others, had been united under Herod the Great. But when Herod died in 4 B.C., the kingdom was divided among his sons. Archelaus, the son who had received Judaea and Samaria, was removed from office within 10 years, and his provinces were then ruled by a succession of Roman governors, of whom Pilate was the fifth.

Herod Antipas had two advantages over Pilate: He came from a hereditary part-Jewish monarchy and he had held his position much longer. But Pilate had two advantages over Herod: He was a Roman citizen and an envoy of the emperor, and his position was created to replace that of Herod's ineffective half brother. It is not surprising that the two men were uneasy around each other. Jesus' trial, however, brought them together. Because Pilate recognized Herod's authority over Galilee, Herod stopped feeling threatened by the Roman politician. And because neither man knew what to do in this predicament, their common problem united them.

23:13-25 Pilate wanted to release Jesus, but the crowd loudly demanded his death; so Pilate sentenced Jesus to die. No doubt Pilate did not want to risk losing his position, which may already have been shaky, by allowing a riot to occur in his province. As a career politician, he knew the importance of compromise, and he saw Jesus more as a political threat than as a human being with rights and dignity.

When the stakes are high, it is difficult to stand up for what is right, and it is easy to see our opponents as problems to be solved rather than as people to be respected. Had Pilate been a man of real courage, he would have released Jesus no matter what the consequences. But the crowd roared, and Pilate buckled. We are like Pilate when we know what is right but decide not to do it. When you have a difficult decision to make, don’t discount the effects of peer pressure. Realize beforehand that the right decision could have unpleasant consequences: social rejection, career derailment, public ridicule. Then think of Pilate and resolve to stand up for what is right no matter what other people pressure you to do.

23:15 Jesus was tried six times, by both Jewish and Roman authorities, but he was never convicted of a crime deserving death. Today, no one can find fault in Jesus. But just like Pilate, Herod, and the religious leaders, many still refuse to acknowledge him as Lord.

23:18, 19 Barabbas had been part of a rebellion against the Roman government (Mark 15:7). As a political insurgent, he was no doubt a hero among some of the Jews. How ironic it is that Barabbas, who was released, was guilty of the very crime Jesus was accused of (23:14).

23:18, 19 Who was Barabbas? Jewish men had names that identified them with their fathers. Simon Peter, for example, is called Simon son of John (Matthew 16:17). Barabbas is never identified by his given name, and this name is not much help either—Barabbas means “son of Abba” (or “son of daddy”). He could have been anybody’s son—and that’s just the point. Barabbas, son of an unnamed father, committed a crime. Because Jesus died in his place, this man was set free. We, too, are sinners and criminals who have broken God’s holy law. Like Barabbas, we deserve to die. But Jesus has died in our place, for our sins, and we have been set free. We don’t have to be “very important people” to accept our freedom in Christ. In fact, thanks to Jesus, God adopts us all as his own sons and daughters and gives us the right to call him our dear Father (see Galatians 4:4-6).

23:22 When Pilate said he would have Jesus flogged, he was referring to a punishment that could have killed Jesus. The usual procedure was to bare the upper half of the victim’s body and tie his hands to a pillar before whipping him with a three-pronged whip. The number of lashes was determined by the severity of the crime; up to 40 were permitted under Jewish law. After being flogged, Jesus also endured other agonies as recorded in Matthew and Mark. He was slapped, struck with fists, and mocked. A crown of thorns was placed on his head, and he was beaten with a stick and stripped before being hung on the cross.

23:23, 24 Pilate did not want to give Jesus the death sentence. He thought the Jewish leaders were simply jealous men who wanted to get rid of a rival. When they threatened to report Pilate to Caesar (John 19:12), however, Pilate became frightened. Historical records indicate that Pilate had already been warned by Roman authorities about tensions in this region. The last thing he needed was a riot in Jerusalem at Passover time, when the city was crowded with Jews from all over the empire. So Pilate turned Jesus over to the mob to do with as they pleased.
made him carry it behind Jesus. A large crowd trailed behind, including many grief-stricken women. But Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. The days are coming when they will say, ‘Fortunate indeed are the women who are childless, the wombs that have not borne a child and the breasts that have never nursed.’ People will beg the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and plead with the hills, ‘Bury us.’ For if these things are done when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

Jesus Is Placed on the Cross

(235/Matthew 27:35-44; Mark 15:25-32; John 19:18-27)

Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him. When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.

The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. “He saved others,” they said, “let him save himself if he is really God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” The soldiers mocked him, too, by offering him a drink of sour wine. They called out to him, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” A sign was fastened above him with these words: “This is the King of the Jews.”

One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

If the innocent Jesus (green tree) suffered at the hands of the Romans, what would happen to the guilty Jews (dry tree)?

The place called The Skull, or Golgotha, was probably a hill outside Jerusalem along a main road. The Romans executed criminals among themselves. When they gambled for his clothes, they fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18. An irony of the Crucifixion was the sign that fulfilled a prophecy of Isaiah 53:12. The sign was meant to be ironic. A king, stripped and executed in public view, had obviously lost his kingdom forever. Jesus was suffering the most horrible, painful death ever devised by sinful man, and he looked at the people responsible for his suffering and prayed for their forgiveness. The Roman officer and soldiers who witnessed the Crucifixion said, “This man truly was the Son of God!” (Matthew 27:54). Soon many priests were converted to the Christian faith (Acts 6:7). Because we are all sinners, we all played a part in putting Jesus to death. The good news is that God is gracious. He will forgive us and give us new life through his Son.

Roman soldiers customarily divided up the clothing of executed criminals among themselves. When they gambled for Jesus’ clothes, they fulfilled the prophecy in Psalm 22:18. This sign was meant to be ironic. A king, stripped and executed in public view, had obviously lost his kingdom forever. But Jesus, who turns the world’s wisdom upside down, was just coming into his Kingdom. His death and resurrection would strike the deathblow to Satan’s rule and establish Christ’s eternal authority over the earth. Few people reading the sign that bleak afternoon understood its real meaning, but the sign was absolutely true. All was not lost. Jesus is King of the Jews—and of the Gentiles and the whole universe.

As this man was about to die, he turned to Christ for forgiveness, and Christ accepted him. This shows that our deeds...
23:43
2 Cor 12:3-4
Rev 2:7

23:45
Exod 26:31-33
Heb 9:3-8; 10:18-20

23:46
Ps 31:5

23:48
Luke 18:13

23:49
Ps 38:11

23:53
Luke 19:30

23:55
Luke 8:2; 23:49

23:56
Exod 12:16; 20:10
Lev 23:8

24:1
John 20:19
1 Cor 16:2

40 But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? 41 We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.”

42 Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

43 And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Jesus Dies on the Cross (236/Mark 15:33-41; John 19:28-37)

44 By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock.

45 The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. 46 Then Jesus shouted, “Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!”* And with those words he breathed his last.

47 When the Roman officer* overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, “Surely this man was innocent.”* 48 And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow.* 49 But Jesus’ friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb (237/Mark 15:42-47; John 19:38-42)

50 Now there was a right and good man named Joseph. He was a member of the Jewish high council, but he had not agreed with the decision and actions of the other religious leaders. He was from the town of Arimathea in Judea, and he was waiting for the Kingdom of God to come. 51 He went to Pilate and asked for Jesus’ body. 52 Then he took the body down from the cross and wrapped it in a long sheet of linen cloth and laid it in a new tomb that had been carved out of rock. 53 This was done late on Friday afternoon, the day of preparation,* as the Sabbath was about to begin.

54 As his body was taken away, the women from Galilee followed and saw the tomb where his body was placed. 55 Then they went home and prepared spices and ointments to anoint his body. But by the time they were finished the Sabbath had begun, so they rested as required by the law.

Jesus Rises from the Dead (239/Mark 16:1-8; John 20:1-10)

24 But very early on Sunday morning* the women went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. 2 They found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance to the tomb, 3 and the sepulcher was empty. 4 For that was the first day of the week, called the Lord’s Day.* 5 After this, two of his followers went from Jerusalem to a town called Emmaus, 6 about seven miles from the city. 7 As they talked together, Jesus came near and went with them. 8 But they did not recognize him.

9 “What are you talking about?” he asked. “You must be very foolish and slow to understand even the Scriptures. 10 Have you nothing to say about what happened in Jerusalem during the last three days? 11 How is it that the prophets predicted Jesus’ suffering and death and the Resurrection from the dead were never mentioned?” 12 And they said, “The things that our teacher Jesus said and did...” 13 But he said, “You are not thinking about what we can’t do...”

14 The two angels* asking the women why they were looking in a tomb for someone who was alive. Often we run into people who are looking for God among the dead. They study the Bible as a mere historical document and go to church as if going to a memorial service. But Jesus is not among the dead—he lives! He reigns in the hearts of Christians, and he is the head of his church. Do you look for Jesus...
entrance. 3 So they went in, but they didn’t find the body of the Lord Jesus. 4 As they stood there puzzled, two men suddenly appeared to them, clothed in dazzling robes. 5 The women were terrified and bowed with their faces to the ground. 6 Then the men asked, “Why are you looking among the dead for someone who is alive? 7 He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead! Remember what he told you back in Galilee. 8 The Son of Man must be betrayed into the hands of sinful men and be crucified, and that he would rise again on the third day.”

8 Then they remembered that he had said this. 9 So they rushed back from the tomb to tell his eleven disciples—and everyone else—what had happened. 10 It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and several other women who told the apostles what had happened. 11 But the story sounded like nonsense to the men, so they didn’t believe it. 12 However, Peter jumped up and ran to the tomb to look. Stooping, he peered in and saw the empty linen wrappings; then he went home again, wondering what had happened.

Jesus Appears to Two Believers Traveling on the Road (24:3ff/Mark 16:12-13)

13 That same day two of Jesus’ followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles* from Jerusalem. 14 As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things Jesus suddenly came and began walking with them. 16 But God kept them from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, “What are you discussing so intently as you walk along?”

They stopped short, sadness written across their faces. 18 Then one of them, Cleopas, replied, “You must be the only person in Jerusalem who hasn’t heard about all the things that have happened there the last few days.” 19 “What things?” Jesus asked.

“The things that happened to Jesus, the man from Nazareth,” they said. “He was a prophet who did powerful miracles, and he was a mighty teacher in the eyes of God and all the people. 20 But our leading priests and other religious leaders handed him over to be condemned to death, and they crucified him. 21 We had hoped he was the Messiah who had come to rescue Israel. This all happened three days ago.

24:7 “Son of Man” is a title Jesus used for himself. 24:13 Greek 60 stadia [11.1 kilometers].
24:24-23
Matt 28:1-8
Mark 16:1-8

24:26
Matt 28:24
Luke 24:7-44
Acts 17:3
Heb 2:10; 5:5

24:34
1 Cor 15:5

Then some women from our group of his followers were at his tomb early this morning, and they came back with an amazing report. They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see; and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said.”

Then Jesus said to them, “You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn’t it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?” Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

By this time they were nearing Emmaus and the end of their journey. Jesus acted as if he were going on, but they begged him, “Stay the night with us, since it is getting late.” So he went home with them. As they sat down to eat, he took the bread and blessed it. Then he broke it and gave it to them. Suddenly, their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

And at that moment he disappeared!

They said to each other, “Didn’t our hearts burn within us as he talked with us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?” And within the hour they were on their way back to Jerusalem. There they found the eleven disciples and the others who had gathered with them, who said, “The Lord has really risen! He appeared to Peter.”

Jesus Appears to His Disciples (244) (John 20:19-23)

Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them as they were walking along the road, and how they had recognized him as he was breaking the bread. And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there

24:30 Or As they reclined. 24:34 Greek Simon.

ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS
After Jesus’ death, two of his followers were walking from Jerusalem back toward Emmaus when a stranger joined them. During dinner in Emmaus, Jesus revealed himself to them and then disappeared. They immediately returned to Jerusalem to tell the disciples the good news that Jesus was alive!
among them. “Peace be with you,” he said. 37 But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!

38“Why are you frightened?” he asked. “Why are your hearts filled with doubt? 39Look at my hands. Look at my feet. You can see that it’s really me. Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don’t have bodies, as you see that I do.” 40As he spoke, he showed them his hands and his feet.

41Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” 42They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43and he ate it as they watched.

Jesus Appears to the Disciples in Jerusalem (249)

44Then he said, “When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.” 45Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. 46And he said, “Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. 47It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations,* beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ 48You are witnesses of all these things.

49And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised. But stay here in the city until the Holy Spirit comes and fills you with power from heaven.”

Jesus Ascends into Heaven (250/Mark 16:19-20)

50Then Jesus led them to Bethany, and lifting his hands to heaven, he blessed them. 51While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up to heaven. 52So they worshiped him and then returned to Jerusalem filled with great joy. 53And they spent all of their time in the Temple, praising God.

24:44 Many days may have elapsed between verses 43 and 44 because Jesus and his followers traveled to Galilee and back before he returned to heaven (Matthew 28:16; John 21). In his second book, Acts, Luke makes it clear that Jesus spent 40 days with his disciples between his resurrection and ascension.

24:44-46 The writings by Moses, the prophets, and in the Psalms refers to the entire Old Testament. In other words, the entire Old Testament points to the Messiah. For example, his role as prophet was foretold in Deuteronomy 18:15-20; his sufferings were prophesied in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53; his resurrection was predicted in Psalm 16:9-11 and Isaiah 53:10, 11.

24:45 Jesus opened these people’s minds to understand the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit still does this in our life today when we study the Bible. Have you ever wondered how to understand a difficult Bible passage? Besides reading surrounding passages, asking other people, and consulting reference works, pray that the Holy Spirit will open your mind to understand, giving you the needed insight to put God’s Word into action in your life.

24:47 Luke wrote to the Greek-speaking world. He wanted them to know that Christ’s message of God’s love and forgiveness should go to all the world. We must never ignore the worldwide scope of Christ’s Good News. God wants all the world to hear the Good News of salvation.

24:50-53 As the disciples stood and watched, Jesus began rising into the air, and soon he disappeared into heaven. Seeing Jesus leave must have been frightening, but the disciples knew that Jesus would keep his promise to send the Holy Spirit to be with them. This same Jesus, who lived with the disciples, who died and was buried, and who rose from the dead, loves us and promises to be with us always. We can get to know him better by studying the Scriptures, praying, and allowing the Holy Spirit to make us more like Jesus.

24:51 Jesus’ physical presence left the disciples when he returned to heaven (Acts 1:9), but the Holy Spirit soon came to comfort them and empower them to spread the Good News of salvation (Acts 2:1-4). Today Jesus’ work of salvation is complete, and he is sitting at God’s right hand, where he has authority over heaven and earth.

24:53 Luke’s Gospel portrays Jesus as a perfect life lived according to God’s plan. As a child, he was obedient to his parents and amazed the religious leaders in the Temple. As an adult, he served God and others through preaching and healing, and finally, as a condemned man, he suffered without complaint. This portrayal of Jesus was well suited to Luke’s Greek audience, who placed high value on being an example and improving oneself, and who often discussed the meaning of perfection. The Greeks, however, had a difficult time understanding the spiritual importance of the physical world. To them, the spiritual was always more important than the physical. To help them understand the God-man, who united the spiritual and the physical, Luke emphasized that Jesus was not a phantom but a real human being who healed people and fed them because he was concerned with their physical health as well as the state of their souls.

As believers living according to God’s plan, we, too, should obey our Lord in every detail as we seek to bring wholeness to people’s bodies and souls. If others want to know how to live a perfect life, we can point them to Jesus.
STUDY QUESTIONS

Thirteen lessons for individual or group study
HOW TO USE THIS BIBLE STUDY

It's always exciting to get more than you expect. And that's what you'll find in this Bible study guide—much more than you expect. Our goal was to write thoughtful, practical, dependable, and application-oriented studies of God's word.

This study guide contains the complete text of the selected Bible book. The commentary is accurate, complete, and loaded with unique charts, maps, and profiles of Bible people.

With the Bible text, extensive notes and features, and questions to guide discussion, Life Application Bible Studies have everything you need in one place.

The lessons in this Bible study guide will work for large classes as well as small-group studies. To get everyone involved in your discussions, encourage participants to answer the questions before each meeting.

Each lesson is divided into five easy-to-lead sections. The section called “Reflect” introduces you and the members of your group to a specific area of life touched by the lesson. “Read” shows which chapters to read and which notes and other features to use. Additional questions help you understand the passage. “Realize” brings into focus the biblical principle to be learned with questions, a special insight, or both. “Respond” helps you make connections with your own situation and personal needs. The questions are designed to help you find areas in your life where you can apply the biblical truths. “Resolve” helps you map out action plans for that day.

Begin and end each lesson with prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit's guidance, direction, and wisdom.

Recommended time allotments for each section of a lesson are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>60 minutes</th>
<th>90 minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflect on your life</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read the passage</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realize the principle</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respond to the message</td>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve to take action</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All five sections work together to help a person learn the lessons, live out the principles, and obey the commands taught in the Bible.

Also, at the end of each lesson, there is a section entitled “More for studying other themes in this section.” These questions will help you lead the group in studying other parts of each section not covered in depth by the main lesson.

But don’t just listen to God’s word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don’t obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. But if you look carefully into the perfect law that sets you free, and if you do what it says and don’t forget what you heard, then God will bless you for doing it (James 1:22-25).
LESSON 1
TO TELL THE TRUTH
LUKE INTRODUCTION

1 What nonfiction book have you read lately? How do you know that what the author has written is true?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2 Which of these sources of information do you trust the least: television news, radio news, newspapers, news magazines, tabloid magazines? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3 Which of those news sources do you trust the most? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Read the introduction to Luke, Luke 1:1-4, and the following notes:
☐ 1:1, 2  ☐ 1:1-4  ☐ 1:3, 4
LESSON 1

4 What reasons did Luke give for writing his Gospel (1:1-4)?

__________________________________________________________________________

5 Why is his account reliable and trustworthy (1:3)?

__________________________________________________________________________

6 Who is Luke’s audience—to whom did he write this book (1:3)?

__________________________________________________________________________

7 What is the significance of the introductory words to Luke's Gospel?

__________________________________________________________________________

Luke wrote that he had “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” so that he could “write a careful account” (1:3). Certainly Luke’s investigation would have included interviews with eyewitnesses to Christ’s life as well as checking and rechecking any written reports against the facts. As a Gentile, Luke could have been objective in his research. As a doctor, he would have been meticulous. As we read and study Luke’s biography of Christ, we can be confident that it is an accurate account. Written to Theophilus, the Gospel of Luke is for all those who love God.

8 Christians believe that Luke and the other Bible writers were inspired and guided by the Holy Spirit as they wrote (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21), so that all of the Bible is accurate. Why, then, is it important that Luke was a careful historian?

__________________________________________________________________________
9 In 1 John 1:1-2, John wrote about being an eyewitness to the Word of life. What might have motivated Luke and John to begin their books with these strong claims of accuracy?

10 Luke had to research and discover Jesus Christ for himself in order to share him effectively with others. For Luke, firsthand knowledge was essential to faith. Think back to when God became more than a word to you—when you discovered that he wanted a personal relationship with you. What first got your attention? How did you know it was true?

11 Suppose you were to write a brief story of your personal experience with Christ—the “Gospel according to ________________ [your name].” What would you say were your reasons for turning to Christ? How would you describe your life since then?

12 Whom would you like to reach with your Gospel (for example, unbelievers at work, in the neighborhood, at school, or in your family)?
13 What questions about Christianity would they want answered?

14 What would make you a credible, reliable witness to them?

15 Name someone you know who would be encouraged to learn that Luke took pains to record history accurately.

16 Write a brief prayer of thanks for the reliability of the Bible.

A What qualifications did Luke have for writing a Gospel to a Gentile audience? What special qualifications has God given you to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ?

B Why was the theme of “the perfect human” especially appropriate for a Greek audience? What themes in Luke strike a responsive chord in you?

C How is the Greek culture of the first century similar to ours today? Why is Luke’s message especially appropriate for people in our world?
LE S S O N  2
A L L  S E T
L U K E  1:1–4:13

1 Describe some steps parents might take to prepare a child for first grade.

2 How might a child respond to these preparations?

Read Luke 1:1–4:13, the profiles of Zechariah and Mary, and the following notes:

❐ 3:15  ❐ 3:16  ❐ 3:23  ❐ 4:2

3 What was the angel’s message to Zechariah (1:11-17)? How did Zechariah respond (1:18)?

4 What was the angel’s message to Mary (1:26-37)? How did she respond (1:38, 46-55)?
5 What was the angel’s message to the shepherds (2:8-14)? How did they respond (2:15-18)?

6 What was John the Baptist’s message (3:2-3, 7-18)? How did the people respond (3:10, 12, 14-15)?

7 How did God prepare the world for Christ’s coming?

8 How did God prepare Jesus for his public ministry?

God the Father did not spring his plan of salvation on the world. He prepared everyone involved at each step. He sent an angel to Zechariah and then to Mary. He sent John the Baptist to the people. And he allowed Jesus to experience temptation directly before ministering to others. God prepared each one for what was ahead, even if none of them knew exactly what it meant or what the future held. We may not know what God is doing in our life now, but we don’t have to. Whatever God is doing, he is preparing us for what he will do. If we will trust him and be faithful to what he has given us to do now, we will be ready when his plans for our future unfold.

9 Why was it important for God to prepare the world for Christ’s coming and ministry?
10 How does God prepare people for his work today?

11 How does God's work in our life invite us to trust him for the future?

12 What past experiences has God used to prepare you for the work you do today? (Try to recall a specific example.)

13 What present experience requires you to trust God because you don't understand its purpose?

14 How might your present experience be preparing you for the future?

15 How can you show your trust in God through this time of preparation?
16 In what area of your life can you work on trusting God to reveal his unfolding plan?

A Why did Zechariah and Elizabeth suffer for not having a child? How did God use their suffering to bring them joy? How is their experience similar to an experience you have had?

B Read Mary's song (1:46-55) and Zechariah's prophecy (1:68-79). What do their words reveal about their understanding of God's character and plan? How do you celebrate when you realize God has included you in his plan?

C When an angel suddenly appeared to the shepherds, they were at first terribly frightened (2:9). Later, when they returned to their fields after seeing the baby Jesus, they were “glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen” (2:20). What marvelous works of God cause you to praise him?

D What enabled Simeon to “die in peace” (2:25-32)? In what ways is he an example of faithfulness? In what ways can you demonstrate the same kind of faithfulness in your life?

E What do we learn about Jesus as an adolescent (2:41-52)? What does this teach us about a balanced life? How might this affect our relationships?

F What was unusual about John the Baptist's ministry (3:1-20)? What basic message did he preach, and how did he get his point across? In what ways is your life like his?

G Why was Jesus baptized (3:21-22)? What did he show us by way of example?
LESSON 3
WILL THE REAL JESUS PLEASE STAND UP?
LUKE 4:14–6:11

1 Describe a time when your reputation did not accurately describe you.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

2 How did that reputation cause people to react to you?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 4:14–6:11 and the following notes:

3 How did people respond to Jesus after each of the following events?
Teaching in the synagogue (4:14-30): ______________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Teaching in Capernaum (4:31-32): _________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Driving out the demon (4:33-37): __________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
LESSON 3

Healing the sick (4:38-41): ______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Providing many fish (5:1-11): ____________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Healing the man with leprosy (5:12-16): _________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Forgiving the sins of the paralyzed man (5:17-26): _______________________
________________________________________________________________________

Eating at Levi's (Matthew's) house (5:27-32): ____________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Picking grain and healing on the Sabbath (6:1-11): _______________________
________________________________________________________________________

4 What may account for the differences in how people responded to Jesus?
REALIZE the principle
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

The people who met Jesus all met the same person, and he did something
for each of them. He taught them the truth, healed them, drove out demons,
forgave their sins. Yet they responded in different ways. Jesus' hometown
friends said, "You're no better than we are. We know your family." The Phar-
isees rejected him because he didn't fit their system—he threatened their
secure religious world. Some in the crowds were curious. Some were
amazed. Some left everything and followed him. Jesus gets the same range
of responses today. Some people don't know who he is. Others know who
he is but aren't willing to follow him for whatever reason. As Jesus confronts
you today, how will you respond?

5 What ideas do people in your neighborhood or workplace have about
Jesus today?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
6 Who today responds to Christ with . . .

outrage?

disinterest?

curiosity?

amazement?

7 What would it mean for you to leave everything and follow Christ?

8 What has it cost you to follow Christ?

9 What keeps you from responding to Christ in total commitment?

10 Take time now to write out a brief prayer of commitment to follow Christ.
11 Whom can you enlist to hold you accountable for this commitment?

A What did Jesus show about his priorities by healing on the Sabbath? (See Luke 4:31-35, 38-41; 6:6-11.) With whom did these priorities clash (6:7-11)? How do Christ’s actions affect your sense of what’s most important?

B Why were tax collectors such as Levi despised by the Jews (5:27-32)? Who is despised for similar reasons in our society? How can Christians reach out to them?

C What was Levi risking and/or giving up when he followed Jesus (5:27-32)? What risks and/or sacrifices are involved for you in following Jesus?
If you were a detective checking out a person’s values, what would you investigate? What would you collect as evidence?

According to the world’s values, what brings happiness? What gives meaning to life?

Read Luke 6:12–8:3 and the following notes:
- 6:20-23
- 6:21
- 6:24
- 6:26
- 6:27
- 6:37, 38
- 6:45
- 7:11-15
- 7:44ff
- 8:2, 3

Whom does God bless, or who should rejoice (6:20-23)?
4 For whom are sorrows waiting (6:24-26)?

5 What actions did Christ tell his followers to take in loving others (6:27-42)?

6 To what kinds of people did Jesus minister (7:1–8:3)?

7 Why would Jesus’ words about blessings have been a surprise to the disciples?

8 In Luke 6 Jesus gave his disciples many specific instructions. How do these instructions differ from the ways people usually act?

9 Why would it be unusual for someone to reach out to a Roman officer, a widow, or an immoral woman, as Jesus did (Luke 7)?
At this point in his life, Jesus “had it all.” Crowds followed him. People shook their heads in amazement at his teaching. Almost everyone liked him. He was a genuine celebrity. According to all of the world’s values, he had a bright future. But then Jesus surprised everyone with remarkable statements and deeds reflecting what is really important in life. Blessings come to those who are poor, hungry, sad, and hated, he said—not to those who are rich, prosperous, and popular. He told his disciples that God wanted them to love their enemies and do good to them. He told them not to judge but to forgive. Then he demonstrated these values by reaching out to a Roman officer, a widow, an immoral woman, and others of low status. Jesus seldom told people what they expected to hear; his values opposed the world’s. But God’s values are right and true.

10 How do Jesus’ values compare to our world’s values today?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11 Describe a time when God gave you joy in difficult circumstances.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12 What people do you find it difficult to treat with kindness, compassion, or generosity (6:27-42)?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

13 How can you reach out to people others have rejected, such as a person with AIDS, a former prisoner, or a disabled child?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
14. In what ways does Jesus challenge your values (your sense of what's important)?

15. Name someone to whom you can demonstrate Christ’s love (someone who doesn’t like you, is a social misfit, or owes you something). How can you show that love this week?

A. Who were the Jews’ enemies in Jesus’ day? Why was it difficult for the Jews to show love to their enemies (6:27-36)? What difficulties do you have showing love to your enemies?

B. How can you acknowledge the truth about someone’s sin without judging the person (6:37-42)? How can you help someone without being judgmental?

C. What are some examples of “good fruit” (6:43-45)? What kind of fruit are you producing?

D. What kind of person builds a “house without a foundation” (6:46-49)? What does Jesus identify as a solid foundation for our life? How can you build on this foundation?

E. Why was Jesus amazed at the Roman officer’s faith (7:1-10)? Why did Jesus heal the officer’s slave? How does your faith compare with that of the officer?

F. Why did John the Baptist have doubts about Jesus (7:18-23)? What did John do about those doubts? What can you do when you’re confused or have doubts about God?
LESSON 5
ALL-POWERFUL LORD
LUKE 8:4–9:50

1 List several important people you have met. Over what or whom do these people have power or control?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 8:4–9:50 and the following notes:
☐ 8:23  ☐ 8:23-25  ☐ 8:27, 28  ☐ 8:30  ☐ 8:33  ☐ 8:43-48  ☐ 8:45, 46

2 What evidence of Jesus’ power do you see in each of the following events?
Calming the storm (8:22-25): _________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Healing the demon-possessed man (8:26-39) and the boy with an evil spirit (9:37-43): _________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Healing the woman with a hemorrhage (8:43-48): _________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
LESSON 5

Raising Jairus’s daughter (8:40-42, 49-56):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Feeding more than five thousand people (9:12-17):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Being transfigured (9:28-36):

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

3 What do you think the disciples learned about Jesus as they watched him perform these miracles?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Jesus’ disciples and the crowds who followed him saw dramatic demonstrations of power. Jesus cured diseases and disabilities with a word or a touch. He spoke with authority to demons and drove them out of their victims. He brought dead people back to life. He revealed his power over nature itself. Jesus is God—he has power over every aspect of your life. He also has power over all the things you fear—natural disasters, Satan, hunger, death—everything. The question is, have you turned your fears over to him? You can turn over to God everything you feel threatened by and know you are in good hands.

4 How would you answer Jesus’ question, “Who do you say I am” (9:20)?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5 How does knowing what Jesus is really like affect how you relate to him?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
6 What dampens your faith in Christ?

7 Describe a time when you have seen Christ’s power demonstrated in your life.

8 To what do you feel vulnerable (accidents, sickness, death, demons, something else)?

9 Which areas of your life (or what problems in your life) are you reluctant to give control of to God? Why?

10 How could you tell someone who is afraid to give control of his/her life to God?

11 What fears do you need to turn over to Christ’s control?
12 How can the knowledge of Christ's power over your fears enhance your prayers this week?

A Why did Jesus speak to the crowds in parables (8:4-18)? What can you do to be more receptive to what Christ is telling you?

B Note the parable of the four soils (8:4-15). What kind of soil are you today? At what times in your life were you more like another type of soil? What does it take to be fertile soil?

C Who are Jesus' mother and brothers (8:19-21)? How can a person become part of God's family?

D Why did Jesus tell the formerly demon-possessed man to tell others of his healing (8:38-39) but asked Jairus and his wife not to tell anyone about their daughter coming back to life (8:56)? When is it best to tell of God's work in your life, and when is it best to let it speak for itself?

E What were Jesus' instructions to his disciples as he sent them out to preach (9:1-6)? What did he require of them that he also requires of you?

F How did the disciples respond to the hunger of the crowd (9:10-17)? What did they ask Jesus to do about it? What did Jesus do to stretch their faith in him? When have you seen God provide in unexpected ways?

G Who did the people think Jesus was (9:18-20)? Who do people today think he is? To whom can you reveal the truth about Christ? How can you do it?

H How are we to shoulder our cross daily (9:23)? Give up our life for Christ's sake (9:24)? Lose the world and gain our very soul (9:25)?

I How did Peter respond to what he saw on the mountain (9:28-36)? What is important about what God said from the cloud? What does this experience reveal to you about Jesus?

J Why did the disciples argue (9:46-48)? What does it take to be great in God's sight? What adjustments might this involve for you?
LESSON 6
THE PRICE IS RIGHT
LUKE 9:51–11:13

1 What is the most expensive purchase you have ever made?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

2 Why did you make it?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

3 How did you get the money to pay for it?
_________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 9:51–11:13, the profiles of James and Martha, and the following notes:
☐ 10:38-42  ☐ 11:4

4 Following Jesus is costly. What is the significance of the cost Jesus asked his disciples to pay?
No place to lay his head (9:57-58): ___________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________

R  REFLECT on your life

R  READ the passage
LESSON 6

Let the spiritually dead care for their own dead (9:59-60): _____________________
________________________________________________________________________

No one looks back (9:61-62):______________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

As lambs among wolves (10:3): ___________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Love with all your heart (10:26-28): _______________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

A neighbor to the man who was beaten and robbed (10:29-37): _______________
________________________________________________________________________

The one thing worth being concerned about (10:38-42): ______________________
________________________________________________________________________

Forgive as we are forgiven (11:4):___________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5 What price did James pay for his dedication to Jesus (see profile of James)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Jesus called many people to follow him. Some came right away; some started and
then turned back; others refused entirely. To those who followed, Jesus made it clear
that there would be a price to pay. Our commitment to Christ may affect our
relationships, our job status, or our position in the community. Following Christ costs
something. Even today, in many places of the world, following Christ can mean
rejection, imprisonment, or even death. We may not be called to die for our faith, but
Jesus does ask us to pattern our life after his. Obeying him will always involve
sacrifice of some kind.

6 What did following Christ (or doing what was right) cost . . .
the disciples? ____________________________________________________________
the seventy-two messengers? _____________________________________________
the Good Samaritan?_____________________________________________________
Mary? __________________________________________________________________

REALIZE
the principle
7 What makes faith in Christ worth dying for?


8 What might following Jesus (as described in Luke 9:51–11:13) cost a person in his/her . . .

lifestyle? ______________________________________________________________________

decisions? ______________________________________________________________________

relationships? ____________________________________________________________________

goals? __________________________________________________________________________

finances? _________________________________________________________________________

9 Following Christ means doing what God tells us to do. What has God told you to do that you are hesitating over because of the cost?


10 What can you do this week to obey Christ in this area?


A Why did James and John want to “call down fire from heaven” on a Samaritan village (9:51-55)? When are you tempted to condemn people or retaliate?

B What instructions did Jesus give to the seventy-two messengers (10:2-11)? Why was their mission successful? In what ways was their mission like the one God has given you?

C In the parable of the Good Samaritan, two people passed by the injured man without helping him, while another stopped to help (10:25-37). What do each man’s actions show about him? Who needs your help? To whom can you be a Good Samaritan?

D How was Martha serving Jesus (10:38-42)? Why was she upset? When are you tempted to choose something good over what is best?
E Why did Jesus give this prayer to his disciples (11:1-4)? What is the significance of each phrase? How can your prayers reflect these priorities?

F Why did Jesus teach us to be persistent in prayer (11:5-13)? About what do you need to be persistent in prayer?
LESSON 7
IT’S WHAT’S INSIDE THAT COUNTS
LUKE 11:14–13:17

1 Finish these sentences:
A hypocritical peace activist is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical environmentalist is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical police officer is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical aerobics instructor is one who _________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical scientist is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical doctor is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________
A hypocritical religious leader is one who __________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 11:14–13:17 and the following notes:
❍ 12:1, 2   ❍ 12:8, 9   ❍ 13:10-17

2 Who were the Pharisees?
LESSON 7

3 List some ways the Pharisees demonstrated hypocrisy (11:37-52):


4 What did Jesus say about hypocrisy (11:14–12:3; 13:10-17)?


Jesus had harsh words for the Pharisees and experts in religious law. They accused him of being allied with Satan. He condemned them for their blatant hypocrisy. They accosted him for working on the Sabbath. He criticized them for caring more about their traditions than about obeying God. As a result, “the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees became hostile and tried to provoke him with many questions” (11:53). The Pharisees and law experts were hypocrites because they claimed to be holy but were filled with sin. They went through religious motions but had no spiritual depth. They pretended to be devoted to God but were only concerned about themselves. In short, they focused on outward appearances and not on the inner condition of their heart. Jesus warned us to beware of hypocrites and hypocrisy in our own life.

5 What does it mean to focus on the inner condition of your heart?


6 What is so bad about religious hypocrisy?


7 What are some examples of religious hypocrisy today?


8 What might a Christian hypocrite look like?
9 Why is it easy to say one thing and live the opposite?

10 How can a Christian avoid being hypocritical?

11 What are some of the hindrances to living what you profess to believe?

12 How can you focus on the inner condition of your heart over outward appearances?

13 What areas of your life do you need to make more consistent with your Christian faith?

14 How will you know when you’ve made progress?
A How did Jesus answer the charge that he was in league with Satan (11:14-23)?

B What is the danger for a person who makes a dramatic change in lifestyle (11:24-26)?

C How was Jonah a sign for the nation of Israel (11:29-32)? What lessons can we learn from God’s treatment of Nineveh and other nations in the past?

D How does what you see and focus on affect your thoughts and motives (11:33-36)? What do a person’s eyes reveal about him/her?

E How much does God know about you (12:6-7)? How can God’s love and care for you free you from fear?

F In what situations do you find it difficult to admit that you’re a Christian (12:8-12)? What can you do to become more bold in your witness for Christ?

G How do people store up things for themselves (12:13-21)? What does God say about greed? What can you do to “have a rich relationship with God”?

H What do people worry about most (12:22-34)? How does worry hurt us? What is God’s antidote for worry?

I Why should believers be well prepared and ready for Christ’s return (12:35-48)? How should they live to be ready? What changes can you make so that you will be ready for Christ’s return?

J How does (or can) faith in Christ bring division among people (12:49-53)? How should you respond when someone you love strongly opposes your faith?

K What kind of fruit is God looking for Christians to bear (13:6-9)? How can you be more productive for God?
1 What are some signs of status?

2 Why is status important to some people?

Read Luke 13:18–14:35 and the following notes:
- 13:30
- 14:7-11
- 14:7-14
- 14:11
- 14:16ff
- 14:28-30

3 Why did Jesus tell the parable of the wedding feast (14:7-14)?

4 Why did Jesus tell the parable of the banquet (14:15-24)?
5 What do these parables have in common?

6 What did Jesus say about those who seek honor and status for themselves (14:8-9, 11)?

7 Why is status a problem for some?

The people of Jesus’ time made distinctions among themselves on the basis of status. Pharisees and experts in the law had high status. Rich people and those with authority had high status. Healthy people had high status. Meanwhile, almost everyone else—the poor, disabled, uneducated, and powerless—had low status. Jesus criticized the people for caring about these differences. He wanted his disciples to see things God’s way, to realize that status doesn’t matter to God—it matters only to the world. We should show concern for all people, especially those who have low or no status.

8 In your world, who are the people to be seen with?

9 What are the places to be?
10 What makes a person great in God’s eyes?


11 Whom do you know who is great in God’s eyes yet has low status in the world’s eyes?


12 What part of your image have you tried to protect?


13 Describe a time when you tried to raise your own status.


14 Describe a time when you avoided people because of their low status.


15 Name one status-seeking behavior you would like to eliminate from your life now.


16. What person of low status (poor, disabled, or uneducated) can you reach out to this week? How will you reach out to this person?

A. How is the Kingdom of God like a mustard seed (13:18-19)? How is the Kingdom of God like yeast (13:20-21)? How does this affect our expectations of the way God works in the world?

B. In what sense is the door to heaven narrow (13:22-30)? Why will some who associated with Jesus be unable to enter? Who might these people be today? What’s the difference between associating with Jesus and knowing him? How can a person enter the narrow door?

C. Why was Jesus determined to go to Jerusalem (13:31-35)? Why did God’s people find it difficult to listen to God’s prophets? Why did Jesus grieve over this fact? What can you do to reach those who oppose God?

D. What excuses do people make today for not accepting Christ’s invitation to salvation, i.e., his “banquet” (14:15-24)? What can you do to “go out into the country lanes and behind the hedges and urge anyone you find to come” (14:23)?

E. What would happen if we didn’t love Jesus more than our families and even more than our life (14:26)? How does this affect your relationships at home?

F. Why must a person count the cost before following Jesus (14:28-33)? What will it cost you to follow Christ completely?
LESSON 9
LOST AND FOUND
LUKE 15:1–17:37

1 What is the most valuable possession you’ve ever lost?

2 What did you do to try to find it?

Read Luke 15:1–17:37 and the following notes:

❒ 15:2
❒ 15:3-6
❒ 15:4, 5
❒ 15:8-10
❒ 15:20
❒ 15:24
❒ 15:25-31
❒ 15:30
❒ 15:32

3 What would a shepherd do when one of his sheep strayed away (15:4)?

4 What would he do after he found it (15:5-6)?

REFLECT on your life
READ the passage
5 What would a woman do if she lost a silver coin (15:8)?

6 What would she do when she found it (15:9)?

7 What did the father do when his son returned home (15:11-32)?

8 What has God done to find sinners (16:27-31)?

9 At what point will God stop seeking sinners (17:22-37)?

10 Why do you think Jesus told the three parables in chapter 15?

In their desire to remain pure and holy, the Pharisees wanted nothing to do with “sinners.” They thought that religious people who observed all the Pharisees’ traditions should not associate with ungodly people (those who did not observe these traditions). What the Pharisees did not know or did not care about was that God seeks out sinners. Through these three parables, Jesus pointed out that the Pharisees lacked a key element of God’s heart—compassion for people who do not know God. God wants everyone to come to him. Those who truly know God desire the same thing.
LESSON 9

11 How can a person become spiritually lost?

12 What might cause a Christian to develop a callous attitude toward those who do not know God?

13 Whom do you know that is lost?

14 What can you do to help bring them to the Father?

15 How can you avoid becoming exclusive about your relationship with God, like the older brother in the parable of the lost son?

16 Name the lost people for whom you can pray regularly.
A How did the shrewd manager protect himself against his employer (16:1-8)? How does your use of money reflect your commitment to God?

B How can a Christian use money and possessions to help bring people to the Father (16:9)? What reward awaits the Christian who does this? How can you use your money and possessions to “make friends”?

C Why is it important to be faithful or trustworthy in small matters (16:10-13)? What has God entrusted to you? How can you be faithful (or responsible) in these areas?

D How do some people try to serve “both God and money” (16:10-13)? Why is this impossible? How can money come between a person and God?

E Why did the Pharisees scoff at Jesus’ teaching on money (16:14-15)? In what areas are you tempted to rationalize your disobedience of God’s law?

F Why would the story of the rich man and Lazarus have upset the Pharisees (16:19-31)? Why did the rich man long for paradise?

G How did Jesus answer the disciples’ request for more faith (17:5-10)? What are you tempted to put off for lack of faith? What is your simple duty in that area?

H Why did the one leper return to thank Jesus (17:11-19)? What good things has God done for you? Why is it important to remember to thank God? What can you thank God for today?

I Why will many people not be ready for Christ’s return (17:20-37)? How can a person get ready? What do you need to do now to prepare?
LESSON 10
TRUE RICHES
LUKE 18:1–19:27

1 What does a single person give up when he/she gets married?

2 Why would a person willingly give all that up for marriage?

Read Luke 18:1–19:27 and the following notes:
- 18:18ff
- 18:22, 23
- 19:8
- 19:11ff
- 19:20-27

3 Why did the rich man go away sad (18:18-23)?

4 Why did Zacchaeus receive Christ's forgiveness (19:1-10)?
Based on each man's past, which of them would seem to be the most likely to follow Christ (18:20-21; 19:2, 7)? Why?

What does God want us to do with our money and other resources (19:11-27)?

The rich young man came to Jesus confident of his religious credentials, but he went away sad because he didn’t love Christ as much as he loved his money. In contrast, Zacchaeus was willing to pay any price to follow Christ, even if it meant paying back four times the amount he had extorted. When confronted by Christ, each of these men made a choice about money—one served it; the other used it to serve God. Money can be either our master or our servant, but it cannot be both. When we choose to serve God with our money and resources, we gain the proper perspective and free ourselves from the tyranny of greed.

Why is money so important to some people?

In addition to money, what else can easily take God’s place in people’s lives today?

In what ways are you like the rich young man?
10 In what ways are you like Zacchaeus?


11 Name something that would be difficult for you to give up to follow Christ.


12 What resources can you invest for the Kingdom?


13 How can you invest them?


14 How will you use your money and possessions to serve God this week?
A Why is it important to persist in prayer (18:1-8)? How can you be more persistent in your prayer life?

B What is the difference between the prayer of the Pharisee and the prayer of the tax collector (18:9-14)? Why was the tax collector justified? How can you make your prayers more like his?

C Why did Jesus welcome the little children (18:15-17)? How can we come to God as little children?

D How did Jesus answer the rich man's question, "What should I do to inherit eternal life?" (18:18-22)? Why was this answer difficult for the man to accept (18:23-24)? What barriers can stand in the way of your willingness to do what God wants?

E What did Jesus predict would happen to him (18:31-34)? Why were the disciples surprised when Jesus rose from the dead? What statement of Jesus have you just recently come to understand?

F What did the blind beggar ask for (18:41)? What did he receive (18:42, 43)? How did this affect the man (18:43)? What blessings has God given you that inspire you to respond as this man did? How can you show that response this week?
LESSON 11
OPPOSITION
LUKE 19:28–21:38

1 What motivational sports slogans have you heard?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2 What are some possible reactions to overwhelming opposition?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 19:28–21:38 and the following notes:

3 What people opposed Jesus (19:39, 47; 20:1, 19, 27, 46)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
4 What tactics did the religious leaders use to try to trap Jesus (20:1-8, 19-40)?

After Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the opposition intensified. The Pharisees, teachers of religious law, Sadducees, and leading priests united against him and used a variety of tricks and traps to find some legal way to apprehend him. Jesus eluded their verbal traps while continuing to fascinate the crowds. But the opposition was real and would eventually lead to his arrest.

Jesus warned his followers to prepare themselves for similar treatment. Following him, he told them, would invite persecution from all sides, even from those closest to them. It would take a conscious effort for them to stand firm in their devotion to Christ. Following Christ today invites persecution just as surely as it did then. Knowing this is the first step in standing firm against opposition to our faith.

5 What kinds of persecution did Jesus tell his followers to expect (21:5-19)?

6 Why did the religious leaders try to trap Jesus instead of admitting that he was the Messiah?

REALIZE the principle

7 How did Jesus’ warning in 21:17 come true for the disciples?
Why was persecution a positive sign?

How are true believers persecuted by religious leaders today?

How are Christians persecuted by the government? family? friends?

Where might you face opposition (even persecution) for what you believe?

Describe a time when you were tempted to be silent or to compromise your faith because of opposition.

What truths will help you remain loyal to Christ when people oppose you because of your faith?
A  What is the significance of the following events of Jesus’ triumphal entry (19:28-46)?

- His entering the city on a colt
- The people joyfully praising God
- Jesus’ telling the Pharisees that if the crowd were to keep quiet, the stones would burst into cheers
- His weeping for and words about Jerusalem
- His driving the merchants from the Temple

B  How did the religious leaders react when Jesus said, “The stone that the builders rejected has now become the cornerstone” (20:17)? How should they have reacted? What can you do to avoid making the same mistake as the religious leaders?

C  What lessons can we learn from the poor widow’s offering (21:1-4)? How does her example challenge you to handle your finances differently?

D  What signs will signal the end of this age (21:8-31)? What can we do in the meantime (21:34-36)? What will you do to prepare for this time?
LESSON 12
IN OUR PLACE
LUKE 22:1–23:56

1 Check two or three experiences that you would consider to be the most painful.

☐ Being betrayed by a close associate
☐ Saying good-bye to close friends
☐ Having a very close friend turn his/her back on you
☐ Struggling with a difficult decision
☐ Being deserted by friends and associates
☐ Being falsely accused
☐ Being mocked in public
☐ Being convicted of a crime you didn’t commit
☐ Being tortured
☐ Dying a slow death
☐ Being executed publicly
☐ Being totally alone

2 Why did you select these experiences?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Read Luke 22:1–23:56 and the following notes:

☐ 22:70  ☐ 23:15  ☐ 23:22
LESSON 12

3 Each of the following people or groups played a key role in the final hours of Jesus’ life on earth. Briefly describe each person’s part in the drama (22:1–23:25).

Judas: __________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
The twelve disciples: _____________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Peter: __________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
The religious leaders: ____________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Herod: _________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Pilate: __________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

4 Why was Jesus in such agony when he went to pray (22:39-46)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

In the final hours of his life on earth, Jesus suffered unimaginable emotional and physical pain, including desertion and betrayal by friends, public humiliation, and physical torture. But the greatest suffering he endured was bearing the sins of the world on a rugged Roman cross. Suspended between heaven and earth, Jesus took our place, paying the penalty for our sins. He hung there totally alone, separated even from his Father. In dying for us, Jesus did more than we can comprehend. He not only took our sins away but also made it possible for us to have a relationship with God.

5 What crimes was Jesus accused of during his trials (22:66–23:25)?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
6 Why did Jesus have to die in order for God's plan to be accomplished?

7 Why was Jesus' pain on the cross so excruciating?

8 How would you explain to an unbeliever the reason for Jesus' death?

9 How have you responded to Jesus' sacrifice for your sins?

10 How can you celebrate or remember Christ's sacrifice for you?

11 What can you do this week to express your gratitude to Christ for all he did for you?
A Why do you think Judas betrayed Jesus? Why did Peter deny him? When are you tempted to deny your relationship with Jesus?

B What is the significance of Jesus’ words to his disciples regarding the bread and the cup during the Last Supper (22:14-20)? Why do Christians still celebrate this event? Why do you take Communion? What do you do to prepare yourself for Communion?

C When Jesus was arrested, where were the people who had cheered him a few days earlier? Where would you have been? Why?

D Why did the religious leaders have to take Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor (23:1)? What did they accuse Jesus of doing (23:2)? Why were these accusations different from the ones used before the Jewish council (22:66-71)? How did Jesus respond to these accusations? How do you respond when falsely accused of something?

E Why did Pilate give in to the religious leaders’ demands to have Jesus crucified? How are you pressured to do wrong each day? How can you resist that pressure?

F How did each of the crucified criminals respond to Jesus (23:39-43)? What does this teach us about salvation?

G Why did Jesus tell the women of Jerusalem, “Don’t weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (23:28)? For what do you weep?

H What was significant about the words exchanged between Jesus and the criminal on the cross (23:42-43)? In what ways do you identify with this criminal?
LESSON 13
ALIVE!
LUKE 24:1-53

1 What causes your peers to despair and lose hope?


2 To what or to whom do people look for hope today?


Read Luke 24:1-53 and the following notes:


3 Who were the first people to discover Jesus’ resurrection? Why were they convinced it was true?


LESSON 13

4 Fill in the chart below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What some expected from Jesus</th>
<th>What happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(a) Jesus would rescue Israel from Roman oppression and set up a kingdom in Israel (24:21).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Jesus would save himself from the cross (23:35).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) Crucifying Jesus would put an end to this troublemaker (23:4-5).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 What were the different reactions to the news of Jesus’ resurrection (24:1-53)?

When Jesus died, the disciples despained. Lost and leaderless, they huddled in fear behind closed doors. But when Jesus appeared to them, their lives changed forever. Why? Because suddenly they had hope. When they saw that Jesus was alive, they knew that all he had taught them was true. They now realized that he was the Messiah, the one who had come to bring salvation to the world, and they were assured of their own resurrection and place in heaven. Suddenly the future looked brighter than they had ever imagined. The Resurrection continues to bring hope to those who despair today.

6 As Jesus explained to the two believers on the road to Emmaus, he had fulfilled all of Scripture and accomplished all that God had planned. What difference does it make to the world that Jesus is who he said he is?
LESSON 13

7 How did the Resurrection give the disciples hope?

8 What difference does it make that Jesus is alive today?

9 If you had been one of Jesus’ followers nearly two thousand years ago, how would you have reacted to his death on the cross?

10 How would you have reacted to the amazing news of his resurrection?

11 How does the Resurrection give you hope?

12 When do you most need to remember the truth of the Resurrection?
13 Think of one way you can keep the hope of the Resurrection in your thoughts this week.

A Why is the Resurrection central to the Christian faith? How does the truth about the Resurrection impact you?

B What did it take to convince the disciples that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead (24:36-40)? What assures you of the truth of the Resurrection?

C How did Jesus spend his time with the disciples after the Resurrection (24:45)? How did Jesus prepare the disciples to be his witnesses? In what ways have you been prepared to witness for Christ?

D How did the disciples respond to Christ’s ascension (24:50-53)? What motivates you to worship and praise God?
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