



# Luke

*A Series Guide by Crosswalk Church*

*Introduction*

# LUKE

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Over the last year, we have studied the Book of Luke for several different seasons. We finished 2023 in Luke. We took our Easter series from Luke and quickly moved to Acts for our Experience Seasons 1 and 2. We will revisit the book of Luke again here as we examine the teachings in the middle section of this important work.

It is well for us to sit in a book for longer than just a few weeks to really understand the author, interpret what they are trying to do, get to know their voice and simmer in the words of Jesus that we see in chapters 5-9. Luke has a particular voice amongst the synoptic gospels, and learning to listen to his versions of the words of Jesus is worth the time we spend on it.

So we invite you to abide in these words, to marinate in them, and to see the commitment that Jesus speaks of when it comes to becoming and sustaining a discipling relationship with Jesus. May you be moved time and time again by these words and the love and healing that is behind them.

Grace to you, as you engage, study, reflect, and learn from the words of Jesus.

—Pastor Tim and the Series Guide Writing Team.

*Day 1*

## 5:1-4

**5** One 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. **2** He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. **3** Stepping 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.

*4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Now go out where it is deeper, and let down your nets to catch some fish.”*

Chapter 5 begins a section where we see Jesus about to call his first disciples. He is preaching by the village of Gennesaret; the sea was sometimes called this. However, Gennesaret was a town on the Sea of Galilee, so it was sometimes used as a pseudonym for what we know as the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus was preaching to great crowds, and he saw an opportunity to stand back from the crowd and teach from the boats. This would have been easier, and the water would have helped carry his words further.

However, as he was preaching, he noticed that the fishermen were still on the boats, and they had not caught any fish.

It must have been strange interacting with the fisherman at first. He was preaching to a large crowd on the seashore, and he just moved into one of the boats. What were they thinking? Would you have done that, commandeered a boat for your purposes? It seems aggressive, well, at least assertive of Jesus. However, it was needed at the time so people could hear the words he had to say to them.

The synoptic Gospel of Matthew says this is where Jesus starts to tell the parable of the sower. (Matthew 13:2-3). I mention this about Matthew, so you know the importance of Jesus's words that day. And the people were hungry to hear his teaching. Jesus had a way of teaching that pushed people to think differently about faith, God, their lives, and who Jesus actually was.

In the same way, Jesus continues to push us to think about things differently than we have before. His grace has consistently been given, and it has always changed our lives. When we find ourselves in ruts with our thinking or understanding of the world, all we have to do is look back into Jesus's life, and our priorities are reorganized.

1. How has grace changed your perspective on things in your life?
2. Does it surprise you that Jesus was already so popular a speaker?
3. Would you have traveled far to hear the words that Jesus had to say?

*Day 2*

## 5:5-11

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**5** “Master,” Simon replied, “we worked hard all last night and didn’t catch a thing. But if you say so, I’ll let the nets down again.” **6** And this time their nets were so full of fish they began to tear! **7** A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking.

**8** When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, “Oh, Lord, please leave me —I’m such a sinful man.” **9** For he was awestruck by the number of fish they had caught, as were the others with him.

**10** His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed.

*Jesus replied to Simon, “Don’t be afraid! From now on, you’ll be fishing for people!” 11 And as soon as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.*

This is a favorite of mine. They seemed to at least have some knowledge of who Jesus was. Simon Peter was willing to follow his instructions, although he had not formally been introduced, and decided to follow Jesus.

There must have been something compelling about Jesus for a rough-and-tumble fisherman to be willing to follow his instructions, especially about fishing. I don’t know about you, but when I know how to do something, I rarely like to take advice!

I remember working on an old Land Cruiser that had blown a head gasket. I had never taken an engine apart before, and so I was neck-deep in both oil and trying to learn all I could from the forums for Landcruisers. At that point, I was willing to hear all the advice people had to give me. However, the next time I was rebuilding an engine, I was less interested in someone else’s advice since I thought I finally knew something about rebuilding Landcruiser engines. (IYKYK:)

The good news was that Simon Peter was interested in at least listening to Jesus. So he did what he was told to do, and sure enough, they soon caught so many fish that they needed other boats to haul the haul in.

But then came the realization that he wasn’t fishing at all, but he had witnessed a miracle, and now, everything needed to change. He wanted more of that because he had been involved in a miracle. This could have been one of the

motivations to drop his nets and follow Jesus wherever he went.

That's the funny thing about miracles: when you have had one, no one can tell you didn't have that experience. This was one of those moments for Simon Peter.

1. What do you think you would need to experience to drop everything and follow Jesus where he was asking you to go?
2. What if he asks you to go somewhere you don't want to?
3. What does discipleship and followership look like for you?

*Day 3*

## 5:12-16

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**12** 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.”

**13** Jesus reached out and touched him. “I am willing,” he said. “Be healed!” And instantly, the leprosy disappeared.

**14** 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.”*

**15** *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. 16 But Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness for prayer.*

There is so much happening in this text that we need to break it into a few sections. The first section is about Jesus's healing and willingness to make it happen for the man with leprosy. It should be noted that Leprosy had a tendency to be a catch-all term for any skin disease, but it certainly could include actual leprosy as well.

The man asks Jesus to make him clean. This would have been a common understanding that the reason he was diseased was that he was unclean in some way. Sin was often connected to disease. While we know that this is not the case, we also know that Jesus has the ability to cleanse anyone, both bodily and spiritually. The man simply asked that he be “clean.”

Jesus was willing. This leads us to the next section: what happened when the man was healed.

Jesus tells the man to not tell anyone what had happened. This is probably due to a myriad of reasons, not the least of which being that he was kicking up a bit of a ruckus with all of the healing he had been doing.

Healing was usually the purview of the priests, and therefore, they did not take kindly to Jesus taking some of their business away. Jesus was healing for free, without any certifications or verifications of the effectiveness of the healing. This is likely why Jesus told him to go to the temple and be declared clean.

But even though Jesus asked him to keep it quiet, the word was getting out no matter what. This is often the way fame works. One deed leads to more and more recognition. And Jesus was getting a great deal of recognition at this point.

1. Have you ever wondered what you might be famous for?
2. How can you ask Jesus for healing or to be cleansed today?
3. Why do you think Jesus didn't want people to know about this healing?

*Day 4*

## 5:17-26

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*17 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.*

*18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a sleeping mat. They tried to take him inside to Jesus, 19 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. 20 Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the man, "Young man, your sins are forgiven."*

**21** *But the Pharisees and teachers of religious law said to themselves, “Who does he think he is? That’s blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!”*

**22** *Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, “Why do you question this in your hearts? 23 Is it easier to say ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or ‘Stand up and walk?’ 24 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!”*

**25** *And immediately, as everyone watched, the man jumped up, picked up his mat, and went home praising God.*

**26** *Everyone was gripped with great wonder and awe, and they praised God, exclaiming, “We have seen amazing things today!*

It's funny that everyone wants to hear what happens when something is popular. Whether it is for critical reasons, curiosity, or support, something popular draws a crowd. Jesus is popular at this point in his ministry, so the room is full of supporters, haters, gossips, and those who just like to see something new.

However, this means some people who should be there for healing might not make it. Luckily, this man who needed healing had some friends who were willing to carry him to see Jesus. Not only were they willing to take him to see Jesus, but they were willing to go the extra mile to get their friend right to Jesus. They had to bore a hole into the thatch on the top of the roof to get him in.

But when they did, they see that Jesus was willing to forgive the man and to heal the man as well.

This did not sit well with the haters who were there. They were upset with what he had done, thinking he was taking authority that was only God's to take. (Of course, they didn't understand who Jesus really was!)

It is interesting that this is one of the only places where the author states that "Jesus knew what they were thinking. . ." Normally, Jesus overhears, however, it is not unreasonable to think Jesus might know their thoughts and their hearts. So we move forward simply knowing that Jesus knew what was in their hearts.

He then immediately healed the young man and they watched him pick up his mat and leave. In some ways, his healing was a confirmation that Jesus did have the ability to forgive sins, as both of those abilities are from God.

At the end of this very eventful day, the people were deeply impacted and full of awe and wonder. Seeing Jesus heal and forgive meant that they were now living in a new reality that threatened everything they knew to be true.

When you are confronted with that kind of interaction, you have to believe, or you have to try and stop it, which is exactly what the Jews did with Jesus.

1. Have you ever had a day that was full of awe and wonder? What happened? And how did you see God work?
2. What side of the argument do you think you would have found yourself if you had been there that day?
3. Do you think you have any friends who would tear open a roof to get you closer to the Healer?

Day 5

## 5:27-32

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**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.

**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?"

**31** Jesus answered them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. **32** I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners and need to repent."

I got an email from one of my favorite people asking this question in particular. They wondered if we were supposed to sit with those who could be considered less desirable. They were making the case that while it seems like a great thing that Jesus did, for us to do it might put our families in jeopardy.

It was a reasonable question from a reasonable person, and the model that we see Jesus showing us would say that we are supposed to cultivate relationships with people who are considered by society as less than desirable to be around. And yes, what Jesus has shown us is an incredible compassion for the marginalized, the discredited, and the outliers.

A few things might be worth noting at this point.

1) While we are not Jesus, we do desire to be like him, to emulate his works and words, and to put the philosophy of compassion into our lives. It is possible to do this in many different ways, some of which may look like what Jesus did, and some may not.

For instance, we have a free medical clinic that serves many who lack the basic building blocks of healthcare. We do not take these people into our homes, but we assume some of the risks they live with daily. This is following in the footsteps of Jesus as we care for the most marginalized in our community.

2) Jesus had a knack for making sure that he didn't leave people in the situations where he found them. Jesus had a way of motivating people, with their love for him, to change, to grow, to find a new freedom, and to no longer be bound by their sin.

This becomes more difficult for us to emulate, although we can continue to work to find ways to help people grow as well. By helping to give the most marginalized around us agency and opportunity, we can also follow in the ways of Jesus by motivating people to live differently with our help.

One other note: We can't fix everything and everyone. Only Jesus can do that. This reality does not stop us from

demonstrable work in our communities, but I have seen well-meaning people beat themselves up because they can't fix all of the ills of society. Our job is to make the changes where we can, in the greatest spirit that we have. Let us not be overwhelmed by our inability to save everyone, but be diligent in who we are called to help!

1. Who do you think Jesus is calling you to help in your capacity?
2. How do you think that help will be received?
3. Are there organizations that are already doing great things that you can join with?

*Day 6*

## 5:33-39

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**33** 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?”

**34** Jesus responded, “Do wedding guests fast while celebrating with the groom? Of course not. **35** But someday the groom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”

**36** Then Jesus gave them this illustration: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and uses 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.

**37** “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. **38** New wine must be stored in new wineskins. **39** But no one who drinks the old wine seems to want the new wine. ‘The old is just fine,’ they say.”

Last year, we did a whole series on these texts, so I don’t want to go over already well-tilled soil. I think we can lean into the first verse of this text and see where the questions are going. The main thrust of the question is simply this: How come your disciples don’t act pious and do religious things all the time?

Jesus answered this with a series of illustrations that showed that because he was with them and teaching something entirely new and foreign to them, it would be very difficult to syncretize this new belief into their old belief systems.

Trying to fit these new teachings into some old container would also make no sense. The new teaching was so radical that old metaphors and infrastructures could no longer contain this new and amazing truth that Jesus’s life and teachings contained.

Have you ever considered how this “new” teaching has become old news in your life? Or have you, at some point in your life, encountered these truths to be so new that the old way of thinking has to pass away.

I once conversed with a great guy who loved Jesus wholeheartedly. His life had been renewed, and his trajectory had changed by the grace of Jesus Christ. However, he could not believe that he was completely forgiven for what had been a “checkered” past. We had a conversation in which he was struggling against the idea of complete forgiveness given to him by Jesus. I could see how he couldn’t get to the point of submitting to the grace of Jesus. I finally said some words that got through to him, and the floodgates opened. Although he was clear on his salvation, the forgiveness he was finally able to submit, and in that submission, all the old containers vanished, and he was truly able to live and experience the new wine and the new wineskin!

1. Has this ever happened to you or someone that you know?
2. How can you find those new wineskins?
3. Do you think this metaphor makes sense in today’s world?

# SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

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## INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

Describe to others in your group how you imagine Jesus. What does he look like? What's he wearing when you spend time with Him? What color are his eyes? What's it like to listen to the sound of His voice, or how would you imagine it to be like if you feel you've never heard it?

## HEAD

1. Read Luke 5 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Why do you think these professional fishermen were so quick to let this person take over their boats?
3. The miracle of the fish wasn't just enough to feed them, the catch nearly broke their nets. How does God's abundance play into this story and do you find yourself more often leaning into the God of abundance, or a life of scarcity? How does that show in your life?

4. Why do you think people so often disobeyed Jesus' instructions to not tell anyone about their healing? Why do you think Jesus gave that instruction?
5. In verse 16, it says Jesus often withdrew, sometimes even in the moments where he was gaining momentum. What lessons can we learn about Jesus' rhythms of life that we can apply to our own?
6. Jesus called such a diverse group of people to be his companions (fishermen, zealots, tax collectors, etc...). How should his choices inform the kinds of communities we seek to create?

## HEART

1. What is something you feel you have learned recently in your walk with Jesus? Something he has, or is, teaching you?
2. Has Jesus ever redirected your life (aka - from fishermen to fishers of men)? If so, how and what was that experience like for you?
3. Praise God for friends that are willing to do whatever it takes to get their loved one to Jesus. In what ways can we as a church community live in a similar way for our brothers and sisters in the communities around us?
4. Which would you have Jesus do for you, forgive your sins or heal a physical, mental, or emotional ailment? Explain your answer. (good news is that he does both in the story of the paralytic)
5. Matthew Levi would have been the last choice of almost anyone living in that time, to be a disciple. He had betrayed his own people. What do you learn from Jesus' willingness to choose him, and how can we seek to be more like Jesus in who we include?

## HANDS

Luke chapter 5 ends with Jesus talking about fasting, and though fasting in Scripture often relates to food, it can also mean removing something from your life for a time in order to allow more time to focus on God. What most gets in the way of your walk with Jesus? Is it technology (texts, social media, etc...)? Is it work? Is it your need to be up on the latest news? What if this week, for three days, you set those things aside and used that same time to sit at the feet of Jesus; to worship; to journal; to listen?

## LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

*“Be still and know that I am God.”*

Psalm 46:10 NLT

*Day 8*

# 6:1-5

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**6** One Sabbath day as Jesus was walking through some grainfields, his disciples broke off heads of grain, rubbed off the husks in their hands, and ate the grain. **2** But some Pharisees said, “Why are you breaking the law by harvesting grain on the Sabbath?”

**3** Jesus replied, “Haven’t you read in the Scriptures what David did when he and his companions were hungry? **4** He went into the house of God and broke the law by eating the sacred loaves of bread that only the priests can eat. He also gave some to his companions.” **5** And Jesus added, “The Son of Man is Lord, even over the Sabbath.”

I love this story because when I heard it when I was younger, I quickly realized that we often make an idol of the Sabbath. At least that is what it felt like growing up in Adventism in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Whether it was how deep you could go in the water or whether or not you could turn on your oven after the sun went down, there always seemed to be another thing we weren't supposed to be doing on the Sabbath. The first time I heard this text, I was blown away. The way Jesus answers the Pharisees is pretty simple. He cites precedent and reminds them of what David did with his companions when they were hungry.

He essentially says to them: "they were hungry. . ." and that is enough reason to let them take some wheat. He didn't need any grand theological justification, just his companions' need for sustenance. It was so simple, so elegant, and so obvious.

Sometimes, it is so hard to justify what we do that it almost becomes ridiculous. Here, Jesus is succinct and to the point. And then he reminds them that he is the Lord over even the Sabbath.

By saying that he is the Lord of the Sabbath, we see that Jesus is exerting his authority over one of the things that they held sacred and dear. The Sabbath was a mark of their obedience to God and the clear understanding that they were a chosen people. I don't know if this sounds familiar to you or not, but we have treated the Sabbath in much the same way. We have held it up as a "sign" that we are favored above others and that we may have figured out something that no one else really has.

Now, to be clear, I'm a fan! I think there is clear biblical evidence for the need for a Sabbath for us and the

graciousness of God to give us such a time for renewal and refreshing. But I don't think we should make an idol out of it.

If the Sabbath and our keeping or giving it are the only marks that people can see that we are followers of Jesus, then perhaps we have not been great at living lives that reflect a greater expression of Jesus in the world.

1. Have you ever kept the Sabbath so legalistically that it ceased to be a joy in your life?
2. How can you shape your life so that the Sabbath is truly something for you and brings rejuvenation into your being?
3. How can you teach your kids about the Sabbath in a way that is life-giving?

*Day 9*

## 6:6-11

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*6 On another Sabbath day, a man with a deformed right hand was in the synagogue while Jesus was teaching. 7 The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees watched Jesus closely. If he healed the man's hand, they planned to accuse him of working on the Sabbath.*

*8 But Jesus knew their thoughts. He said to the man with the deformed hand, "Come and stand in front of everyone." So the man came forward. 9 Then Jesus said to his critics, "I have a question for you. Does the law permit good deeds on*

*the Sabbath, or is it a day for doing evil? Is this a day to save life or to destroy it?"*

**10** *He looked around at them one by one and then said to the man, "Hold out your hand." So the man held out his hand, and it was restored! 11 At this, the enemies of Jesus were wild with rage and began to discuss what to do with him.*

Here, we see a culmination of what had happened before; Jesus befuddling the Pharisees with his answer and his healing, but in this particular interaction, something more needs to be noticed.

Their reaction is more nefarious than we have seen before. They were "wild with rage," says this translation, and they were now going to have to find a solution to this "problem" that Jesus was becoming.

Over the years, I have heard many different reactions to who the person of Jesus was and what he did. Some people find Jesus to be fascinating and compelling. Others find Jesus to be milquetoast, and his words were not upsetting in the least. One day, someone asked me if I ever thought Jesus made anyone angry by what he said. This individual could not believe that Jesus had ever made anyone angry.

This text would push back pretty hard on the idea that nothing Jesus did was controversial. I find the opposite to be true. Most of what Jesus said angered those who found his words threatening to their way of life.

In this section, Jesus reminds the Pharisees that the Sabbath is a day for doing good rather than evil. He also reminds those same Pharisees that when we value policy over people, we may be missing out on our humanity.

1. How can you make sure that you see people over policy?
2. What do you think Jesus would think is okay to do on Sabbath?
3. How does the Sabbath play into your life right now?

*Day 10*

## **6:12-16**

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**12** One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. **13** At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Here are their names:

**14** Simon (whom he named Peter),  
Andrew (Peter's brother), James, John, Philip,  
Bartholomew,  
**15** Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus),  
Simon (who was called the zealot),  
**16** Judas (son of James),  
Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

This is the first of two lists in Luke's writings that give the names of the twelve apostles. There are lists like this that occur in Matthew 10:1-3 and Mark 3:16-19. Although there are some variations in the lists' order, they all prioritize Peter and mention Judas Iscariot last.

In verse 12, we see that Jesus went to pray for the whole night. We know Jesus often took time alone and sought

solitude with God before big events. This is something that we all would do well to put into practice as well.

From this time of reflection, Jesus brings together those who were following Jesus at the time and he chooses the 12 that we have come to know as Apostles, with the addition of Paul, later, although he did not know Jesus personally.

We have Peter, James (Son of Zebedee), and John that made up Jesus' inner circle. Peter was the leader and John was Jesus' "Beloved" disciples. Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus, leading to his arrest and crucifixion. The other apostles included Andrew, Philip, Bartholemew, Matthew, Simon, James the Lesser, Jude and Thomas.

Many books have been written about why these particular men. Some books pitch that we are to have these 12 kinds of people in our lives at all times. Some use Jung's Archetypes and connect them to each of the apostles. There have been a myriad of discussions, arguments, and scholarly work done in this area.

I don't think that Jesus chose these 12 to be the architecture of the relationships that we need, although there are things we can learn from these books and writings. These were the men who had the most trajectory in their faith in Jesus. These were the men who walked out of the upper room after the resurrection, after having seen Jesus in the flesh, and never denied or recanted the fact that they believed Jesus to have been resurrected from the dead.

What is your faith trajectory? Do you have what it takes to go the distance when your faith is shaken and your commitment is put to the test?

You may not be a Peter or a John, but you might be a Matthew, Thomas or James. All of which are mentioned as those that Jesus chose to be Apostles.

1. Do you think you would stay faithful when your faith is put to the test?
2. How do you think you might stay when others might fail in their faith in Jesus?
3. How can you bolster someone else's faith today?

*Day 11*

## 6:17-19

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**17** 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. **18** They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil spirits were healed. **19** Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.

This is a bit of a transitional paragraph to give us some insight to what was happening, who was there, and what was about to be said. Jesus is about to teach what is called the Sermon on the Plains, which is close to the Sermon on the Mount that we see in Matthew 5.

We see that there a multitude of people from all over Judea, much like in Matthew 4 and Mark 3. But there is something

else we should note as well: It says that they could see the power that was going out of him. We know that Jesus knew when power left him. We see that explicitly in the story of the woman with the issue of blood. (Luke 8)

What does this mean, that there was power that was emanating from him? We don't experience that too often. At Redlands we have an electrical room where I have to change in the worship service when there is a baptism. I don't have enough time to run back to a changing room or my office, so I use this electrical room. It is warm and dry, but there is a transformer in this room that is always a little warmer than the rest of the room. I am not an electrician, but it sure feels like there is an extra amount of energy that is coursing through this transformer.

I imagine this is what it was like being around Jesus. The energy was palpable. They knew he was not of this world, but to feel that power coursing through his veins would have been quite a sight and an ever more pronounced feeling. Have you ever known someone who has this kind of kinetic energy around them?

I have! Honestly, it was my daughter when she was little. Hannah was always buzzing, not like a bee, but like a bare wire, about ready to have her energy connect with something else and the sparks would begin to fly. Some people are just born with the energy that is crackling off of them.

These people are electric to be around. They are exciting, and they have a tendency to draw quite a crowd. There are some actors in Hollywood wood, and some leaders that have this kind of energy about them. However, the difference between them and Jesus is that there were times when that energy was the power of the Holy Spirit moving through Jesus so that those around him were healed.

1. What do you think it would have been like to be near Jesus at that time?
2. Would you have liked to see someone healed by that power?
3. What can we do to bring some of that power into the world today?

*Day 12*

## 6:20-23

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**20** *Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,*

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

**21**

*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.*

**22** *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. 23 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.*

So many of these things sound horrible. There, I said it. I know we are supposed to look at these words and find the

wisdom in them, but sometimes, I don't think I want to be poor, I don't want to be hungry and I don't want to weep. I know that these iconic words of Jesus should be what comforts me in difficult times, but I don't relish the idea that I will be mocked and cursed.

I guess what Jesus is trying to teach us here is that there is more beyond what we experience in this world and in this life. Sometimes, it is hard for us to see that. And I don't think it is unreasonable for us to get discouraged, for us to see only what we can see in this life, and to struggle to get through some of the difficulty that we deal with in this life.

While we are given the hope of the life that is yet to come, sometimes, we have to live the life that we have here, and that can be difficult. We are to remember that others of the faith have been treated this way before us, and that is meant to give us some hope, and of course it does. However, it doesn't really solve the problems that we are going through now. There are times I wish Jesus had just promised us that everything would go well, life would be easy, and God would bless us so richly that we wouldn't have a trouble in this world. . .

But alas, that is not what is promised us. Rather, we are promised that there are blessings in "due time." That time may not be in this world. We are to look at this life as an opportunity to commit and praise God through our struggles as our characters are built to be more like his.

I am glad, however, that Jesus always gives us hope for something more, something grander, and something greater. It is not that he leaves us with nothing, but rather that he leaves us with much to look forward to. In the end, he will be proven worthy to be praised and our previous commitment and praise will not be considered wasted. In fact, as we struggle, we are learning the value of his love for us.

1. Are you familiar with these texts, or more familiar with the Matthew version of this sermon?
2. How do you feel about what is promised us?
3. How can you live today like you are expecting that reward in the future?

*Day 13*

## **6:27-36**

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*27 “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. 29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. 30 Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. 31 Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

*32 “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! 33 And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! 34 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.*

*35 “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. 36 You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.*

As we go deeper into Jesus' teaching on the Plains, we are struck with the succinctness of his words and the clear command to "do to others as you would like them to do to you. . ."

These are not unfamiliar words to us, but much harder to put into practice. This admonition for us to live in such a manner that it probably wouldn't make sense to most people is the hallmark of Christian living. Regardless of the rhetoric we hear coming from Christian pundits and preachers who are preaching a protective or exclusive gospel, what we see here is the ever-giving nature of the life that we are called to live on this earth.

Overwhelming love, that is what we are called to give and live. Going further than required is where love is really measured by the gospel. Without this, we are just the same as any other faith, any other people on the earth. If we are to claim the overwhelming and never ending love of Jesus, than perhaps we are to make sure that we have the same ethos when it comes to the love that we give to others.

These texts make it absolutely clear that we are to live love in a way that is so far beyond what is natural and normal for us as humans that we should actually be seen as strange and weird and even peculiar; not because of what we don't do, but because of the way that we have chosen to give love day after day. We are to create communities where people feel loves, seen, safe, and heard. We are to grow the kingdom from the way that we love, not the things that we excise from our lives.

As I write this, I am traveling to a destination where I am pretty sure there will be lots of pushback on the kinds of communities that we are trying to create. I am preparing myself for the questions that will inevitably come around about the music, the coffee, and how we can call ourselves “Adventists” with an expression of church like we do. I weary of these conversations.

While I get why these questions will be asked, I am constantly chagrined by the fact that the questions we will field will not be gospel oriented, will not be around how people can love better, but around how we can protect what we perceive to be a “better Adventism”.

Now, I may be wrong, and I hope that I am. But I think when we read these words of Jesus we can be reassured that you cannot love too much as a community of belonging.

1. What can you do today to show someone the love that you have received from Christ?
2. How can you protect these communities of belonging by finding ways to love more profoundly.
3. Do you think you understand the things that Jesus was trying to preach through this sermon?

*Week 2*

## SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

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### INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

When you were growing up, were there certain do and don'ts your parents gave you that you thought at the time seemed silly, or that your friends didn't have to follow, or even reflecting back on now you may still not have a good reason for why they wanted you to do, or not do, something? (like being home before sundown, or eating whatever you put on your plate even if your sibling put it there when you weren't looking - I am not speaking from experience)

## HEAD

1. Read Luke 6:1-36 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. While the Pharisees were caught up in the letter of the law, Jesus seems so simple and practical (ex: they were hungry so they ate). Where else do you see this type of behavior happen in communities of faith, where we miss the forest for the trees?
3. In v 11, why do you think the Pharisees were so furious and couldn't celebrate the miracle?
4. Jesus didn't seek to fulfill his mission on earth alone; rather, he chose a community. Why do you think community is so vitally important in our faith journey?
5. Why do you think power emanated through Jesus, that people could simply touch him and be healed? What are some ways that people can know, see, experience that we've been with Jesus?

6. In verses 20-22, Jesus mentions some things that don't sound so great; poor, hunger, weep, hate, rejection. But these are all things of the seen world. How can you and I help remind each other, regularly, that there is more going on around us that what we can see...so much more?
7. In verses 27-36, Jesus commands us to love, but not ordinary love. Rather, superhuman love - love for enemies, for those who hate you or curse you or who strike you. At Crosswalk, we say lovewell. How can we practice loving like this in such a divisive, angry, violent, world? How can we help each other lovewell?

## HEART

1. What is special to you about the idea of Sabbath? What are maybe some ways you think we miss the gift of Sabbath?
2. Speaking to your community of faith, in what ways do you currently help your community of faith grow and impact even more hearts of the kingdom of God?
3. Sometimes, Jesus' commands seem other worldly, likely nearly impossible for us to follow. What are some ways that you think we can seek to be obedient to the teachings of Jesus, even the ones that are really hard?
4. There are always two realities, the world we see, and the world we can't see. How can we help each other remember that there is always a bigger story going on than the one we see with our eyes?

## HANDS

Who in your life right now, is hard for you to love? Who has hurt you or wronged you in some way? We won't ask you to put that all aside, especially if you feel unsafe, but what is

one thing you could do today to extend an act of love their way? Maybe it's saying a prayer for them. Maybe it's dropping an anonymous gift at their doorstep. Or maybe it's even more. Pray over what you can do to stretch your ability to love, and do you best to act on it.

## LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

*"For our present troubles are small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last forever! So we don't look at the troubles we can see now; rather, we fix our gaze on things that cannot be seen. For the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever."*

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 NLT

Week 3

Day 15

# 7:1-10

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*7 When Jesus had finished saying all this to the people, he returned to Capernaum. 2 At that time the highly valued slave of a Roman officer was sick and near death. 3 When the officer heard about Jesus, he sent some respected Jewish elders to ask him to come and heal his slave. 4 So they earnestly begged Jesus to help the man. "If anyone deserves your help, he does," they said, 5 "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. **7** I am not even worthy to come and meet you. Just say the word from where you are, and my servant will be healed. **8** 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.”

**9** 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!” **10** And when the officer’s friends returned to his house, they found the slave completely healed.

“The Christian church is the only society in the world in which membership is based upon the qualification that the candidate shall be unworthy of membership.”

—Charles C. Morrison

Chapter 7 introduces how Jesus seemed to screen people for admission into the Kingdom of God. Have you noticed that Jesus seemed to search for people who did not meet the qualifications to become part of the Jewish temple worship of his day?

The people that Jesus included were not just without qualifications, but they were outcasts, gentiles, the sick, the needy, and those who had been cast aside by the religious elite of the day. They were people who needed help by the cause, rather than those who could help the cause. They were often seen as worthless, as less than, and as deeply flawed. Sinners shamelessly showed their love, knowing forgiveness was their only hope in life. Jesus set up no

qualifications people like this had to meet for membership. He showed compassion to those society scorned, and then bade them come follow him.

As teaching time was over, it was time for some renewed action on the part of Jesus. This is when Jesus would heal, and Jesus would forgive. The question, of course, is whether or not his actions would prove his words to be true. So he returned to his ministry center, the city of Capernaum.

Capernaum was a busy business center that required Roman soldiers for two reasons: to guard the populace against criminal activities and to be taken advantage of by illegal business practices, as well as to collect customs from traders who crossed the borders into Palestine.

Of course, daily gossip would have brought the centurion news of Jesus. They would not have been inured to the trappings of and stories of what was happening through this extraordinary man. When finally in need enough, the centurion called in some capitol and influence and asked the Jewish elders to help him. They, of all people, relayed his message to Jesus. Used to issuing commands, the centurion phrased the message pretty bluntly: Come! Cure!

The Jewish elders, who would normally hold Jesus at an arms distance wanted to, at least, make some headway with this Roman leader, so they relayed the message, begging Jesus to come and cure the man's servant. But they didn't want Jesus to defile himself, and they simply asked him to "say the words" and the man would be healed.

Luke did not report how Jesus cured the servant, as this was not the point of the story. Jesus responded to the centurion's words in the same way the crowds responded to his miracles —in amazement. Jesus was blown away by the faith that his centurion showed. It, was, in fact, a unique kind of faith—a

faith far beyond the Jewish elders who knew Jesus could heal but still refused to follow him. There was not a faith like this in all of Israel, and Jesus let them know.

Jesus never met the centurion. He never had to bend rabbinic purity rules to effect a cure, although I think he would have. The friends returned, and the servant was healed. Why? Because of faith in Jesus from this Gentile centurion.

1. Was Jesus right in simply answering the centurion's request?
2. Do you think Jesus would have gone to this man's house if the need made it necessary?
3. Have you ever met someone who had this kind of faith, even if they didn't call themselves Christian?

*Day 16*

## 7:11-17

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**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.*

Woah! We sometimes forget this story because we think about the resurrection of Lazurus as the most prominent resurrection story. However, we see that Jesus was willing to resurrect another person, and this time, it was due to the compassion he had for the young man’s mother.

Jesus’ compassion brings life to the dead, awe to the living and a call to compassion for his disciples.

As this funeral procession intercepts him on his way to Nain, it must have been disconcerting. Anytime there is a funeral for a young person, the tragedy is palpable, and while we don’t know how old this young man is, it is clear that he was much too young. The grief that his mother experienced moved Jesus deeply.

The word used for the son shows that it was the mother’s only son. In Palestine at that time, this would have meant that this mother’s future was in jeopardy; she would not have any extended family to take care of her, and of course, she had lost a son.

Jesus immediately recognized the situation, and compassion flowed from him. Words say so little in a time like this. Jesus tried to brush away her tears and catch her attention. Jesus had more than “thoughts and prayers” to give to this woman.

By simply walking up to the coffin, the processional stopped.

I was once at a funeral, and the wife of the recently passed man left her seat during the service, picked up a folding chair, sat it in front of the coffin, and proceeded to hold his hand and stroke his face throughout the remainder of the service. It was strange to most of us.

As it turns out, her husband was a pathologist who worked at a coroner's office for years. She worked along with him, and so the idea of a dead body did not mean the same thing to her that it might mean to the rest of us. Once I understood that, I found her gesture of love to be quite beautiful.

However, in the Jewish tradition, it would have been anathema to touch a dead body. And to be clear, Jesus did not touch a dead body. He touched the coffin and then told the young man to "get up"! The dead son heard and obeyed and started to speak loquaciously.

Then, Jesus returned the boy to his mother. It was a beautiful moment, to be sure.

However, what it did to the people in the crowd was something else. One translation says, "Fear seized them!" another translation says, "Great fear swept the crowd. . ." As you can see, the response was not all positive.

On the other hand, we might be using the term "fear" specifically. They were in awe, in amazement, and the immediately glorified God. Perhaps the fear was less being afraid and more being in awe of what God has done.

All in all, it was an amazing moment that not only glorified God, but also gave a mother her son back. Nothing could be sweeter.

1. Are you ever amazed by what God has restored in your life?
2. Do you think we have much awe and wonder in our lives?
3. How would we get some of that wonder back into our spiritual journeys?

*Day 17*

## 7:18-35

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**18** *The disciples of John the Baptist told John about everything Jesus was doing. So John called for two of his disciples, **19** 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?”*

**20** *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?’”*

**21** *At that very time, Jesus cured many people of their diseases, illnesses, and evil spirits, and he restored sight to many who were blind. **22** 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, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is being preached to the poor.” **23** And he added, “God blesses those who do not fall away because of me.”*

**24** 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 wind? **25** Or were you expecting to see a man dressed in expensive clothes? No, people who wear beautiful clothes and live in luxury are found in palaces. **26** Were you looking for a prophet? Yes, and he is more than a prophet. **27** John is the man to whom the Scriptures refer when they say,

*'Look, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
and he will prepare your way before you.'*

**28** I tell you, of all who have ever lived, none is greater than John. Yet even the least person in the Kingdom of God is greater than he is!"

**29** 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. **30** 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! 35 But wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it.”*

This is a complex passage that will use some unpacking. News about Jesus had reached John in his prison cell (See 3:20). Even in prison, his followers looked to him for leadership and kept him informed of the outside world. John then sends two of these disciples to Jesus. Things had not worked out exactly as John expected, and perhaps some confusion about who Jesus was began to set in. Was this the savior? Or should they look somewhere else?

Jesus did not answer immediately. What he did was heal, teach, forgive, and do those things that Jesus was wont to do on any and every occasion. He didn't answer with words, rather, with actions. He took care of people, he healed, cast out evil spirits, and restored them to the lives that they had been separated from for too long.

In the midst of this work, he leans over to them and says, essentially, “Tell him what you saw.” They did, and then Jesus addressed the crowds that were with him. He uses snippets from Isaiah as he describes his ministry to John's two disciples. Three types of actions typify what Jesus did—healing, resurrecting, and preaching the good news.

Now, we don't know how John took this message when he received it. Luke ignores what questions we might have about. Rather, he focuses on Jesus and what Jesus says next. Jesus makes his case with a beatitude or a statement of blessing people who act in a certain way. This beatitude focuses on people's response to Jesus. He desperately didn't want people to miss the messiah due to what they were expecting a messiah to be. He uses the idea of John the Baptist to remind people that what they expect is not always what they get but what they need.

He then points out there seems to be nothing he can do that won't be seen as negative in the eyes of some. They called John the Baptist possessed by a demon because he didn't eat and drink, but they also said that Jesus was a glutton because he did. Jesus is essentially making the case that there is no winning around some people.

1. Do you know anyone like that, who is never happy, but keeps moving the goalposts on what is appropriate and what isn't for other people?
2. Do you think that Jesus answered the two disciples correctly?
3. The last quote is worth remembering: "But wisdom is shown to be right by the lives of those who follow it!"

*Day 18*

## 7:36-43

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**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—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.”

Forgiveness is a funny thing. We sometimes feel it and need it, but we don’t always understand it. It is both ethereal and deeply personal and real. Forgiveness is as much a culture we cultivate and an action we engage in and receive. Forgiveness is all of these things and more.

In this story, Jesus is eating at a Pharisee’s house, and this woman comes in and starts to lower herself in front of him, wash his feet, and weep over them. This would have been embarrassing and uncomfortable for everyone. Jesus receives this love because he understands what it means to the woman.

When the Pharisee pushes back on the propriety of this woman’s behavior, Jesus tells a story about forgiving a little and a lot. The story’s point is obvious: those who have been forgiven of much are often more grateful for that forgiveness, and this woman had been forgiven of many sins.

Sometimes we have trouble really believing in the forgiveness that comes from God as it seems to be such an intangible thing. It is hard for us to believe that God is really willing to forgive us, and we function as if it never really

happened. We carry guilt that God has no interest in us carrying, and we work hard to become “accepted” by God, when that acceptance has already been given to us repeatedly.

This story reminds us of the greatness of forgiveness and the goodness of Jesus as he accepted the woman’s act of gratitude into his life, regardless of whether it seemed appropriate to others or not.

1. Have you been forgiven of much or of little?
2. Have you ever met someone who didn’t feel they needed forgiveness for anything? How did that make you feel?
3. Do you think that the forgiveness of God is a feeling or a fact?

*Day 19*

**7:44-47**

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“That’s right,” Jesus said. **44** 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. **45** You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped

*kissing my feet. 46 You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.*

**47** *“I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.”*

This is the continuation of yesterday's story, and we see how Jesus summarized the situation. He reminds Simon that he had been less than hospitable, and she was actually treating Jesus with more love and compassion than the host had.

There are some interesting rituals mentioned: water to wash feet, greeting with a kiss, and olive oil to anoint a visitor's head. All these things were common courtesy for a guest to receive when coming over. And apparently, Jesus had received none of these from Simon. (However, it might be fair to note that the woman was there, and therefore these things may have been pre-empted by her actions).

What do we do when we receive guests into our houses? Are there particularly Christian things that we do to let them know we welcome them? Many cultures have these kinds of rituals, but the early church's particular rituals have fallen by the wayside over the last two millennia.

I wonder if it wouldn't be interesting for each of us to put into place a ritual or two that shows hospitality to our guests as we receive them in our homes. A glass of water, a quick blessing, a grateful handshake. Maybe we do much of that already without noticing it. But when we put spiritual meaning behind something, it will allow us to be able to remind our guests that this is a home where God is honored and they are welcomed.

Every Jewish home has a Mezuzah on the doorpost. It is a piece of parchment inscribed with a specific verse from the Torah. They put it in on their doorpost as a reminder that this is a house of God and also to always remember the Exodus.

I have always loved this tradition, as every time I step into a hotel room in Israel, I am reminded of so much history and spiritual heritage. It has always sort of warmed my heart and given me pause.

1. Is there anything you do that reminds you that your house is a house of God when you go in?
2. What could you do to make this happen?
3. How can you connect with your guests and let them know they are welcome?

*Day 20*

**7:48-50**

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**8** *Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”*

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

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

Finishing up this week is finishing up this story. The almost addendum to the story is that Jesus was interested in going further than simply appreciating what the woman was doing for him, but he wanted to forgive her sins himself, right there.

Of course, the men at the table were concerned because the forgiveness of sins is something that is only in God's portfolio, and to have this man doing it in front of them meant that he was taking the role of "Forgiver" upon himself. And they were exactly correct, that was specifically what he was doing.

Jesus never shied away from accepting his role as the son of God and, as we understand the Trinity, his placement amongst the Godhead. We have to agree with this if we are to call ourselves Christians in the great tradition of Christianity. We don't get to demote Jesus to a lesser status and think that we are still finding our way through our Christian walk.

If this sounds harsh, I do apologize, but there are some basic tenets of Christianity that even our forebearers in Adventism had to wrestle with in order to finally become clear. The idea of the Trinity was one of them. Initially, they did not think the Trinity was something to be believed in. However, they came to the conclusion that if we were to honor the Biblical understanding of who Christ was, then we would have to obtain an understanding of Jesus as part of that Godhead.

In order to understand a text like the one above, we also must have a clear understanding that Jesus is God and has the ability to forgive sins, just as the father has that ability. This is why the men at the table were so confused. They were being forced to make a choice about who Jesus was.

1. What is your understanding of Jesus and the Godhead?

2. Does your understanding of the Trinity fall into the tradition of Christianity?
3. How is the Trinity best described so that you might understand it?

*Week 3*

## SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

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### INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

### OPEN QUESTIONS

John the Baptist had gone before Jesus to prepare the way. When you think about your journey of faith, who went before you that helped opened your heart to see Jesus? What was something they taught you that you carry with you to this day?

### HEAD

1. Read Luke 7:1-50 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.

2. Jesus seems to care so little about the labels we use to identify people; the centurion, the tax collector, a woman who had lived a sinful life. How did Jesus see past these labels and should you and I be working to do the same? What ministry gets stopped when we focus so much on labels instead of people?
3. What do you think it was like for the Pharisees, the religious elite, to hear Jesus praise a Centurion for having greater faith than anyone in Israel?
4. Jesus' tenderness and compassion for the widow is palpable. The people respond with both fear and worship. Why may both feelings be appropriate in this situation?
5. Why do you think John the Baptist began to have doubts that Jesus was the Messiah?
6. Why do you think this woman, who had to know her reputation among the people, would even dare enter a house full of such "holy" people?

## HEART

1. What do you admire about the Centurion's faith, and what aspect of it do you wish you had more of?
2. If you could have Jesus restore one person to you, someone who has died, who would that person be and why?
3. John the Baptist had a moment of doubt. Sitting in a prison cell, he began to wonder if he got it right. Do you think faith and doubt are truly opposites, or might they go hand in hand, one helping the other? Explain.
4. The "sinful woman" poured out everything she had on Jesus, expensive perfume and even her tears. What might Jesus be asking you to give in this season of your life to honor him? Money? Time? Devotion?

## HANDS

The centurion's faith, John the Baptists persistence and willingness to prepare the way, the sinful woman's incredible gift and sacrifice...all for Jesus. What is one thing you could do for Jesus this week, or one thing you could say yes to for Jesus this week, to show Him how much you love Him and how thankful you are for Him and all that He has done for you?

## LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

*“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Mark 10:45 NLT

*Day 22*

**8:1-3**

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**8** 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, **2** 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; **3** 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.

Big Man with Big Commitments He was a big man, six foot four or more, at one time over 300 pounds, wearing size 16–D shoes laced halfway up his calves. He had a big voice. Metropolitan opera people invited him to New York to sing. He had big talents. The world's largest seminary invited him to teach. Conference centers waited for him to come and direct games and music as well as teach. The largest religious publishing house in Protestantism hired him as a worldwide consultant. But Sibley Burnet ignored all that. He lived by his favorite phrase, “A man is biggest of all when he stoops to help a child.” So he relinquished his dream to sing opera in New York. He gave up his goal of seminary teaching. He limited his conferences. He devoted himself to one thing—teaching children and teaching people how to teach children. To do this, he made another commitment, a commitment to God's Word. It is still wonderful to pick up his worn-out Bible and read the notes he made in the margin of nearly every page. At his retirement, churches and church groups around the nation honored him with dinners and plaques and praise. But the happiest days of his life came when he stood before a Vacation Bible School full of children, told them how much Jesus loved them, and greeted them as they came to say they wanted to live for Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus called for big commitments from all people, big and small. Luke 8 illustrates some of those big commitments and asks us where our commitments lie. Luke begins with an orderly account of Jesus' ministry, though he does not always place Jesus in a precise location. In chapter 7, he was in Capernaum, Nain, and in a Pharisee's house, where he doesn't name the location. Now, Jesus begins a nomadic ministry throughout the towns and villages, presumably of Galilee. He is preaching, teaching, and healing all along the way.

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<sup>1</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 121.

Mary Magdalene had good reason to follow Jesus. He had exorcised demons from her, transforming her life into something different. She would eventually be one of the witnesses of the empty tomb. Many believe that Joanna, who appears only in Luke (at the empty tomb) was married to a major official in Herod's government and may have funded much of Jesus' ministry. Susanna only appears here in the Bible.

While this is setting up the context for the rest of the chapter, it is good to know what is coming. It is a lesson in commitment, a lesson to listen, obey, testify, and believe.

1. What do you need to commit to today? Is it a habit, an opportunity, a person, or church?
2. How can you commit like you never have before?
3. Why do you think committing to something is so important?

*Day 23*

## 8:4-15

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*4 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: 5 “A 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. 6 Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. 7 Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. 8 Still 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.”

**9** His disciples asked him what this parable meant. **10** He replied, “You are permitted to understand the secrets[a] 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.’[b]

**11** “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God’s word. **12** 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. **14** 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.

Crowds seem to play an important role in the book of Luke. While the leaders of Israel may have rejected and crucified Jesus, the crowds loved him! And he did not disappoint. He continued to stir their interest with a parable. The meaning of the parable has tested the abilities of the best Bible students over the years. It is possible that we have tried too hard to find just one central meaning rather than letting the parable open a vast new understanding of the nature of God’s Kingdom and the ministry of Jesus.

The story itself is a simple lesson from everyday life. You don’t need to be an expert on Palestinian farming to understand it on its surface. All the seeds thrown out by

hand do not hit the target, nor is every seed left alone to enjoy its home in the warm, sun-baked soil. Much of the seed never germinates. But the seed in good soil brings abundance.

The parable indicates that if we hear God's Word, believe, and hold fast to it, we can be "good soil" in which the Word of God multiplies and bears fruit abundantly. So we should make sure that we are "Good Ground."

Now, the disciples, listening as they might, simply didn't understand. I mean, they were not farmers, but fishermen, so maybe they didn't get the nuances of sowing seeds. But I think it is something more. They were the closest to Jesus, and still missed the point.

Sometimes, what we think will be easy to understand is difficult for us to catch. Even if we are close with Jesus. We have to allow time in our lives for Jesus to continually speak to us, to explain it to us, and to make sure that we are able to understand all that he is teaching us.

1. Have you heard this parable before? I am sure you have. Do you understand it?
2. Why do you think it was so difficult for the disciples to understand?
3. Have you ever been so close to something that you don't have a great perspective on it? Maybe that is what was going on with the disciples.

## 8:16-18

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**16** “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.

**18** “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.”

I love that Jesus used the obvious to teach these hidden truths. Remember, the process of lighting an oil lamp at that time is not like turning on your light on your cell phone. They had to source the oil, make sure they had an oil lamp, and then fix the wick. You wouldn't do this just to put it under a bed or under something that wouldn't allow you to see it's light.

I believe that the same is true for the Word of God. God does not give his Word to be hidden for only a few or to be the cause of concern because no one can understand it. Of course, it is the work of a lifetime, as there is so much to work toward understanding about God, but it is there. It has been revealed through his word, and we are not diminishing it by hiding it but amplifying it by living it!!

If you believe that you have read the word of God and have grown, don't stop! There is so much more room for growth and maturity in your walk and it is all there in scripture and in the revelation of Jesus Christ. We live his words daily and grow through that same revelation that he has given to so many through his word.

1. If you are reading this, you are in the word of God daily; how has that changed your life?
2. What else do you do to study scripture?
3. How can you delve even more deeply into the revelation of God through Scripture?

*Day 25*

**8:19-21**

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**19** 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 standing 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."

Wherever Jesus went, there were those disciples who followed him. Many had given up everything in order to follow him each and every day. His family, however, did not. They came and saw him on occasion and checked in on

him. When they got there this time, they found that his popularity had grown and they couldn't even get close enough to see him.

Someone saw they were there and let Jesus know. His answer sounds almost insensitive. He lets them know that his family are those who listen to God's word and obey those words.

Does this mean that his family was not listening to the word of God? Perhaps. We don't have much information on them, but we do know that they were not close disciples of Jesus. And let's face it, it would be hard to be a disciple of your older brother or your son. That is just easy to understand.

Jesus felt like he had a responsibility to those who were following him as he spoke the words of God into their lives. His new "family" are those who understand what he is saying and align their lives to it.

Perhaps this is part of the cost of discipleship. His family did not partake in the ways that so many others did. That is not to say they didn't believe, but they were not disciples in the same way that others were.

Of course, these words of Jesus shock us, and almost turn us off to him. But Jesus was here to do something specific, something so important that everything else in life would have to be secondary to it. Even his family needed to take a back seat to the work that God had given him.

Some of us may come from families who don't believe. You may be the only one who can give them the word of God. However, you may also have to align your life a bit differently than they understand. Church and community may become more important to you as you grow and mature in Jesus.

That is not to say your family is unimportant; of course, it is. We are not Jesus, and we don't have to forsake our families except in certain circumstances. But we can find a new family and home in Jesus and his people. It is my hope that the Crosswalk Churches will be those homes that are full of love, grace and belonging.

1. Have you ever had to make a decision your family didn't understand?
2. Do you think Jesus was being mean to them?
3. How hard do you think they must have taken this interchange?

*Day 26*

## 8:22-25

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**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!”*

This is such a famous story that I am hesitant to comment on it more than what you probably have already heard about it. You have heard sermons, devotionals, and more of this story about how we are either going into a storm, amid a storm or leaving a storm in our lives.

I will not try to wrap this story up too tightly, as is often done. I find this story amazing, sometimes difficult to believe, and it also exposes human nature.

How so? Well, the disciples are most concerned about themselves drowning, and then as the story develops, they are terrified of the power that Jesus exposes to them. The wind and the sea listen to him, and when they realize that really does have that power, they can't seem to get their heads around it.

Is this because the disciples are stupid or a bit slow? No, I don't think that is the case. I believe that they were constantly kept on their toes by the choices Jesus made, by the words Jesus said, and by the exposition of power that Jesus would let eke out of him in certain situations.

Listen, what would you do if someone you knew suddenly showed a power you couldn't imagine. Wait, let's make that a little more reasonable. What if you were hanging out with someone you had known for a few years, you continually liked what they had to say, and you realized that they were a little different? Then, one day, they say, “Hey, let's go to Paris!” Your answer is, “How?” You don't have money to buy a ticket. . .

“No worries,” says your friend, “we can go on my jet.”

Okay, everything you thought you knew just changed. Does this guy/girl have a jet? What? You thought you knew them enough to think you were on the same level, but now everything has changed.

What they experienced with Jesus was much greater than this little example, but can you imagine? There was a sea change in a moment, and nothing would be the same again. This is what the disciples experienced that night when they were with Jesus. Now, they had to decide if it was reasonable to commit to such an overwhelming power!

1. When you think of the power that Jesus has, what do you usually think about?
2. Do you think it was reasonable that the disciples were amazed by what happened, even after they had seen so many phenomenal things that Jesus had already done?
3. How can we live in that wonder today?

*Day 27*

**8:26-39**

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**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 the tombs 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.

**34** When the herdsmen saw it, they fled to the nearby town and the surrounding countryside, spreading the news as they ran. **35** 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. **36** Then those who had seen what happened told the others how the demon-possessed man had been healed. **37** 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. **38** The man who had been freed from the demons begged to go with him. But Jesus sent him

*home, saying, 39 “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.*

Another famous story that is quoted often. Jesus and the Garasene demoniac is famous for a couple of things. 1) The demons mentioning that they were “legion” or many. 2) Jesus sending them into the pigs, rather than sending them to the “pit.”

This region was in the area of the Decapolis, or a group of cities that were Gentile and were beside the Sea of Galilee. In these cities, you could raise, sell, and eat pigs without any issue, which would not be possible in Jewish towns.

The welcoming committee consisted of one man, but this guy was completely possessed. When he saw Jesus, he fell down prostrate and took a worshipping posture. Then he shouted at Jesus, hoping to be ignored. It is clear this is the demon speaking, not the young man. And the demon seemed pretty clear on who Jesus was. It turns out that this man was not simply possessed by one demon, but by an army of demons. And all of them were afraid of Jesus.

Long story short, Jesus sent these demons into the pigs, and that caused all sorts of trouble for him and the disciples. What we do learn from this story, at its most foundational, is that Jesus has an authority that even the demons cannot question.

1. Do you think Jesus should have sent them into the pigs?
2. Why would he do this?
3. What do you learn from this story?

# SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

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## INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

If you could travel to anywhere in the world, with one person from history, where would you go and who would you go with and why?

## HEAD

1. Read Luke 8:1-39 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. In your own words, what is the good news of the kingdom of God?
3. In v 8, Jesus says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” I would imagine that most people in the crowd had ears, so what do you think Jesus is really saying? How do we better attune our ears to hear Him?
4. Can you remember a time when Jesus tried to teach you something that for so long, made absolutely no sense to you at all? Did you ever figure it out or are you still wrestling?

5. When we read about the lamp on the stand, it causes us to think that what's on the inside of us, is seen on the outside? Maybe a more modern saying would be, garbage in, garbage out. How do we keep the light inside us shining bright even when the world tries to snuff it out?
6. Contrast the storm and the disciples with the posture of Jesus. How was He able to sleep in there was so much commotion happening around him? Was he just that tired?
7. Could the demons have refused to do whatever Jesus told them to do? Why or why not? What courage do you find from his interaction with the powers of darkness to take with you in your life this week?

## HEART

1. What opportunities do you have right now to scatter the seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Where? How? When?
2. When was the last time you needed to be reminded that you follow the One who controls the wind and the waves? What wind and waves are happening in your life now that you need to be reminded who is ultimately in control?
3. Who is your family of faith and how are you supporting the family?
4. What is something God has done for you that you love to tell other people about?

## HANDS

This week, write a list of all the things in life that you are worried about, that consume your thoughts, that overwhelm you or seem insurmountable. Pray to the God who is bigger

than any storm you face in this life, then hand over that list, ripping it up first and trusting in Him to care for your needs.

## LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

*Day 29*

**9:1-6**

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**9** One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. **2** Then he sent them out to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick. **3** “Take nothing for your journey,” he instructed them. “Don’t take a walking stick, a traveler’s bag, food, money, or even a change of clothes. **4** Wherever you go, stay in the same house until you leave town. **5** And if a town refuses to welcome you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate.”

**6 So they began their circuit of the villages, preaching the Good News and healing the sick.**

Roy Angel (Shields of Brass, 41) tells the story of a missionary woman who came home to place her three children in American schools and then prepared to return to her mission field in Africa. A well-meaning friend watching her pack commented, “I am sure you are anxious to return to your mission field.” Frowning for a moment, the missionary replied in a solemn tone: “No, I am not anxious to get back. The place to which I am going is dirty. There are no electric lights; there are no modern conveniences whatsoever. There is no pure water, and I will be cooking on my wood stove. While I cook, I will be weeping because my children are so far away. I will be desperately lonesome for them and wonder if they are sick. When I remember that it will be three years before I see them again, I will be tempted to tell the Lord that I cannot stand it and am going home. No, I am not anxious to get back, but I am more anxious to do the Lord’s will than anything else. I would be more miserable here than there.”<sup>2</sup>

Jesus sent his disciples out to go into the mission field, and he gave them authority to heal and cast out demons. He also reminds them not to take anything and to rely on God and the goodness of those they minister to for their every need.

Sometimes, when we go into the mission field God has for us, we will need little else than what God has provided and will provide for us in his graciousness. But he does mention that not everyone will accept this message of grace, and therefore, we are asked to continue to move on to pastures that are willing to receive the seeds of the gospel that we have been asked to plant.

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<sup>2</sup> Trent C. Butler, [Luke](#), vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 129.

Our dependence on God is a crucial aspect of this sending that Jesus does in this text. When we are sent into the mission field, whatever that is for each of us, we are called to go in faith, and with faith. That means we are being asked to depend on God in ways that perhaps we wouldn't normally, and that we have to trust more than we ever have before.

1. What is your mission field?
2. How can you trust God more as you move into that mission field?
3. What

*Day 30*

**9:7-17**

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*7 When Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, heard about everything Jesus was doing, he was puzzled. Some were saying that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead. 8 Others thought Jesus was Elijah or one of the other prophets risen from the dead.*

*9 “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***

*10 When the apostles returned, they told Jesus everything they had done. Then he slipped quietly away with them toward the town of Bethsaida. 11 But 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.*

**12** Late 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.”

**13** But Jesus said, “You feed them.”

“But we have only five loaves of bread and two fish,” they answered. “Or are you expecting us to go and buy enough food for this whole crowd?” **14** For there were about 5,000 men there.

Jesus replied, “Tell them to sit down in groups of about fifty each.” **15** So the people all sat down. **16** 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. **17** They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers!

This is a great story of provision. But more so, it is a story of the great leveling of society by Jesus being willing to feed everyone, regardless of gender, position, creed, or age. Jesus, in one fell swoop, changed the way that we look at society; who is worthy of getting fed first, and who is worthy of getting fed at all, and how we trust in God to provide for all of us.

This was a great big potluck! But not everyone contributed; rather, it was God making sure there was enough for everyone. When you think about it, you know that there must have been more than just the men there. There would have been children, women, soldiers, aristocrats, priests, and even those needing healing.

Therefore, when Jesus was willing to serve them all from his provision, he was making a statement that in God's kingdom blessings fall on everyone, regardless of their position or their standing in society.

As well, Jesus was becoming a very popular preacher/teacher/rabbi. Even Herod was trying to figure out who he was and what he was trying to do. This confounded Herod, but not just Herod. The priests were always confused, as were so many other people.

The problem with Jesus has never been that he was a revolutionary, but that no one could figure out what kind of revolution he was starting. We know that it was a kingdom revolution, but this was just one of the examples of how everything was about to change!

1. Could you imagine what it would have been like to be there on that day and be served by the disciples?
2. What would you have done if you were there?
3. How is Jesus still providing for you today?

*Day 31*

**9:18-27**

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**18** 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?"

**19** “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.”

**20** Then he asked them, “But who do you say I am?”

Peter replied, “You are the Messiah sent from God!”

### **Jesus Predicts His Death**

**21** Jesus warned his disciples not to tell anyone who he was.

**22** “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.”

**23** Then he said to the crowd, “If any of you wants to be my follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross daily, and follow me. **24** 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. **25** And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but are yourself lost or destroyed? **26** If anyone is ashamed of me and my message, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he 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.”

Today is full of so many insights. First, we see Jesus needing some time to be with God. He left the crowds to pray alone. But then he asks that all-important question; “who do people say I am?”

There is a much more precise narrative that includes this in Mark 8:27-29, but this will do for us today. The thing I want you to think about today is how you would answer this question if you were asked. Would you say he was a prophet or a teacher? Or would you answer as Peter answered? Do

you believe that Jesus was the messiah sent from God? Do you believe that he was and is God?

Big questions, to be sure. But perhaps it is really the only question that matters. This goes to the heart of what we believe as Christians. With this answer your spiritual trajectory is set and you grow toward a more mature faith in Christ.

But that trajectory, as we see in the following verses, means that we have to forego some things we might have wanted. We have to become disciples, and that means we work as Christ worked, suffer like Christ suffered, and view our lives as he did as something worth giving away to God.

1. How would you answer this question if you were asked today?
2. Do you go to quiet places to pray?
3. Are you ready to be a disciple of Christ? To go where he went, and to live as he lived?

*Day 32*

**9:28-36**

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**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.*

**32** 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.

**35** Then a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, my Chosen One. Listen to him." **36** When the voice finished, Jesus was there alone. They didn't tell anyone at that time what they had seen.

You know, God only speaks twice in the New Testament. God the Father, that is. He says, "This is my son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:13-17), and here, when he says essentially the same thing, but he adds one more thought: "Listen to him!"

I think I should write it this way:

LISTEN. TO. HIM.

This is the idea; we should be listening to the words of Jesus, not just thinking we understand the spirit of the words that Jesus said. We should listen to Jesus and do what his words command us to do. How would that go if we decided to take the words of Jesus seriously?

We are Christians, so we want to take them seriously, but we don't take them literally. That is perhaps sometimes the problem. We take his words seriously, but not literally. In other places in scripture, we take the words literally, but not seriously. This means that we keep rules and regulations literally, but when Jesus tells us to take care of the poor or the immigrant, we try to take the words seriously, but not imagining that Jesus would want us to go 2 miles rather than just 1.

This is the conundrum of being a Christian. What do we take seriously, and what do we take literally? Some Christians say they take everything literally in scripture, but we know that is not true. None of us do that. Some Christians take nothing literally but do take things seriously, which might create some problems as well.

To be a Christian means continually discerning how the words of the Bible make sense in today's world. We must be careful to be prayerful about what we take literally and seriously.

But one caveat. I do believe we have to take most of Jesus's words seriously and literally. When they show up red in our Bibles, we should pay careful attention. This is what God is admonishing us to do in these verses.

1. What do you take literally in scripture?
2. What do you take seriously?
3. And what do you DO with that information?

Day 33

**9:37-43**

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**37** *The next day, after they had come down the mountain, a large crowd met Jesus. 38 A man in the crowd called out to him, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, my only child. 39 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.”*

**41** *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.”*

**42** *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. 43 Awe gripped the people as they saw this majestic display of God’s power.*

“Choosing to suffer means that there must be something wrong with you, but choosing God’s will—even if it means you will suffer—is something very different. No normal, healthy saint ever chooses suffering; he simply chooses God’s will, just as Jesus did, whether it means suffering or not.” Oswald Chambers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Trent C. Butler, *Luke*, vol. 3, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 140.

We realize here that life cannot be lived on the mountaintop; we eventually have to come back to the reality of our lives. And sometimes, that reality is disappointing.

One voice rises above the crowd, a father begging for help for his only child. The disciples had tried to exorcise the demon, but they could not. And this demon created disturbing effects on the boy. Seizures and violent acting out were part of what this boy had to endure. As he walked up to Jesus, the demon threw one last violent attack at the boy, knocked the son to the ground, and threw him into convulsions. But Jesus took charge, commanding the demon to depart. Then he took the boy and gave him back to his father.

Awe was the result. In this translation, it says that “Awe gripped the people. . . “ When was the last time you were gripped by awe? When you were flabbergasted by what God is doing in your life and in the life of others around you?

Now, Jesus had a moment in this pericope where he was upset and called these people faithless and corrupt. That is a pretty clear accusation to hurl toward those who he walked with every day. He wasn’t just speaking to the disciples, but he was indicting the whole generation. However, the good news is that he was soon to go to the cross in order to not only glorify God with his sacrifice, but also to save that faithless and corrupt generation.

1. Do you think you would fit into the category of “faithless and corrupt?”
2. Has God ever healed you miraculously? What was that like?
3. How can you be sure you are not part of a faithless generation? What steps can we take in order to stay close to the source of life?

Day 34

**9:44-62**

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### ***Jesus Again Predicts His Death***

**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.

### ***The Greatest in the Kingdom***

**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<sup>[i]</sup> welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me also welcomes my Father who sent me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest.”

### ***Using the Name of Jesus***

**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.”

### ***Opposition from Samaritans***

**51** As the time drew near for him to ascend to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. **52** He sent messengers ahead to a Samaritan village to prepare for his arrival. **53** But the people of the village did not welcome Jesus because he was on his way to Jerusalem. **54** When James and John saw this, they said to Jesus, “Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?” **55** But Jesus turned and rebuked them. **56** So they went on to another village.

### ***The Cost of Following Jesus***

**57** As they were walking along, someone said to Jesus, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

**58** 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.”

**59** He said to another person, “Come, follow me.”

*The man agreed, but he said, “Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.”*

**60** But Jesus told him, “Let the spiritually dead bury their own dead! Your duty is to go and preach about the Kingdom of God.”

**61** Another said, “Yes, Lord, I will follow you, but first let me say good-bye to my family.”

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

I want to focus on the cost of following Jesus today. While the other sections are important, what matters to us is the commitment we have to being a disciple of Jesus and what that means in our lives. These texts, from verses 57-62, clarify to us that following Jesus is not the easiest thing to do, and in fact, it is difficult. Jesus has already made the case that we need to pick up our own crosses and carry them, but here is making sure we know that even sleeping will be difficult.

I have always thought these words of Jesus seem to be pretty harsh for those who want to follow him. However, it is good for those who are on the fence about following Jesus to know the truth about what they are getting themselves into. It is no picnic, nor is it ever going to be an easy thing to do.

To follow Jesus, we are asked for everything we have. All our attention, hope, grace, and forgiveness is given to God, and then it flows back to those around us. But following Jesus has never been easy, it has always been the call of a lifetime. It is important that we understand this, and not give only what we have left over to God. We are not called to give our after-work, on-vacation, too-tired, too-angry, or too-frustrated lives to God. But we are asked to give God the first fruits of who we are. We are to give him everything.

Are you ready to give it all to Jesus? Maybe you already have but it is time to re-up the subscription we have to the kingdom of God.

Wherever you are on this journey, know you are prayed for, and you are not doing this all alone!

Blessings!  
Pastor Tim and the Series Guide Writing Team.

*Week 5*

# SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDY

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## INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

## OPEN QUESTIONS

Have you ever had the opportunity to go to the mission field and work, whether that mission field was on the other side of the world, or in your backyard? Share one meaningful, albeit somewhat condensed, version of a story from those mission fields that deeply impacted you and why.

## HEAD

1. Read Luke 9: 1-62 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. We know that when Jesus sent the disciples out, he sent them two by two, even though they could have covered more ground in individually. Why was two by two so important for them? For us?
3. Other than the response we know the disciples had in v 13 to Jesus command for the disciples to feed the

5,000+, how else do you think they responded, either verbally or not?

4. Do you think there was any significance to why there were 12 baskets of food leftover? Numbers always meant something to the Hebrews, so why this one?
5. Jesus' transfiguration was certainly a mountain-top experience for him and the disciples he took. But what happened immediately after that experience (read verse 37)?
6. In Jesus' day, a child was one of the lowest in the food chain, but continually, Jesus speaks to a life of service and servant leadership. What are one or two ways that you and I can practice this Jesus' principle in our faith communities this week? How about in our homes?

## HEART

1. Many believe that answering the question of Jesus, "Who do you say that I am?" is the most important question for you to answer. So, in your group, who do you really believe Jesus is? How does your answer inform how you live your life? Jesus came down the mountain and there was...drama. Knowing that most of our lives are lived in the valley, how can we hold onto those mountain-top experiences when our lives are filled with the drama of the day to day?
2. This may be one of the toughest questions I've ever written for one of our study guides, but I believe it to be in sync with Jesus' teaching in Luke 9. So here goes; What are some of the things you've given up to follow Christ? What have you surrendered? What have you left behind? What have you sacrificed? If you can't think of anything, why might that be?

## HANDS

This week, in honor of our servant Lord, think of one way you could be a blessing to your pastor, or a neighbor, or someone in your community. Then just quietly go and serve, not seeking any reward or recognition, but be a blessing simply to be a blessing.

## LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

*“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

Philippians 2:5-11 NLT