The Discipler’s Commentary:
The Gospel of Luke

William Walthall, MDiv, DMin
Contents

Introduction .................................................................................................................................... iv
CHAPTER 1 ................................................................................................................................... 1
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 11
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 12
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 13
CHAPTER 2 ................................................................................................................................... 15
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 23
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 24
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 25
CHAPTER 3 ................................................................................................................................... 27
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 35
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 36
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 37
CHAPTER 4 ................................................................................................................................... 39
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 48
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 49
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 50
CHAPTER 5 ................................................................................................................................... 52
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 61
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 62
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 63
CHAPTER 6 ................................................................................................................................... 65
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 76
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 77
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 78
CHAPTER 7 ................................................................................................................................... 80
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection................................................................. 91
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ............................................................................................... 92
  Answer Outline for the Discipler ............................................................................................ 93
CHAPTER 8 ................................................................................................................................... 95
  Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection............................................................... 108
  Fill-in Outline for the Disciple .............................................................................................. 109
Answer Outline for the Discipler .......................................................... 110

CHAPTER 9 .......................................................................................... 112
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 124
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 125
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 126

CHAPTER 10 ......................................................................................... 128
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 135
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 136
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 137

CHAPTER 11 ......................................................................................... 139
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 148
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 149
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 150

CHAPTER 12 ......................................................................................... 152
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 162
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 163
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 164

CHAPTER 13 ......................................................................................... 166
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 173
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 174
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 175

CHAPTER 14 ......................................................................................... 177
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 188
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 189
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 190

CHAPTER 15 ......................................................................................... 192
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 207
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 208
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 209
Luke 15 ................................................................................................. 209

CHAPTER 16 ......................................................................................... 211
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection .................................. 227
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple ................................................................. 228
Answer Outline for the Discipler ........................................................... 229
Introduction

The Purpose of This Commentary

The purpose of this commentary is to serve as a tool for discipleship.

How can a Christian’s faith be built apart from the knowledge of God’s word? The answer is, “It can’t.” This commentary provides a tool for building faith. It is designed so that it can be used by an individual, by someone who is discipling another person one-on-one, or in a small group setting such as a Sunday school class or a home Bible study. Besides the commentary itself, study questions are provided for small group discussion, and fill-in-the-blank outlines are available for individual use or for groups. The outlines are useful primarily for the transfer of information and knowledge about the chapter being studied. They provide an overview of the contents of the chapter, with a few practical implications presented in order to apply personally the scriptural lessons in the text. The study questions are geared more in the direction of increasing critical thinking skills about the lessons from the text, and stimulating thinking about how to apply the scriptural lessons to one’s life, values, and relationships, both to God and to others.

In short, the purpose of this commentary is to make disciples who understand the teachings of Scripture and process those teachings in such a manner that the result is changed values and changed behavior, particularly in the realm of relationships. Only then does one become a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

About the Author

When I was a pastor, I had at my fingertips—and still have access to—an abundance of Bible resources. Over the years, I collected an impressive library of commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, lexicons, concordances and study Bibles. When I first began in ministry, all of my resources consisted of books—there were no personal computers at that time. Then desktop computers, Bible programs and the Internet came along. Regardless of the source for information and facts, however, all of my resources lacked one thing in common—really good application and practical ways to enhance critical thinking skills; that is, taking Bible truths and applying them to real-life, relevant situations to the degree that values and behavior are challenged. Indeed, the latter point became the purpose of all my teaching and preaching—to
change behavior. I suppose the reason that commentaries provide facts and information and not much application or promotion of critical thinking skills is the notion that making application of any Bible passage is left up to the pastor or Bible teacher. This notion is somewhat understandable. It is difficult to make application on an individual level. Therefore, the attempts Bible study resources make to provide application tend to be very general in nature and not relevant to the individual Bible student.

Part of my training in Bible teaching was learning what is called the “Inductive Bible Study Method.” Inductive Bible study is probably the best and simplest Bible study method around. One does not need knowledge of original languages, a theological degree, or a computer full of Bible study programs to perform good Scripture study. The approach is simple: starting with the Bible text only, make observation of the passage, make interpretation of the passage (here’s where Bible resources might be most helpful), and then make application. The inductive Bible study method is an excellent tool for meditating on God’s word and taking the time to truly understand and appropriately apply biblical teachings. The Discipler’s Commentary employs the inductive study method, verse by verse, word by word.

In the inductive Bible study method, it is the areas of observation and interpretation that most Bible resources are able to address. It is up to the student, however, to create application. Unfortunately, application is the area that is perhaps most neglected. Yet, application is probably the single most important element of good Bible study. Without application—personal application—how can the student of the Bible have God’s word incarnated into his or her life, and therefore make lifestyle and behavioral changes? This neglected area of the inductive method is addressed exceptionally well in the online program Walk With the Word. (Visit www.walkwiththeword.org for details.)

When it comes to the application portion of the Scripture being studied, Walk With the Word teaches the student to constantly ask questions like, “What is God telling me through His word?” and “How is God speaking to me personally through His word in this passage?” “How do I personally apply this word to my life?” Walk With the Word teaches that God’s word is literally God’s voice. The Bible is God speaking to us today. All that a Christian needs to know concerning how to live in a manner that is pleasing to God is contained in His word.

It is with the concept of hearing God’s voice through His word that The Discipler’s Commentary is written. The application section is how the author “hears” God speaking through
His word. There is an inherent problem, however, with any application: it can only be specific and personal to a degree. When a Bible teacher makes public application to a passage of Scripture (such as a pastor giving a sermon), he or she is necessarily relegated to generalities. That is, it is difficult—if not a little risky—to get too specific in the pulpit. The application, therefore, tends to be drawn from the personal experiences of the pastor or Bible teacher. Specific application also runs the risk of being controversial, particularly if social issues are addressed. For example, when teaching on the subject of “stumbling” blocks (Rom. 14:13), how does a Bible teacher make application in today’s world without opening Pandora’s box? When it comes to making contemporary application of “doubtful things,” I’ve heard other pastors mention such examples as R-rated movies, use of alcohol or tobacco, plunging necklines and cleavage, dancing, certain types of music, certain programs on TV (or television altogether), and even which translation of the Bible should be used. There is also the cross-cultural (or sub-cultural) problem. What may be taboo in one culture or region of the country may not be frowned upon in another (e.g., use of alcohol or tobacco). Therefore, application for some passages will be quite general in nature. This is why I have provided application questions at the end of each chapter. The questions are designed to stimulate discussion and enhance critical thinking skills about the principles that are being taught in the word, so that they can be applied on a very personal, individual level.

The method I found most helpful in making personal application from Scripture was the practice of journaling. While I was in the ministry, I completed a journal entry for every chapter of the Old Testament one time and every half chapter of the New Testament three times. Not only was journaling a life-changing experience, but it forced me to ask the question, “Lord, what are you teaching me personally through Your word today?” For those who desire to dig deeper into God’s word, meditate on it, and have His word change your values and belief system, I highly recommend journaling. There is a section on journaling in the Walk With the Word website.

Finally, I have written The Discipler’s Commentary to bring to the forefront the message of God’s love. The observations and applications found in this commentary reflect the principles and teachings found in my book The Love Revelation: Book 1—The Royal Law. In The Love Revelation, the author believes that one of the most neglected teachings of the Bible is the love message. God clearly states in His word that He wants His children to experience His love and
learn to express that love to others. However, because love is defined and perceived in so many
different ways by the world, the concept of love requires definition. That is, true love must be
defined, and that can only be done by the truth found in God’s word. Truth, therefore, always
trumps love because biblical love requires *biblical* definition. The love message in God’s word,
as defined by the truth in God’s word, is the primary emphasis of this commentary.

If there is anything the reader of this commentary walks away with, I hope it is a new
awareness of the wonder of God’s love, and how love permeates nearly every aspect of biblical
truth. Indeed, I believe all biblical truth points to love; God’s love through Jesus Christ, and the
Christian’s need to love one another. One evangelistic booklet I have used in the past said it
perfectly: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” I believe that the purpose of
the New Testament is not only to draw us to the Savior, but to help us experience God’s love and
express that love to others.

**About the Bible Used in the Commentary**

The author believes in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, and that the Bible
was written without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible we have today, in the more
literal versions, is God’s word; every letter and every word of the Bible has been preserved by
God for a reason, and every portion of God’s word has benefit for the reader. That is not to say
that even the literal translations are completely without error, or that there may be some question
as to how the original text actually read. Having noted that, studies indicate that the Greek text
we have today is over 99.9% accurate and consistent, and that no areas of question affect basic
Christian doctrine.

**About the Version Used**

The version of the Bible used in this commentary is *The New American Standard Bible—
Updated Edition* published by [The Lockman Foundation](https://www.lockman.org) (NASB). The author has found this
version of the Bible to be the most effective for in-depth, inductive Bible study. In the literal
versus paraphrase approach to Bible translations, the NASB is more literal, which makes for
more accurate study. A particular benefit of the NASB is its very accurate and consistent
rendering of verbs from the New Testament Greek to the English. Greek verb tenses and moods
have very specific meanings that carry important information for the serious student of the Bible.
About Spelling, Grammar, and Other Stuff


Regarding capitalization, I have chosen to retain what is called “reverential capitalization” of pronouns referring to God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. There are two reasons for this: first, reverential capitalization helps with clarification of antecedents; that is, to whom the pronoun is referring. Second, reverential capitalization is the style used in the NASB, and therefore, the author desires to be consistent with the source.

About the Format

I have written this commentary in Microsoft Word 2010. Use of an earlier version of Word may skew some of the formatting, making reading awkward (paragraph changes, et cetera). For this reason, I have included .pdf files to maintain the formatting proper. For those using MS Word, however, there is the option to change formatting to suit one’s taste, such as enlarging font, et cetera.

This commentary is available only in digital form, but may be printed at one’s own discretion.

About the Title

The title I’ve chosen is *The Discipler’s Commentary.* I chose that title so as to communicate that the layout of the commentary, as stated earlier, is for the purpose of teaching and discipling others. Therefore, I have arranged each chapter with a design that includes:

- A brief summary of the chapter (“Overview”).
- Events or topics that the reader or teacher is to look for (“Discovery”).
- The author’s commentary placed alongside the biblical text (as much as permitted) so as to make comparison and reference as easy as possible. (Note: for
those reading the commentary in MS Word, a vertical “split screen” effect can be useful for keeping the text in view while reading the commentary.)

- Included in the commentary are the author’s comments that pertain to application to the church and to Christians today. (Warning: some thoughts may be offensive. There are prophetic elements in this commentary.)

- At the end of each chapter are discussion questions that can be used in a group setting. The leader will have no difficulty answering the questions if he or she has read the commentary beforehand.

- After the discussion questions, there are outlines for leaders to use when teaching the Gospel of Luke or leading a discipleship group. The first page is a blank outline for fill-ins. (They may be freely reproduced and distributed without permission from the author.) The second page is the fill-in answers and brief notes for the leader or teacher.

- There are no references or bibliography because the author has chosen to quote no one. However, much historical and textual detail has been gleaned from a number of resources without plagiarizing, including Bibles with commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and resources found on Logos Bible Software 5.

Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge and thank my good friend Danny Isom, author of the Walk With the Word website, for his proof-reading and valuable suggestions in the formatting and content of the commentary.

About Copyright and Distribution

This commentary is entirely free of charge, and may be freely distributed. It is the author’s desire that this commentary be used for teaching and discipleship to anyone at any time in any place. However, it is copyrighted by virtue of its publication on the Walk With the Word website, and on the author’s personal and book websites. Therefore, no one is to profit monetarily from use of this commentary. I only ask that no content changes be made without first consulting with the author.
And on that note, I am quite confident that the commentary itself is *not* error free. Therefore, the author accepts input from readers regarding typos and/or errors, even disagreements on content. One must remember, however, that much of the commentary contains personal opinion and observation, with which readers may or may not agree.

**Using the Table of Contents (TOC) or “Bookmark” in MS Word**

If the reader is using MS Word or the .pdf file (vs. hard copy), the chapter headings in the TOC are linked.

If the reader is using MS Word only, the “Bookmark” icon can also take one to the desired location. The abbreviations are as follows:

- **C01** = Chapter 1 (C10 = Chapter 10), et cetera
- **C01Q** = “Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection”
- **C01O** = “Fill-in Outline for the Disciple”
- **C01A** = “Answer Outline for the Discipler”

**Index**

An index has not been developed. If a reader is so inclined to create one, that would be greatly appreciated. Once completed, please forward it to the author for review and inclusion into the commentary. It may be sent to bill.walthall@walkwiththeword.org


Scripture insertions from:
Logos Bible Software 5.2b SR-3 (5.2.2.1531)
Copyright 2000–2014
Licensed to: rsbeguy@gmail.com (Starter (IH))
Overview of Luke 1

Chapter 1 of Luke focuses on two main characters—Zacharias and Mary. These are two ordinary people living relatively ordinary lives. But God reached down into human history and revealed Himself to them in unique, personal and dramatic ways. Zacharias is a priest, doing his normal duties in the temple. He would be no different from a pastor of a local church showing up on a Sunday morning to preach. Mary, on the other hand, is a young woman, 16 or 17 years old, living in a small, insignificant city in Galilee, “the land of the Gentiles.” But both of these individuals have something in common—they have an intimate relationship with God. Read and observe how, by having a very personal, vital and intimate relationship with God, He reaches down out of eternity and affects their lives forever.

What to look for in Luke 1

1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for God’s global plan for mankind. Ask, “Why is God doing what He is doing?”
3. Look for the love relationships that exist between the principle characters.
4. Look for the ways in which the main characters, Zacharias and Mary, express their relationship to God.
5. Look for the “servant” theme in chapter 1.
6. Look for the foreshadowing of God’s plan to reach out, not just to the Jewish nation, but to all mankind.
7. Look for the phrase, “…filled with the Holy Spirit.” Ask the question, “What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit?” Does it mean “speaking in tongues” as some Christians insist?

1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus;

so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.
In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah; and he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.

6 They were both righteous in the sight of God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and requirements of the Lord.

7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both advanced in years.

Luke makes it very clear to his readers that Zacharias and Elizabeth were “righteous in the sight of God.” (“Zacharias” is the same as “Zechariah” in other translations.) They were righteous because they conducted their lives in a manner consistent with “all the commandments and requirements of God.” (We will see later in the New Testament that the commandments of God relate primarily to how people treat one another.) The fact that they had been married many years, yet had no children, posed a conundrum for both this couple and their priestly friends. An underlying belief at the time was that God was withholding the blessing of children because of the superstitious belief that there was sin in their lives, and Elizabeth was under a kind of curse. That is why Luke makes it very clear that Zacharias and Elizabeth were “walking blamelessly”—they were not being punished for personal sin, but being prepared for God’s plan. Of course, neither Zacharias nor Elizabeth knew any of this, which makes their faithfulness to one another all the more meaningful. Their trust in God, in fact, served as a testimony that love and respect for one another characterized their relationship. According to rabbinic tradition, Zacharias would have been justified divorcing Elizabeth and taking another wife who could bear him a son to carry his family name. He chose instead...
Now it happened that while he was performing his priestly service before God in the appointed order of his division,
according to the custom of the priestly office, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.
And the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside at the hour of the incense offering.
And an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing to the right of the altar of incense.
Zacharias was troubled when he saw the angel, and fear gripped him.
But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.
“You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.
“For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb.
“And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.
“It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

Zacharias’s love for Elizabeth is finally going to bear fruit, the fruit that he had always longed for. It was his faithfulness to her that enabled this moment to happen. Had Zacharias not been faithful and loving toward Elizabeth because she could not bear children, this turning point in history would never have happened.
Remember that both Zacharias and Elizabeth were “advanced in years.” This means that Elizabeth was past childbearing years, as Sarah, Abraham’s wife, had been. It is quite likely that Zacharias was still praying for Elizabeth to become pregnant. Most likely, they had both resigned themselves to the reality that they would have no children, but there was always hope, like in Abraham’s case. Here is a clear case of what it means to love God with all your heart, mind, strength and soul. Zacharias continued to love Elizabeth in spite of the fact that she bore him no child. Whether or not our love for God is real is validated when things don’t go our way, when God does not allow us to have our heart’s desire. Whether or not our love for God is real is also validated when we continue to show love to those who perhaps disappoint us, or fail to live up to our expectations. The true test of love for God is continuing to worship and trust Him when things don’t work out, and to continue to love others in spite of the fact that we feel they may have let us down.
Notice, too, that the angel appears to Zacharias when he was faithfully performing his priestly service. His faithful service to God was one way of demonstrating his love for God.
As was the custom in performing priestly duties, Zacharias had been chosen “by lot” to burn the morning incense. Burning incense was considered a sacred event requiring everyone to leave the temple. This custom of everyone leaving the temple stemmed from two unfortunate events in the Old Testament, when two sons of Aaron died for offering “strange fire” while offering incense (Lev. 10:1-3), and a number of Korahites died while offering incense during Korah’s rebellion (Num. 16). No one but a descendant of Aaron was to offer incense, and for their protection, all others waited outside the temple in silent prayer. When Zacharias is delayed coming out of the Holy Place, many of the worshippers probably wondered if he, too, had been judged by God and died (v. 21).
There is another wonderful lesson in this event.
Luke 1

18 Zacharias said to the angel, “How will I know this for certain? For I am an old man and my wife is advanced in years.”

19 The angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news.

20 “And behold, you shall be silent and unable to speak until the day when these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time.”

The smoke of incense is symbolic of prayer. David writes in Psalm 141:2, “May my prayer be counted as incense before You.” And in Revelation 5:8, incense is described as “the prayers of the saints.” When the angel declares in verse 13 that “your petition has been heard,” it is answered at a time when Zacharias is offering incense. For the reader, this is confirmation that God hears and remembers all our prayers, whether uttered in childhood or as young adults, whether offered in desperation or want. God does not hear our prayers because we are faithful to pray, but because He is the God of love, and He hears our prayers because He loves us.

1:15 There are two important points to emphasize about this verse. First, this verse is absolute proof that being “filled with the Holy Spirit” has nothing to do with speaking in tongues. This will be discussed later in the commentary. The second point is even of greater importance: while in “his mother’s womb,” John is considered by God to be a living human being, a person in His eyes. And so it is with all those who those who are in the womb.

1:16-17 The angel refers directly to the very last writing prophet of the Old Testament, Malachi. He is referring to Malachi 4:5-6, and he is saying that Zacharias’s son will be a fulfillment of that prophecy, well known to the Jews who were waiting for the reappearance of “Elijah.”

“…to turn the hearts”—True love can be demonstrated only by an act that comes from the heart. When fathers love their children, their hearts are turned back to them, meaning they are more interested in their children’s spiritual well-being than their own. Notice, too, that an “attitude of the righteous” is measured here by two conditions: (1) how fathers respond to their children, and (2) hearts that are “prepared for the Lord.” Both are relational in nature, and both indicate hearts shaped by love.

1:18-20 “because you did not believe”—To the skeptical observer, it might first appear that Gabriel’s pronouncement of silence seems harsh and unloving. Our love and trust in God always requires shaping and defining, and the most loving thing God can do for us at times is to discipline us like a loving father, for the purpose of refining our faith. Proverbs 3:12 states, “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines.” This hard lesson for Zacharias verifies that God loves him enough to help him grow in his faith. Instead of being an unloving thing to do, God did the most loving thing—He strengthened his faith with an unforgettable lesson.

The angel identifies himself as Gabriel, the same angel that appeared to Daniel, as recorded in Daniel 9:21.
21 The people were waiting for Zacharias, and were wondering at his delay in the temple.
22 But when he came out, he was unable to speak to them; and they realized that he had seen a vision in the temple; and he kept making signs to them, and remained mute.
23 When the days of his priestly service were ended, he went back home.

24 After these days Elizabeth his wife became pregnant, and she kept herself in seclusion for five months, saying,
25 “This is the way the Lord has dealt with me in the days when He looked with favor upon me, to take away my disgrace among men.”

26 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city in Galilee called Nazareth,
27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the descendants of David; and the virgin’s name was Mary.
28 And coming in, he said to her, “Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you.”
29 But she was very perplexed at this statement, and kept pondering what kind of

And finally in this section, note the phrase “fulfilled in their proper time.” This is one of the most important phrases a Christian must learn. Prayers are answered “in their proper time.” We Christians live in a fast-food, microwave world where we expect our prayers to be answered immediately. But God answers prayers when He is ready to answer prayers, not when we are ready to receive the answer. In truth, some of our prayers may be answered only after we have long departed from this earthly body.

1:21-23 As noted above, Zacharias is delayed in coming out of the Holy Place after burning the incense, and the people are concerned for his well-being. When he finally appears, the people waiting outside notice that something has changed...he is unable to speak. (The Greek implies unable to hear as well.) No doubt, his appearance was changed, as if having been shaken to the core, what some might say, “Having seen a ghost.” The people immediately interpret his condition as having seen a vision, which almost always involves an angel.

What happens immediately afterward is not elaborated on by Luke, and he sums it up by writing that Zacharias was obviously obedient to the words of Gabriel and fulfilled his part of God’s plan.

1:24-25 The subject of the narrative now switches to Elizabeth and her response. Her perspective was to see that, even in her old age, God had dealt “with favor” upon her, which means God had extended His grace to her in the most wonderful way. Herein lies the heart of true worship. We worship God not to earn His favor, but because He has already abundantly given us His favor. In Elizabeth’s case, God not only saw to it that she became pregnant, but in doing so moved her from “dis-grace” to pure grace. God not only gives us the desires of our heart, but gives us what He deems best for us. God not only demonstrated His love for Elizabeth by seeing that she became pregnant, but He demonstrated His love by simply meeting her emotional needs.

1:26-38 Again, Luke changes the subject of the narrative. He now focuses on the young woman Mary and God’s plan for the birth of mankind’s Savior. The same angel who visited Zacharias now visits Mary. Mary is a “virgin”; that is, she has not had any sexual intercourse whatsoever. Those who deny the Virgin Birth completely ignore verse 34 which relate Mary’s concern that she has never been with a man.

There are a number of important pieces of information in the first two verses. “The sixth month” would be the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy. The city of Nazareth is located in Galilee, also called “Galilee of the Gentiles.” This is significant when
30 The angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary; for you have found favor with God.
31 “And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.
32 “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;
33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”
34 Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a virgin?”
35 The angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.
36 “And behold, even your relative Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is now in her sixth month.
37 “For nothing will be impossible with God.”
38 And Mary said, “Behold, the bondslave of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her.
39 Now at this time Mary arose and went in a hurry to the hill country, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth.

41 When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

42 And she cried out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb!

43 “And how has it happened to me, that the mother of my Lord would come to me?

44 “For behold, when the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy.

45 “And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what had been spoken to her by the Lord.”

then it is not impossible that Mary can conceive by the Holy Spirit.

1:38 To be a bondslave is to be one who is wholly devoted, lovingly devoted, to the will of the Master. Notice, too, that she is not a bondslave of a man, but of God Himself. She allows God’s love to own her. And, it is quite possible that she conceived at the moment she believed, for it will be only a short time from now that she will visit Elizabeth, and at the time of the visit, Mary is already pregnant.

There is a wonderful analogy found in verse 38. Just as the Holy Spirit was to “overshadow” Mary when she believed, so, too, is the person who receives Jesus Christ by faith and becomes His bondservant. That person also is overshadowed by the Holy Spirit and becomes a new creation. The apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature...” It is an analogy of new birth through the agent of the Holy Spirit. As Christ was created physically in Mary’s womb, He is “created” spiritually in the heart of those who receive Him. The spirit of Christ is literally born in believers, which is why Paul writes, “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. 1:27).

1:39-45 This is a remarkable encounter between two pregnant women. Elizabeth announces that her six-month-old fetus can experience “joy.”

Here again, note that being “filled with the Holy Spirit” has nothing to do with speaking in tongues, but it has everything to do with “expression,” for she utters prophetic words she could not have known; that is, that her cousin Mary is not only carrying a child, but carrying “the Lord.” Being filled with the Spirit, then, means uninhibited expression—in this case speaking—that glorifies God and what He is doing or has done through His Son Jesus Christ. In the Book of Acts, this expression is always vocalized, and sometimes it is vocalized in tongues as a sign that the Holy Spirit is the One behind the expression, providing proof to the apostolic leadership.

There is no doubt in Elizabeth’s expression that beyond the love and respect that existed between this very young woman and a much older, experienced woman, there is an additional layer of special love that now exists because of the child that Mary is carrying. Jesus Christ will be the special revelation of love that comes from God. This love is now already being experienced by two women who are rejoicing in the Lord. Obviously, after Mary told Elizabeth of her encounter with the angel Gabriel, Elizabeth blesses her for believing what God had told her. Faith allows us to experience the joy of seeing God’s will fulfilled.

Oh! That the details of this magical encounter and what each person knew about the other had been
And Mary said: “My soul exalts the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
“For He has had regard for the humble state of His bondslave; For behold, from this time on all generations will count me blessed.
“For the Mighty One has done great things for me; And holy is His name.
And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him.
“He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart.
“He has brought down rulers from their thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.
“He has filled the hungry with good things; And sent away the rich empty-handed.
“He has given help to Israel His servant, In remembrance of His mercy,
As He spoke to our fathers, To Abraham and his descendants forever.”

And Mary stayed with her about three months, and then returned to her home.
Now the time had come for Elizabeth to give birth, and she gave birth to a son.
Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had displayed His great mercy toward her; and they were rejoicing with her.

written into a book! But Luke’s emphasis is clear: the focus is on the One who brings joy, and upon those who believe what has been spoken by the Lord.

The song (psalm) that Mary composes, probably within days of her encounter with Gabriel, relates how she feels about being considered worthy to bear the Son of God. Can you imagine her excitement? Mary may have been anywhere from 16-17 years old, a mere child by our standards but, in Jesus’ day, old enough to be engaged. What Mary recognizes in her song is that God has seen fit to bless the humble. Not only was she but a child herself, she was of extremely humble means. In Mary’s upbringing, her parents taught her that her true identity, and her most fulfilling one, was to be a bondslave (doulos, bondservant) of the Lord. She obviously attributes her attitude of first being a servant of God to the blessing she has received from God. In her song, she recognizes a number of God’s characteristics:

He has regard for the humble
He is the Mighty One
He is holy
He is the God of mercy
He has mercy on those who fear Him
He has done mighty deeds
He scatters the proud
He brings down rulers
He exalts the humble
He fills the mouths of the hungry
He vilifies the rich
He has given help to Israel
He spoke to Abraham and his descendants
Mary’s love for God, therefore, is expressed by her words of worship and by her servant’s heart. Isn’t that the way Christ should be born in all of His followers?

And it is through lyrics and melody that Mary expresses her joy and gratitude. So it is with sincere and devout Christian song writers today who desire to express their worship of the Lord through music. The Christian today can be blessed by those Christian musicians who are true bondservants of the Lord.

Mary returns home after Elizabeth’s baby is born.

Elizabeth conceived naturally, Mary supernaturally. One child will proclaim Christ, the other will be Christ. So it is when the Holy Spirit enters each believer. Through the Holy Spirit, believers are not only sent to proclaim Christ, but to be like Christ. It is the supernatural being conceived in the natural, and all are born out of God’s love and mercy.
And it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to call him Zacharias, after his father.

But his mother answered and said, “No indeed; but he shall be called John.”

And they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by that name.”

And they made signs to his father, as to what he wanted him called.

And he asked for a tablet and wrote as follows, “His name is John.” And they were all astonished.

At once his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he began to speak in praise of God.

Fear came on all those living around them; and all these matters were being talked about in all the hill country of Judea.

All who heard them kept them in mind, saying, “What then will this child turn out to be?” For the hand of the Lord was certainly with him.

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people,

And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant—

As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old—

Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US;

To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant,

The oath which He swore to Abraham our father,

To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear,

In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.

The officials have come to circumcise the child according to the law of Moses. It is on this day that the child is officially given a name. John is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Yohanan, meaning “Jehovah has been gracious.” Indeed, God had been gracious to Zacharias and Elizabeth, and that is the way God’s love works. Through His love, He demonstrates His abundant grace to His children, and at the same time carries out His will. There is a powerful lesson in this. More than any other way, God carries out His plan both for our benefit and for His. The grace in that is His allowing His children to be part of His plan. In this case, biblical love was the avenue through which Zacharias and Elizabeth experienced God’s love. By fulfilling the law and being faithful and loving to one another, God is now using them to be an instrument by which He will carry out His divine plan. As a result of Zacharias’s and Elizabeth’s love, they are now the proud parents of the last Old Testament prophet, John, who will be called “the Baptist.” God confirmed their love for one another by filling Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit when Mary visited, and now, God is about to reconfirm His love for them by allowing Zacharias himself to be filled with the Holy Spirit. And all of this is a result of Zacharias and Elizabeth being faithful and loving to one another.

This is the third time that Luke uses the phrase “filled with the Spirit.” Here again, there is no relationship to tongues. But there is a relationship to verbally expressing praise, worship and truth. A careful reading of the New Testament demonstrates that Luke, in his Gospel and in Acts, is the only writer to use the phrase “filled with the Spirit.” The only exception is that Paul uses the phrase one time in Ephesians 5:18 and, again, it has nothing to do with speaking in tongues.

This is one of the great scriptural declarations about the redemptive love of God. To be redeemed means to be purchased back or released, always with a price. The price will be the “horn of salvation,” a phrase used only by David (2 Sam. 22:3, Ps. 18:2) to signify God’s power to deliver from an enemy. Indeed, the phrase refers to a Deliverer provided by God Himself through the “house of David.” Only God’s love could provide such a deliverance, and only God’s infinite love could provide a Deliverer for the whole world. It is God’s love that causes Him “to remember His holy covenant,” and it is because of God’s love that those who serve Him can serve Him without fear, for
76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS;
77 To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins,
78 Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us,
79 TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

80 And the child continued to grow and to become strong in spirit, and he lived in the deserts until the day of his public appearance to Israel.

“perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). It is clear, too, by Zacharias’s song of praise, most likely offered at the time of John’s circumcision, that Zacharias recognizes that the only way to salvation and deliverance is through “the forgiveness of their sins,” something that can only happen if God is loving enough to provide a way for mankind to find redemption. It is God’s love that “the tender mercy of our God” is expressed, and it is only because of God’s infinite love that His redemption will be offered “upon those who sit in darkness.” This beautiful acknowledgement of God’s saving love is itself filled with a love for God that goes beyond the law of Moses, beyond ritual, even beyond Judaism itself. It is an expression of love for God that rejoices in the discovery of “the way of peace.”

There is one other aspect of Zacharias’s song that the reader should grasp—it praises God’s global plan and is in no way self-focused. Zacharias is able to see the big picture of God’s plan, and his words reflect his desire to fit into God’s plan. One would think that his prayer of praise would be more focused on personal blessings, rather than global ones. But that is not the case. This is an example that the true blessings of life come when we attempt to fit into God’s plans, and not attempt to have God fit into ours.

1:80 John’s father prophesied that his son would be a prophet, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness” (Isa. 40:3). Out of gratitude for God’s love, Zacharias has turned his only son over to God. Like Abraham, Zacharias demonstrated his love for God by offering up his only son as a holy and living sacrifice.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. We know from chapter 1 that God spoke to Zacharias and to Mary through the angel Gabriel. How has God spoken to you? What changes will you make in your life as a result of reading Luke 1? How will this affect your relationships? How will this affect your prayers and praises to God?

2. Is there anything in your life spiritually that you consider “impossible”? As you identify the seemingly “impossible” thing, apply Gabriel’s words, “Nothing will be impossible with God.” (Of course, if it is a part of God’s plan!) Are you able to take this teaching and apply it to your own life? In doing so, remember that God doesn’t work out His plan overnight. What is possible may take years, or even a lifetime. What spiritual limitation do you have that can change the impossible to the possible?

3. Did you observe the phrase, “…filled with the Spirit”? Have you determined what it means to be filled with the Spirit? Who initiates being filled with the Spirit, and what must have gone on in the life of the believer in order for the Spirit to fill you? What kind of relationship do you have with God that can enable you to be filled with the Spirit, and what kind of a lifestyle are you living that will set you up to be filled with the Spirit if the Spirit so chooses?

4. How has God spoken to you concerning God’s discipline of Zacharias? What is the difference between Zacharias’ questioning the angel Gabriel, and Mary’s? Why do you think Mary was not disciplined for asking, “How can this be…?”

5. How has God spoken to you about Mary’s response concerning the blessing God has bestowed on her? How could she have responded in regard to God’s special blessing (boasting, pride, etc.)?

6. What was Zacharias doing when Gabriel appeared to him? What was Mary doing when Gabriel appeared to her? What is the common theme, and if Gabriel were to appear to you, what would you be doing?

7. What has chapter 1 taught you about God’s love, His desire for you to experience His love, and how He wants you to express His love?
1:1-4 – Luke’s introduction to his gospel: he was Theophilus’s ____________________________________________

Key words: “…having investigated everything __________________________________________________”

Purpose for writing: so that Theophilus may know “the ___________________________________________”

A lesson: In order to know the exact truth, we must study __________________________________________

1:5-25 – The account of the priest Zacharias’s encounter with the angel ___________________________________

Gabriel announces to Zacharias that he will be the father of __________________________________________

Zacharias and Elizabeth will give birth to a son by ________________________________________________

Zacharias is disciplined by Gabriel because he requested __________________________________________

A lesson: Asking God for a sign instead of trusting by faith may result in ______________________________

1:26-38 – The account of Mary’s encounter with the angel _____________________________________________

Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus, the “ _______________________________”

Luke makes it very clear that Mary, though engaged to Joseph, is a __________________________________

Mary will give birth to a son by _______________________________________________________________

A lesson: With God, ________________________________________________________________________

1:39-56 – The account of Mary’s encounter with Elizabeth and Mary’s __________________________________

A lesson: Sometimes wonderful news from God can result in joyful ________________________________

1:57-79 – The account of the birth of John the Baptist and Zacharias’s _________________________________

A lesson: When we are faithful and obedient to God, ______________________________________________

1:80 – The account of the life of John the Baptist before he became an official __________________________

A lesson: Those who are wholly devoted to God do not necessarily lead an _________________________
Luke 1

The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 1

1:1-4 – Luke’s introduction to his gospel: he was Theophilus’s personal physician

- The discipler may want to introduce the other gospel writers, and that Luke was the only one who was not an eyewitness.
- Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the “Synoptic” writers (lit. “through the same eye”)
- Luke was a very educated and intelligent man from Macedonia (Greece); an employee of Theophilus, which means “Lover of God.”

Key words: “…having investigated everything carefully from the beginning”
- See commentary for how Luke was able to investigate “everything carefully.”

Purpose for writing: so that Theophilus may know “the exact truth” (about Jesus Christ)

- It is obvious that Theophilus was a Gentile who had become a Christian, and was wealthy enough to send Luke on a mission to verify the details of the gospel.
- Luke ended up a traveling companion of the apostle Paul.
- Luke includes details that the other gospel writers do not include, and it seems certain that he had personal interviews with Mary, the mother of Jesus.

A lesson: In order to know the exact truth, we must study God’s word

- The discipler does not want to skip over the important lessons that can be learned. Here, the discipler wants to encourage critical thinking on the part of the disciple, perhaps by asking, “What other lessons do you think can be learned from this short section?” The same principle should be applied to all the other lessons that follow. (Note: the heading is “A lesson,” not “The lesson,” as there are many lessons to be learned. The ones provided here are only suggestions.)

1:5-25 – The account of the priest Zacharias’s encounter with the angel Gabriel

- “Gabriel” means “Man of God.” He appears to be the angel who announces good news.
- A brief description of the duties of a priest may be appropriate.
- This may be a good place to dwell on Zacharias’s and Elizabeth’s character (see v. 6)
- The discipler may want to describe what being barren meant to a woman in those days.

Gabriel announces to Zacharias that he will be the father of John the Baptist

- This would be a good place to list all the men named “John” in the New Testament. Differentiate especially between John the Baptist from the apostle John.

Zacharias and Elizabeth will give birth to a son by natural means

- Note the similarities between this encounter and Abraham’s encounter with the angels in Genesis 18.

Zacharias is disciplined by Gabriel because he requested proof (a sign)

- Because he was a priest, Zacharias should have known better, especially knowing the story of Abraham. In essence, Zacharias was asking for a supernatural sign rather than relying on faith. After all, he is encountering an angel in the Holy Place.

A lesson: Asking God for a sign instead of trusting by faith may result in discipline

- Or withholding of blessings, or not receiving what we are asking for, etc.

1:26-38 – The account of Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel

- The discipler may want to elaborate on where the small town of Nazareth was in relation to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, using a map if necessary. The discipler may also want to go into some explanation about arranged marriages in those days, and Mary’s probable age.
Gabriel announces to Mary that she will give birth to Jesus, the “Son of God”

- A number of subjects could be explained in this section, as long as it does not detract from the key points. Such subjects could be the importance of being a descendant of David and “throne of David,” the meaning of the name “Jesus” (aka “Joshua” meaning “Savior” or “Deliverer”), and Mary’s response to Gabriel (“bondslave”).

Luke makes it very clear that Mary, though engaged to Joseph, is a virgin

- That Mary was a pure virgin at this time needs to be emphasized. To get around the miracle of the Virgin Birth, liberal scholars come up with all sorts of speculative ideas, such as Mary was raped by Roman soldiers, or that Joseph himself had violated Mary.

- In those days, to be “engaged” meant that a legal promise had been made between the families.

Mary will give birth to a son by supernatural means (by the Holy Spirit)

- This would be a good place to explain the Roman Catholic doctrine of Immaculate Conception; that it doesn’t refer to Jesus’ birth, but to Mary’s, a doctrine contrived to advocate that Mary herself was born without sin (“Mother of God” doctrine).

- That Mary was impregnated by the Holy Spirit means that Jesus was born without sin, and therefore perfect human and fully divine. He was born the God-Man, which makes His death on the cross all that more significant.

A lesson: With God, nothing is impossible

1:39-56 – The account of Mary’s encounter with Elizabeth and Mary’s song of praise to God

- Point out that Mary had plenty of time to compose this song, often referred to as the “Magnificat.”

A lesson: Sometimes wonderful news from God can result in joyful singing

1:57-79 – The account of the birth of John the Baptist and Zacharias’s prophecy

- Note that in this chapter, the phrase “filled with the Holy Spirit” is used three times, and in no instance is there an association with “speaking in tongues.” In all instances, there is “praise to God.”

- Note that Jesus and John the Baptist will be cousins.

A lesson: When we are faithful and obedient to God, wonderful things happen

1:80 – The account of the life of John the Baptist before he became an official prophet

- We will learn much more about John the Baptist and his message in chapter 3.

A lesson: Those who are wholly devoted to God do not necessarily lead an easy lifestyle

- Finally, as the disciple how God is speaking to him or her personally through this chapter.
CHAPTER 2

Overview of Luke 2
In chapter 2, Luke provides some details concerning the birth and early childhood of Jesus. Whereas chapter 1 focused on the pre-birth events in the lives of Zacharias and Mary, chapter 2 focuses on outside witnesses of his birth: shepherds, Simeon, Anna, and even temple officials. Luke wants the reader to understand that Jesus’ birth was not ordinary, even in regard to His conception. His birth was a cosmic event witnessed by those who were actively seeking God. The love theme throughout chapter 2 can be found in a number of places—from the humble setting of His birth, to the loving gifts of the Father to Simeon and Anna who had devoted their lives to serving God.

The question might be asked, “How did Luke, not an eyewitness to the events, know so much about them?” It is speculated that when Paul was in prison in Caesarea—some 3 years—Luke traveled to Jerusalem and interviewed Mary and others knew Jesus well. Tradition also has it that Philip’s four daughters, who were prophetesses, were extremely well-informed about the birth, life and death of Jesus. Luke, as it turns out, was an investigative journalist.

What to look for in Luke 2
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Jesus was the Son of God, the coming King of the Jews. Note particularly the humble circumstances of His birth.
3. Review chapter 1 and count the number of individuals who are “filled with the Spirit” (beginning with John the Baptist). Note features that are common to all these individuals, and the result of their being filled with Spirit.
4. Note Simeon’s responses to meeting Jesus. Note the global and personal responses, and note what is the foremost desire in Simeon’s heart.
5. Observe Anna’s reaction to God after having lost her husband and not having any sons to provide for her. How did she spend the rest of her days?
6. When Jesus is separated from His parents, note where He is finally located, and what He is doing when He is found.
7. Note how Luke describes Jesus’ childhood, and whether or not he records that Jesus worked miracles as a child, as the Gnostic gospels claim.

1 Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth.
2 This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.
3 And everyone was on his way to register for the census, each to his own city.
4 Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the city of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David.
5 in order to register along with Mary, who was engaged to him, and was with 2:1-7 The birth of Jesus took place sometime between 6 and 4 BC. The exact time frame of the census is uncertain, but it is known that Caesar Augustus was the first declared emperor of Rome; the name “Augustus” means “exalted one.” Regardless of the details, the purpose of the census was twofold: registration for conscription into the Roman army (from which Jews were exempt), and registration to levy a “poll tax” which every person under Roman rule was required to pay annually. Because this was the “first census,” Jews were required to return to their ancestral cities to register. Both Joseph and Mary were descendants of David, and therefore required to journey to Bethlehem, the City of David, to register. From a human perspective,
child.

6 While they were there, the days were completed for her to give birth.

7 And she gave birth to her firstborn son; and she wrapped Him in cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

The timing couldn’t have been worse. The journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem was about 70 miles over hilly terrain. There is no indication in Scripture that Mary actually rode on a donkey, although in all probability, she did. There is also no indication they traveled alone; they may have been part of a caravan of fellow travelers.

Would Joseph and Mary have traveled all the way to Bethlehem when she was nine months pregnant had not Caesar called for a census? It is highly unlikely. Also, had Joseph and Mary related the birth of their son to Micah’s prophecy—that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2)—they might well have moved to Bethlehem much earlier. Joseph and Mary were not scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures, and may not have realized that the birth of their son was the fulfillment of Micah’s prophecy. The point here is that God is in charge of rulers and kings (Isa. 40:23; Dan. 2:21) and uses even their politically motivated behaviors to exalt His name and fulfill His will. As God had planned since the beginning of time, the Messiah, the “stem of Jesse,” would be born in the City of David (Isa. 11:1).

2:4 As indicated above, Mary went with Joseph to Bethlehem because both were direct descendants of David. A comparison of the genealogies found in Luke and Matthew indicate that Mary represents the physical descendant of David leading to the Messiah, and Joseph represents the legal, or royal line leading to the Messiah. The reader should take note: God doesn’t express His love for mankind with a spattering of coincidences here and there; His love is directly tied to and expressed through His providential dealings with all mankind throughout history.

2:5 The phrase “who was engaged to him, and was with child” is nothing short of what could be considered a scandalous statement. Clearly, Joseph and Mary had neither married nor consummated their relationship. Mary’s condition would have brought upon her great shame and ostracism, and upon Joseph, great judgment and contempt. Matthew’s gospel helps shed light on Joseph’s dilemma (Matt. 1:18-25). Matthew clearly states that Mary was still a virgin when Jesus was in her womb, and conception was not by Joseph, but by the Holy Spirit.

Can the reader see the great love that Joseph had for Mary? As Matthew states, his instinct was to “send her away secretly.” Being engaged was as legally binding as marriage, and therefore Joseph had the legal right to break the covenant as well as the relationship. But he chose to suffer ridicule by trusting God, and he chose to risk his own reputation by loving Mary.

2:7a Also, Luke clearly states that Jesus is Mary’s
“firstborn” son, not her “only” son. Mary will have other sons, including James, the author of the epistle (Luke 8:19-21; Gal. 1:19). God’s love allowed Mary to have a full family to take care of her when Joseph apparently died at a relatively young age, and Jesus, the eldest son, was fulfilling God’s plan for mankind.

Luke 2:7b The birth of Jesus is the ultimate expression of God’s love for a lost world. That we live in a world without biblical love is indicated in the pathetic scene that no one at the inn was willing to make room for a woman who was about to have a baby. No one was willing to sacrifice their room for the One who will be willing to sacrifice His life for all mankind. Mary is directed to a stable. The incarnation of the word, God’s ultimate act of love, is unrecognized by the world. It is a foreshadowing of things to come.

One last note needs to be inserted regarding Jesus’ birth and the traditions associated with it. It is unlikely Mary gave birth the night she arrived in Bethlehem. Luke states, “while they were there,” not “when the arrived….” Most likely, Joseph had pitched a tent, as most travelers did. When it came time for Mary to deliver, the inn would have been a better setting, as women helpers would have been available. As it turned out, the inn was full when it came time for Mary to give birth. Therefore, they resorted to a stable (which may have been a cave) where there was plenty of water and straw for a bed.

Also, the nativity scene currently celebrated at Christmas pictures animals, shepherds and the three wise men, and a bright star shining in the background. The nativity scene is a direct descendant of the Christmas morality plays held in churches during the Middle Ages. Churches condensed many events into a single event for simplicity’s sake. Though Luke records the incident with the shepherds, it is unlikely they arrived there the same night, as they would have been punished for leaving sheep unguarded. Therefore, they probably arrived later the next day when their watch was over. Also, no animals are mentioned in Scripture (although there were probably some in stalls). And the three wise men from the East? Matthew’s gospel does not mention the number of wise men—there may have been a whole caravan—and it is clear in Matthew 2:11 that they entered “the house,” which some have speculated may have taken place as much as two years after Jesus’ birth.

But out of love, we will forgive church tradition for these inaccuracies, as in the end, they are superiorly overshadowed by the superb truth that “the word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:12).
8 In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened.

10 But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;

11 for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

12 “This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.”

13 And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,

14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.”

2:8-20 Shepherds were at the bottom of the prestige chain in Jesus’ day. They had no status other than what their families gave them. These particular shepherds were most likely watching over sheep that were destined for sacrifice. In the hills of Bethlehem, Herod the Great had built a residence, and the surrounding fields were ideal for grazing sheep. Historians indicate that the sheep kept at Herod’s residence were those destined for sacrifice in his temple. It is no coincidence, then, that the shepherds keeping watch over lambs destined for sacrifice would be directed to the Lamb of God who would become the sacrifice for all mankind’s sins, God’s greatest gift toward man.

2:9-10 Notice that on almost all angelic visitations, their opening words are, “Do not be afraid.” Out of love, God anticipates our fears even before we do. Notice, too, that the good news is for “all people.” That means all people, including Gentiles. Luke especially would have picked up on these subtleties. The good news will result in “great joy.” This is explained in the next verse. Finally, note that the angel is standing before them, not hovering above them in the air, as is depicted at Christmas.

2:11 It is to shepherds, and only to shepherds, that the announcement is made that the Messiah is born. He is the long-awaited-for Deliverer. The word “Christ” is the Greek word for the Hebrew word “Messiah.” The good news that will come to all mankind and bring great joy is the news that God is fulfilling His promises and will indeed provide for all mankind a Deliverer from sin.

2:12 There is not only an announcement, but proof is provided.

2:13 For the sake of accuracy, please note that there is no mention that the angels sang. They were praising God and “saying.” Our assumption that the angels were singing probably comes from Handel’s “Messiah.”

2:14 What is being implied here is this: there are men and women who please Him and there are those who don’t. One of the most important questions in life is this: “With whom is God pleased?” A Christian might assume that God is pleased only with someone who has already believed in Jesus Christ. But the question is broader and more imminent than that; at this point in history, Christ hasn’t died for sins. As we will discover later in the Scriptures, those with whom God is pleased are those who truly understand what it means to love others and act accordingly toward their fellow man. The principle is quite simple and profound: those who act in love toward others will recognize God’s love through Christ, and those who don’t love will be blind to all God offers through Jesus Christ.
15 When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds began saying to one another, “Let us go straight to Bethlehem then, and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.”

16 So they came in a hurry and found their way to Mary and Joseph, and the baby as He lay in the manger.

17 When they had seen this, they made known the statement which had been told them about this Child.

18 And all who heard it wondered at the things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary treasured all these things, pondering them in her heart.

20 The shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them.

21 And when eight days had passed, before His circumcision, His name was then called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

2:15-16 The shepherds went “straight” to Bethlehem. They “came in a hurry” and “found their way” to the Messiah. This is the manner in which those “with whom He is pleased” demonstrate their desire to see Jesus. For these, there is always an urgency to seek out Jesus. For those who have no desire to seek Jesus, there is always an urgency to flee His presence. Those with whom God is pleased seek the presence of Jesus with a sense of urgency.

2:17 Those who receive good news also have an urgency to tell others about it. This episode with the shepherds confirms for Joseph and Mary that their child is no ordinary child.

2:18 “All” refers to the shepherds, Joseph and Mary. It is possible that there were others present, but this is not stated.

2:20 What is the response of those who come into the presence of the Savior? “Glorifying and praising God” is the normal response. All fear is gone, for the perfect love that has been expressed by God through the birth of the Son of God casts out all fear.

2:21 As we read in John’s case (1:59), it was customary to name the child at his circumcision. However, in Jesus’ case, according to the instruction from the angel Gabriel, Jesus is given His name “before” His circumcision. There is significance in this. Jesus supersedes the law of Moses; that is, He existed before the Law. John’s naming was according to the Law, he being the last of the Old Testament prophets. Jesus’ naming was before the Law, Jesus being the fulfillment of the Law. Jesus’ name was given before He was “conceived in the womb.” Jesus existed before the Law was given to Moses, and He supersedes the Law because He existed before He came into the world to save mankind from its sin.

The name Jesus is Greek for the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “the Lord saves,” or “the Lord delivers.”

2:22-24 Mary required purification and Jesus required dedication according to the Law. Instead of a lamb plus a pigeon or turtledove, which was the required sacrifice, two turtledoves or pigeons were allowed to be used by those who were poor. Not only did Jesus have to be born in a stable, but He had to be dedicated with the poorest of sacrifices.

2:22 “…they brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.” This event happens at the beginning of His life. At the end of His life, He will bring Himself up to Jerusalem and present Himself to the Lord. Whereas the least costly sacrifice is presented in the beginning, the most costly
PAIR OF TURTLEDOVES OR TWO YOUNG PIGEONS.”

25 And there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; and this man was righteous and devout, looking for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Spirit was upon him.

26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ.

27 And he came in the Spirit into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law,

28 then he took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said,

29 “Now Lord, You are releasing Your bond-servant to depart in peace, According to Your word;

30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation,

31 Which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES, And the glory of Your people Israel.”

33 And His father and mother were amazed at the things which were being said about Him.

34 And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel, and for a sign to be opposed—

35 and a sword will pierce even your own soul—to the end that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

sacrifice—His life—will be presented in the end. God’s love accepted the least costly sacrifice—Christ’s love allowed for the most costly sacrifice. The entire event of purification and dedication is one smothered with love: God’s love for Joseph and Mary, Joseph’s love for Mary, Mary’s love for God, and God’s love for His Son who will eventually become the Perfect Sacrifice.

2:25-32 God is a consoled and comforter of His people. Simeon is desperate to experience the “consolation,” or comforting of God’s people as promised by the prophet Isaiah (40:1). There is a wonderful irony here, because the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, “was upon him.” We know this by Jesus’ description of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16-17 where Jesus calls the Holy Spirit “the Comforter.” Not only was the Holy Spirit “upon” Simeon, but the Holy Spirit had “revealed” to him that he would actually come face to face with the Messiah. Why was the Spirit ministering so frequently in Simeon’s life? Because he was “righteous and devout.” One cannot become righteous and devout without the Holy Spirit, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, one becomes more righteous and devout. Simeon was wholly dedicated to the Lord.

2:32 “…a light of revelation to the Gentiles…” This quotation from the prophet Isaiah had more meaning than Simeon imagined at the moment, but it was not lost on the Gentile Luke. Simeon, like most devout Jews, assumed that the Messiah would make His power and sovereignty known to all the Gentile world by ruling over them, resulting in their acknowledgement that the God of Israel was the only true God. Luke, however, discovered that the Messiah would make His salvation known to the Gentile world, thus not only saving him, but saving any Gentile who received Jesus Christ as Lord. Thus, the “consolation of Israel” was not just for the Jews, but for the whole world.

2:33-35 This is the first indirect mention of the cross. As the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon that he would see the Christ, the Holy Spirit also revealed to him a mystery that most Jewish leaders did not see—that the Messiah must first suffer and die. Even Jesus’ future disciples would have a difficult time accepting the fact that the Messiah must first experience the cross. Why? Because, like most of us, no one wanted to deal with the seriousness of personal sin and the cost of the sacrifice that would be needed to reconcile God to man. Like us all, most Jews wanted heaven and all God’s blessings without the sacrifice. That the Messiah must first suffer and die was a truth that the Holy Spirit revealed to Simeon, most likely through Isaiah 53.

2:35 Mary had no idea of the grief that would await
And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years and had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage,

and then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple, serving night and day with fastings and prayers.

At that very moment she came up and began giving thanks to God, and continued to speak of Him to all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own city of Nazareth.

The Child continued to grow and become strong, increasing in wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.

Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover.

And when He became twelve, they went up there according to the custom of the

her 33 years later. Up to the point of the word “Israel,” Mary is hearing only wondrous and glorious things about her Child. God’s love allowed her to continue on with the joy of the moment, and kept her from understanding the terrible truth that one day her heart would be broken. This is a hard thing to accept about God’s love; more often than not, love involves much more pain and sacrifice than we are willing to acknowledge or accept.

Anna was someone who, after the death of her husband, could have justifiably sought another husband. She could also have become very angry at God for taking her husband. Yet, instead of turning to anger, or to financial security from the world, she chose instead to see her situation as a sign from God and devote her life fully to the kingdom of God. Anna was what Paul would later refer to as “a widow indeed” (1 Tim. 5:3).

Whereas Simeon was looking for the consolation of Israel, Anna was looking for “the redemption of Jerusalem.” Whereas Simeon saw the big picture of national spiritual need, Anna saw the plight of the poor, the needy and the oppressed.

After the birth of Jesus, Mary remained “unclean” for 40 days, according to Mosaic law. During this time, she and Joseph returned to Nazareth, and soon after were married. So Joseph and Mary were officially married only after she gave birth to a child. Rumors, of course, would spread that Jesus was illegitimate, that Mary was an adulteress, that she had perhaps prostituted herself out to a soldier stationed in Nazareth, or that perhaps she had even been raped. As Simeon had prophesied, Jesus was already being “opposed.” We know from Matthew’s gospel that Joseph had had doubts in the beginning, but God lovingly informed him in a dream that Mary’s pregnancy was of the Holy Spirit. It was only through his love for her and her Son that he was willing to endure the gossip, the whispers, the ostracism, the rumors and the public humiliation that surely accompanied their return to Nazareth. Why didn’t Joseph choose another city where they could hide their secret? Because Joseph knew that Mary needed to be around family, and he was willing to suffer personal consequences to see that she was taken care of.

This paragraph indicates clearly that Jesus knew He was the Son of God. This passage, the only one in Scripture that mentions Jesus’ childhood, also emphasizes Jesus’ primary earthly ministry—teaching. Had Jesus performed miracles, as the
43 and as they were returning, after spending the full number of days, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. But His parents were unaware of it,
44 but supposed Him to be in the caravan, and went a day’s journey; and they began looking for Him among their relatives and acquaintances.
45 When they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem looking for Him.
46 Then, after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions.
47 And all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers.
48 When they saw Him, they were astonished; and His mother said to Him, “Son, why have You treated us this way? Behold, Your father and I have been anxiously looking for You.”
49 And He said to them, “Why is it that you were looking for Me? Did you not know that I had to be in My Father’s house?”
50 But they did not understand the statement which He had made to them.
51 And He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and He continued in subjection to them; and His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

52 And Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.

apocryphal New Testament (Gnostic) literature record, would not Luke have mentioned it? Jesus’ primary ministry, apart from His death on the cross, was to change people’s mind about God and their relationship to Him. This can only be done by teaching truth, and by example. If one desires to know what “questions” Jesus was asking, one need look no further than the substance of His teaching throughout the gospels. Perhaps “all who heard Him” were so “amazed at His understanding” because He was able, even at the age of twelve, to grasp the spirit of the law rather than the letter of the law. The spirit of the law teaches that God is a God of love, and that God wants all mankind to experience His love and express His love to others.

A logical question to ask is why didn’t Jesus inform His parents that He was remaining behind in Jerusalem? Wasn’t that an unloving thing to do to His parents? The answer can be found in the number of days He went missing—three. Note that a total of three days goes by between the time they discover Him missing and the time they find Him in the temple. This event is a foreshadowing of the crucifixion and resurrection. In the crucifixion, Jesus will go “missing” for three days, and then He will be “found” in His Father’s house—that is, in a resurrected state. During the time between His resurrection and ascension, He will be teaching, but this time, not teaching the rabbis but His disciples, the new leaders of the church. In verse 50, Joseph and Mary “did not understand the statement” because He had not disclosed Himself as the Son of God, and because they had no idea the cross was coming.

2:51 Jesus fulfills the fifth commandment by remaining in subjection to His parents, even though He knows He is the Son of God. This is another way of saying that He honored His father and mother, which in itself is another way of saying He loved them.

2:52 There is no mention of miracles or the “gifts of the Spirit,” as the Holy Spirit had not yet empowered Him.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In chapter 2, God continues to speak. Through the angel, He spoke to the shepherds and through the Holy Spirit He spoke to Simeon. God still speaks today through His word. How has God’s word spoken to you as you have completed studying this chapter?

2. Ask yourself, “What is the primary focus of my life? Is it family? Is it my career? Is it satisfying my personal needs and wants?” If it is any of these things, where does your relationship with God fit in? Is it something that is just tacked on to these other priorities? If you really want to hear God’s voice and have His word speak to you, what are you going to change in your priorities to make that happen? How will your life change in regard to prayer, study and service? What will it take for you to become “righteous and devout” as Simeon was? What are you “looking for”?

3. What would it take for you to be “filled with the Spirit,” and how will you know when you are? Is being filled with the Spirit something you or a charismatic speaker makes happen, or does God make that happen?

4. Consider Anna’s life. What did she do to replace personal loss and grief with joy and fulfillment? What is the great lesson her life teaches? Have you thought about what you would do if God intervened in your life like He intervened in Anna’s?

5. When it comes to your relationship with Jesus, what are you focused on pursuing—His miracles, His “signs” or His teaching? Which of these will have the most lasting effect on your life and on those whom your life touches?

6. Go through chapters 1 & 2 and circle the word “favor” or its variants (e.g., “favored”). (You can find the word in 1:25, 28, 32, and 2:51.) What does it mean to find “favor” with God? How can you find favor with God? (Hint: There is a close relationship between “favor” and “grace.”)

7. What has chapter 2 taught you about God’s love, His desire for you to experience His love and how He wants you to express His love?
Luke 2

The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 2

2:1-20 – The account of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and the witness of the _________________________

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, aka ________________________________

Bethlehem is called the “City of David” because that was _______________________________________

Verse 5 states that Mary was “engaged” to Joseph and was ______________________________________

The shepherds were watching sheep being raised for the purpose of _______________________________

Though Gabriel announced that “the Child” was the Son of God, the angels call Him the _____________

2:21-38 – The account of Jesus’ presentation at the Temple and the blessing by ______________________

Jesus was circumcised on the “eighth day” and presented with an offering because He was __________

A man named Simeon, who is not a priest, is described as “ ________________________________”

Simeon received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw _________________

Simeon’s blessing upon the Child includes the prophetic words that He would be “ ________________”

Simeon also prophesies that Mary, the mother of Jesus, will suffer great __________________________

Anna is a widow who devoted her life serving in the Temple with “ ____________________________”

2:39-52 – The account of Jesus’ trip with His family to Jerusalem and His teaching in the ______________

Every year, Jesus parents traveled to Jerusalem for the ________________________________

Jesus was teaching Jewish scholars in the temple when He was 12, one year before being an __________

Jesus’ parents are unable to locate Jesus in the caravan, but find Him teaching in the Temple after _______

Joseph and Mary did not understand what Jesus meant when He said He had to be in _________________

At this time, Jesus did not have complete understanding of God’s will because He was “ _______________”
**The Discipler’s Commentary**

**Answer Outline for the Discipler**

**Luke 2**

2:1-20 – The account of Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem and the witness of the *shepherds*

Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, aka *the land of the Gentiles*

- Whenever locations are mentioned, such as towns or the region of Galilee, a map is useful for students to gain perspective. Maps are often found in the back of some study Bibles.
- It also may be helpful to have the disciple look up Old Testament references that prophecy events surrounding Jesus’ birth. Specifically, have the student look up Isaiah 9:1 and Micah 5:2. Seeing OT prophecies fulfilled is an important way to build faith.

Bethlehem is called the “City of David” because that was *where David was from*

- David, son of Jesse, a “Bethlehemite,” is found in 1 Samuel 16.
- Help the disciple see the “big picture” of God’s plan that Jesus had to be born in Bethlehem.

Verse 5 states that Mary was “engaged” to Joseph and was *with child*

- It would be important here to differentiate between being “engaged” in modern-day America and being engaged in Jewish culture. In Jewish culture, engagement was a legal contract between families.
- Have the disciple attempt to describe how Mary, being unmarried but “with child,” would have been looked up by her relatives, her family, her friends and her community.

The shepherds were watching sheep being raised for the purpose of *sacrifice at the temple*

- It would be helpful here to include the information that the sheep were probably grazing under the shadow of Herod’s residence, and that they were being raised specifically for sacrifice. Help the disciple see the relationship between these sheep and the “lamb of God,” Jesus.
- Depending on the disciple’s knowledge of the OT, some review may need to be made of the “Passover” lamb sacrifice in Exodus 12, and how Jesus fulfilled that role.

Though Gabriel announced that “the Child” was the Son of God, the angels call Him the *Messiah (Christ)*

- Messiah means “Anointed One.” For scriptural references on this, see Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:25, and John 1:41. King David was a “type” of Messiah. A Jewish tradition had been built up over the centuries that a Messiah would come a deliver Israel from all their enemies.

2:21-38 – The account of Jesus’ presentation at the Temple and the blessing by *Simeon*

Jesus was circumcised on the “eighth day” and presented with an offering because He was *first born*

- This ceremony was instituted in the Mosaic law; the firstborn was always presented as an offering to God (Ex. 13:2; Lev. 27:26).
- Discuss with the disciple the significance that Joseph and Mary had to offer “turtledoves.” Tie this fact into the events surrounding Jesus’ birth in a stable.

A man named Simeon, who is not a priest, is described as “*righteous and devout*”

- Have the disciple attempt to describe what it would mean to be “righteous and devout” today. Make sure that the disciple does not limit his or her description to things one does or doesn’t do (works), but to focus on the importance of relationships and the role of love in the disciple’s life.

Simeon received a promise from the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he saw *the Messiah*

- Make sure the disciple understands that this was a unique promise given at a unique time, and therefore, not applicable to everyone. What is applicable is that God fulfills His universal promises to all believers, such as the promise of eternal life.

Simeon’s blessing upon the Child includes the prophetic words that He would be “*a light to the Gentiles*”
This will be an important concept to understand as the disciple begins learning about the gospel being received among the Gentiles in the Book of Acts, and the apostle Paul’s role in that mission.

Simeon also prophesies that Mary, the mother of Jesus, will suffer great personal pain.

There are a multitude of lessons that can be gleaned from this passage. The most important one, perhaps, is that with the good news of Jesus Christ, there comes sacrifice and suffering. Sacrifice and suffering are a NORMAL part of the disciple’s life. Refer to Rom. 8:17 and 2 Tim. 3:12.

Anna is a widow who devoted her life serving in the temple with fastings and prayers.

Have the disciple describe what was special about Anna. Speculate as to why Luke included her in his gospel.

2:39-52 – The account of Jesus’ trip with His family to Jerusalem and His teaching in the temple

Every year, Jesus’ parents traveled to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover.

Provide the information that Jewish men were required to make a pilgrimage to the temple in Jerusalem three times a year: at Passover (Feast of Unleavened Bread), Pentecost (Harvest; Feast of Weeks), and Feast of Booths (Feast of Ingathering). This is found in Exodus 23:15-17.

Jesus was teaching Jewish scholars in the temple when He was 12, one year before being an accountable adult.

At 13, Jewish boys go through a ritual called “bar mitzvah,” which means “son of commandment.” (Young girls go through “bat mitzvah” at age 12.) This means they became accountable as adults under the law of Moses.

Jesus’ parents are unable to locate Jesus in the caravan, but find Him teaching in the temple after three days.

Help the disciple see the significance of the “three days,” and how that ties into the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

Joseph and Mary did not understand what Jesus meant when He said He had to be in His Father’s house.

Raise this question for the disciple to ponder: how can we today be in our Father’s house? Many will think of being in church. But the answer is much more profound. We are in our Father’s house when we pray.

At this time, Jesus did not have complete understanding of God’s will because He was increasing in wisdom.

Ask the disciple how he or she intends to “increase in wisdom” over the rest of their lifetime. Does this mean increasing in knowledge, or in the wisdom of the world? Have the disciple read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and Colossians 1:9.

Finally, ask the disciple how God is speaking to him or her personally through this chapter.
Overview of Luke 3

In chapter 3, Luke briefly describes the ministry of John the Baptist, followed by the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. Luke will describe John’s message of repentance, the purpose of his ministry in regard to Jesus, and how John’s confrontation with corrupt Jewish leadership will eventually result in his imprisonment and execution at the hands of Herod. Luke will also emphasize how John instructed his followers “to bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” Luke will then clearly show that Jesus’ ministry began soon after His baptism by John the Baptist. At the end of the chapter, Luke will cite the genealogy of Jesus, and point out that Jesus is not only a physical descendant of David, but the end of the promised “seed line,” descending all the way down from Adam until fulfilled in the Messiah.

What to look for in Luke 3

1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for John’s role in the gospel, and how John fulfills Old Testament prophecy.
3. Look for the contrast between those who are unrighteous and those who are righteous.
4. Look for the contrast between those of noble means and those of meager means.
5. Find the important instructions from John when he tells his followers what they must do to “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.”
6. Find the verse that contains all three Persons of the Godhead (Trinity).
7. Look for the important purpose of the genealogy that Luke provides, especially as it pertains to the “seed line.”

1 Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene,
2 in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.
3 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins;
4 as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.
5 EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME
STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH;
6 AND ALL FLESH WILL SEE THE
SAVATION OF GOD.’”

7 So he began saying to the crowds who
were going out to be baptized by him, “You
brood of vipers, who warned you to flee
from the wrath to come?

8 “Therefore bear fruits in keeping with
repentance, and do not begin to say to
yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our
father,’ for I say to you that from these
stones God is able to raise up children to
Abraham.

9 “Indeed the axe is already laid at the root
of the trees; so every tree that does not bear
good fruit is cut down and thrown into the
fire.”

3:2 Annas and Caiaphas, dual high priests at the
time, can be counted among those in verse 1. Annas
was a sort of High Priest emeritus, and Caiaphas was
his son-in-law in the process of assuming Annas’s
authority and responsibility. The High Priest was in
charge of temple activities, as well as the head of
what was known as the Sanhedrin, the ruling
religious body of Israel’s theocratic state. Annas and
Caiaphas were political pawns to Herod and the
occupying Roman government; all three parties hated
each other and were constantly at odds. Because
Annas and Caiaphas were of God’s chosen race, true
Jews (as opposed to Herod, who was not a Jew but an
Edomite), their sin of failing to recognize the
Messiah, and in fact rejecting Him, are considered
more heinous. They, too, failed to visit John in the
wilderness, and in regard to Jesus, they will be
instrumental in His death. A message about
repentance for personal sin is never welcomed.

3:3 John the Baptist is considered the last of the Old
Testament prophets. John’s message was clear: all
men need to repent and have their sins forgiven. The
bad news is there is no one who doesn’t sin; the good
news—the gospel—is that anyone can be forgiven if
there is true repentance. Luke makes it clear from the
very beginning that without the issue of personal sin
being dealt with God’s way, there can be no real
enjoyment of God’s blessings, and therefore no real
experience of God’s love and grace.

3:4 Luke presents the big picture of John’s role in
Jesus’ ministry, although at the time, John’s
followers probably did not grasp it. John was sent by
God to announce that His Son was coming. If a
person wouldn’t repent with John’s call, how would a
person ever repent with Jesus’ call? John was
announcing, therefore, that to really accept Jesus, one
must be willing to address personal sin. Most people
in John’s day wanted the blessings of the Messiah,
but didn’t want to be bothered with the issue of
personal sin. That same problem exists today, even in
the American evangelical church.

3:5-6 John is quoting Isaiah 40:4-6. All four gospels
record this passage when referring to John the
Baptist. John himself is “the voice of one crying in
the wilderness” and announcing the coming king.
This passage was well known by the Jews to be a
messianic prophecy; that is, an Old Testament
prophecy declaring the arrival of the long-awaited-for
Messiah. Isaiah’s prophecy pictures a royal visit. As
was customary in ancient times, the receiving
monarch would see that the “way” was made smooth.
This was done by filling in ravines and gullies with
dirt, smoothing out the roads, and leveling “hills” to
make the journey as comfortable as possible for the
arriving monarch—a sign of intense respect. John
quotes these verses from Isaiah as a way of warning
his listeners to repent and turn away from sin, for the King, the Messiah, is coming. They are to “make ready the way of the Lord” by turning away from unrighteousness and “bear fruits in keeping with repentance” (v. 8). Eventually, “all flesh” will see the Messiah, whether they choose to acknowledge Him or not. John’s warning is to be ready to receive Him by dealing with personal sin.

3:7 The ritual of baptism was begun sometime after the return of the Jewish exiles from Babylon. By Jesus’ day, the ritual was performed by pouring water over the head of the repenter using a gourd. John lived in the wilderness near the Jordan River, and therefore, the river was a convenient place to perform baptism. (The religious authorities will confront John on his qualifications for performing baptism, as he is neither a Pharisee nor a scribe [John 1:24-25].) The pouring of water over the head of the repenter symbolized a spiritual cleansing; that is, the washing away of sin and unrighteousness, and was accompanied by confession. In verse 16, John will state that the coming Messiah will baptize, not with water, but with “the Holy Spirit and fire.” This prophecy is fulfilled in Acts 2:1-4.

John’s words are not what we would call “politically correct” or “seeker sensitive.” To call those who come to him a “brood of vipers” is to call them evil, as “vipers” are poisonous snakes and almost always associated with evil, sin and death in Hebrew culture. Therefore, John likens people who are living in sin to descendants of Satan, the serpent in Genesis. “Who warned you…” is a bit rhetorical, for certainly Satan would not have warned them. It was God through the Holy Spirit who warned them. Thus, the next verse starts with the word “Therefore” referring to what they must now do to avoid the wrath—judgment—that will surely come upon all unrighteousness.

3:8 What they must “do” is “bear fruits in keeping with repentance….” Note that John does not say, “Bear fruit so that you may be forgiven” or that bearing fruit is their repentance. Good works does nothing to help a person receive forgiveness. Good works—fruit—should be the result of having been forgiven. We do good works because we are forgiven, not in order to earn God’s forgiveness. And, John clearly states that being Jewish does not automatically count for forgiveness or protect a Jew from God’s wrath and judgment. The same principle is true today. Just because someone calls himself a Christian, or claim to be born-again or evangelical, doesn’t automatically protect that person from earthly judgment by God. God must see that a person’s repentance is real, and He observes this by our change in behavior toward others as a result of repentance. (See verses 10-14 below.)
10 And the crowds were questioning him, saying, “Then what shall we do?”
11 And he would answer and say to them, “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do likewise.”
12 And some tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?”
13 And he said to them, “Collect no more than what you have been ordered to.”
14 Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, “And what about us, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.”

15 Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he was the Christ,
16 John answered and said to them all, “As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.
17 “His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to
3:9 John prophetically announces that God is already in the process of changing His plan in regard to the Jews, and the whole system of the Old Testament laws, tithes, works and sacrifices is about to change. This may be one reason John was so hated by the religious leaders who depended on the tithes and sacrifices of the people to maintain their comfortable lifestyle.

3:10-14 Look carefully at these verses and you will see one of the most important messages in the New Testament. Do you see it? The message lies in John’s three responses to the question, “What shall we do?” That is, “Okay, now that we’ve repented and been baptized, what’s the next step? What are the fruits we must bear in keeping with repentance?” John’s answer to their question says nothing about keeping the Sabbath, offering a lamb at the temple, keeping the laws of cleanliness and remaining undefiled, and nothing about fasting, prayer or memorizing the Torah. John’s answers all have one common theme: good fruit is defined as how one treats his neighbor. This theme will be seen throughout the gospels but will not be clearly articulated until after Pentecost. James will be the first to state the theme in his letter: “…love your neighbor as yourself” (2:8). All of John’s answers have loving one’s neighbor as the common theme. This theme has been present in the Old Testament prophets but does not become the basis for all good works until the New Testament. Therefore, even before Jesus’ ministry, death and resurrection, the Bible clearly teaches that living out one’s repentance is demonstrated by how one treats one’s neighbor. For the born-again Christian, the most important test of a transformed life, therefore, is not how many verses one memorizes or how often one goes to church or how many hours one spends in prayer or how much theology one knows. The true test is in how a Christian treats others. This principle is true whether one is a great sinner like a tax collector, a new believer like the soldier, or someone who is just a part of the crowd.

3:15-17 All who are oppressed, as were the Jews under the Romans, look for a deliverer, one who will overpower the evil forces and raise up the righteous. Many of John’s Jewish followers wondered if John himself was that deliverer, the Messiah. But John clearly states that he is not. Ironically, though, through John, all those who repented and had their sins forgiven were delivered!
3:16 Until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, only special people in the Old Testament, like kings and prophets, had the anointing of the Holy Spirit (e.g., Ex. 35:31; 1 Sam. 11:6; Ezek. 2:2). However, as the prophet Joel foretold, there would
gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

18 So with many other exhortations he preached the gospel to the people.
19 But when Herod the tetrarch was reprimanded by him because of Herodias, his brother’s wife, and because of all the wicked things which Herod had done,
20 Herod also added this to them all: he locked John up in prison.
21 Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and while He was praying, heaven was opened,
22 and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.”

3:17 Jesus Himself will be the judge, and John prophesies that judgment will begin even with Jesus’ earthly ministry, for there will be those who receive Him and His message (wheat) and those who reject Him (the chaff).

3:18 The use of the word “gospel” here is interesting. We Christians believe that the gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sins. Yet Luke uses the word here during John’s ministry. In this context, the gospel refers to John’s preaching that a person’s sins can be forgiven through repentance, and that their reward, the Messiah, is about to appear.

3:19-20 There are four Herods named in the gospels. The first was Herod the Great who ruled when Jesus was born. The Herod named here is Herod Antipas, one of seven sons of Herod the Great. Herod Antipas had a half-brother named Philip (Herod Philip I, but not the same Philip mentioned in 3:1). Philip was married to an ambitious, scheming woman by the name of Herodias, who was actually Philip’s niece. However, Herod Antipas and Herodias had an affair, and Herodias eventually left Philip and married her uncle Herod. This affair was not only sordid but, according to Jewish law, incestuous (Lev. 18:16). Sometime in his ministry, John confronted Herod with this particularly hideous sin, and Herod eventually imprisoned John at the behest of Herodias’s daughter. (The details of John’s imprisonment and death can be found in Matthew 14:1-12.)


There is an obvious contrast here between the righteousness of John and the unrighteousness of Herod and Herodias.

One other note: the Herods were not Jewish—they were Edomites. The Edomites were descendants of Esau, the firstborn son of Isaac who sold his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew (Gen. 25:27-34). Esau eventually moved away from Isaac and began the nation of Edom, a mountainous, barren country southeast of the Promised Land. Since the Exodus, the descendants of Jacob (Israel, therefore Israelites) and the descendants of Esau (Edomites) became perpetual enemies. Herod the Great, an
Edomite, had been seated as ruler over the Jews by Caesar because Herod was very powerful, very unsympathetic toward the Jews, and particularly vicious. The entire temple guard was made up of loyal Edomites. Herod would tolerate no uprising from the Jews, lest he be demoted by Rome. So, not only did the Jews hate the fact that an Edomite had been placed as a ruler over them, but Herod was buddies with Caesar whom they also hated.

3:21 On this particular day, Jesus was perhaps the last in line to be baptized, and His appearance may have been a surprise to John. John knew Jesus, as they were cousins, and John had obviously heard the extraordinary details of His birth. It is possible that John and Jesus spent many hours together as children, playing as children do, but at the same time discussing the things of the kingdom of God. John obviously knew that Jesus was special and destined for greatest in the kingdom of God, but had yet to believe that his cousin would actually be the Messiah. Therefore, John may not have anticipated that Jesus needed baptizing, as we read in other gospel writers. Nevertheless, John follows Jesus’ instruction and, with a gourd, pours water over Jesus’ head. While Jesus was praying, John observes the Holy Spirit come upon Him. This does not mean that Jesus became the Christ at His baptism, as some liberal scholars propose. It means that Jesus is now anointed with power by the Holy Spirit to begin His ministry. Most likely, Jesus didn’t begin His ministry until his legal father Joseph had died, as there is no mention of Joseph in the gospels apart from the birth narratives.

It is often asked, “If Jesus was without sin, why did He get baptized?” One must remember that it is not baptism per se that takes away sin. Baptism is a public statement of a desire to live righteously, whether or not one has sinned. (Of course, all mankind has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God [Rom. 3:23].) Therefore, Jesus has Himself baptized by John for at least three reasons: first, to validate John and his ministry of the need for repentance in one’s relationship to God; second, to validate and fulfill the law in regards to its demand for righteousness; and third, to identify with all mankind who are separated from God by sin. By identifying with mankind, Jesus will, on the cross, become the sacrificial lamb for the sin for all mankind, and thus take away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

3:22 Apparently, only John and Jesus heard the Father speak. An important observation of this verse is that all three Persons of the Trinity are present: God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Note that God refers to Jesus as “My beloved Son.” The power and importance of this statement cannot be overemphasized. The Father did not say, “My
When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, the son of Eli,
the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melchi, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph,
the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Hesli, the son of Naggai,
the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josech, the son of Joda,
the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the incarnated Son,” “My Son who teaches truth,” or “My Son who will die for mankind’s sin.” God says, “My beloved Son.” This statement emphasizes the relationship between the Father and the Son: it is a relationship of pure divine love, eternal intimacy, and holy oneness. The Godhead is inseparable in its harmony, perfection and will. The Trinity, therefore, is described as “One God, three Persons.” The relationship between the Father and the Son is one of perfect unity. Throughout His ministry, therefore, Jesus will only refer to God as “My Father.” This is extremely significant in terms of the love message found throughout the gospels. There is an intimate relationship between the Father and the Son that is characterized primarily by love. The Apostle John will emphasize this relationship in his gospel. It is this relationship of love that transcends all human description, and can only be imagined by mortal man because it is eternal and infinite. Therefore, every joy Jesus experienced during His earthly ministry was experienced by the Father. Every taunt, every confrontation His skeptics, every hostile encounter with the Pharisees, and every rejection by the scribes was experienced by the Father as well. When Jesus is ridiculed and scorned at His trial by the Sanhedrin, spit upon and scourged to the edge of death by Roman soldiers, nailed mercilessly to a cross and hung in shame like a common criminal, His Father not only watched, but experienced. At this point in human history, God the Father would have had every justification for completely wiping all mankind off the face of the earth. Yet He didn’t. Instead, the Father listened to the plea of His beloved Son, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And out of love, from that moment on, God the Father so honored His Son’s request by offering forgiveness of sin to all who would accept Jesus as His beloved Son.

3:23 That Jesus began His ministry after His baptism is clear in verse 23. Therefore, the temptation that will follow in the next chapter is actually a part of His ministry; that is, to resist the power and ploys of Satan. Note, too, that Luke clearly states Joseph was not Jesus’ natural father. Jesus’ real father has been named in the previous verse.

3:23-38 The genealogy that Luke traces probably represents Jesus’ physical genealogy through His mother’s ancestors. There are a number of significant points about Luke’s genealogy.

First, it represents the “seed line” leading to the Messiah; that is, the physical line descending from Adam through David, as opposed to Matthew’s genealogy, which is the legal— or royal—line descending from David. (This might explain the different names of Joseph’s father in the two
son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri,
28 the son of Melchi, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er,
29 the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi,
30 the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph, the son of Jonam, the son of Eliakim,
31 the son of Melea, the son of Menna, the son of Mattatha, the son of Nathan, the son of David,
32 the son of Jesse, the son of Obed, the son of Boaz, the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon,
33 the son of Amminadab, the son of Admin, the son of Ram, the son of Hezron, the son of Perez, the son of Judah,
34 the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham, the son of Terah, the son of Nahor,
35 the son of Serug, the son of Reu, the son of Peleg, the son of Heber, the son of Shelah,
36 the son of Cainan, the son of Arphaxad, the son of Shem, the son of Noah, the son of Lamech,
37 the son of Methuselah, the son of Enoch, the son of Jared, the son of Mahalaleel, the son of Cainan,
38 the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God.

genealogies.) This seed line, therefore, is most likely the genetic, physical line that descends all the way from Adam to Jesus, and may actually be Mary’s genealogy. Only by God’s loving intervention and providence did this seed line survive throughout the history of the Jews. Satan himself attempted to destroy God’s plan for the Messiah by having Cain kill Abel. Abel was the second born to Adam, but was of the seed line because “By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain” (Heb. 11:4), and because “(Cain’s) deeds were evil, but (Abel’s) were righteous” (1 John 3:12). Also, the nation of Israel itself constantly put the seed line at risk throughout its history by internal corruption and idolatry. Only God’s love persisted against the attacks of Satan and the self-destructive behaviors of the Israelites. God, therefore, always preserved a remnant that would remain faithful to Him. It was therefore through God’s love and providential care that the seed line was preserved.

Second, the genealogy fulfills the prophecies that the Messiah would be a descendant of David. Mary, therefore, was a direct descendant of David through David’s son Nathan (v. 31). (In Matthew’s genealogy, Solomon is named as the son of David through whom the seed line passed, thus making Joseph the legal, or royal, descendant of David [Matt. 1:6].) Against all odds, therefore, including the destruction of Jerusalem in 386 BC, and the subsequent exile of the Jews to Babylon, God’s hand preserved the seed line.

Third, Luke in particular would be the one to trace the seed line all the way back to Adam (before there was a Jewish nation). Matthew’s genealogy, on the other hand, goes back only to Abraham, the father of the Israelites. This would be Luke’s way of indicating that the Messiah came for all mankind, including the Gentiles.

Fourth, few if any of those listed in the genealogy had any idea that they would play such an important role in the line that would produce the Savior of the world. They might have known they were descendants of David, but there were many other descendants of David that were never part of the seed line.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. John had a purpose in God’s plan. What was that purpose and how does his purpose relate to the purpose God has for your life? That is, what did John do that every believer should do in regard to Jesus Christ?

2. What actions can you take with your life to “make ready the way of the Lord”? What changes do you need to make in your life to “fill in every ravine” and make every “hill…brought low”? Is there a habit that needs to be stopped? Or better yet, is there a practice that needs to begin, such as Bible study, a consistent prayer life and, more importantly, a good, healthy look at your relationships?

3. In verses 10-14, John instructs his followers to do certain things in regard to bearing “fruits in keeping with repentance.” First of all, what does it mean to repent? Second, once you’ve repented, how is that to be worked out in your relationships with others? Third, is it enough just to say that you are a “born-again Christian” and put a fish sticker on your car, or go to church regularly, or even tithe? What is the common thread in John’s instructions to those who received baptism?

4. John paid a price for confronting leadership with their spiritual corruption and evil. Ask yourself if you are willing to do that. Do you know of any spiritual leaders that need to be confronted with their less than righteous life?

5. Have you been baptized? If not, why? If so, how has your life changed in regards to relationships?

6. Can God say this about you, that He is well-pleased with you? How does the answer to that question tie into the answers for questions #3 and #5?

7. One might glance over a genealogy as something that probably doesn’t have any personal significance. Start recognizing its importance by tracing your own “spiritual genealogy.” For example, who led you to the Lord? Who led that person to the Lord, and so on. And, to whom will you become a spiritual parent? Do you see now that there is a pattern for which you can give God much glory and thanks?
3:1-2 – The background for the ministry of __________________________________________________________

3:3-6 – The message of John the Baptist: __________________________________________________________

3:7-9 – The warnings of John the Baptist: Your repentance must _________________________________________

3:10-14 – The instructions of John the Baptist: _______________________________________________________

3:15-17 – The prophecy of John the Baptist: You will be _______________________________________________

3:18-20 – The imprisonment of John the Baptist: for _______________________________________________

3:21-22 – The baptism of Jesus: an introduction to ____________________________________________________

3:23-38 – The genealogy of Jesus Christ though the ancestors of ____________________________
3:1-2 – The background for the ministry of John the Baptist
• As written in the commentary, the discipler may want to review some of the names in verses 1 & 2. It may be helpful to point out the political corruption, greed and wickedness of those listed. Particularly point out that the Herod named here is not the same Herod mentioned in chapter 1. This Herod is Herod Antipas, one of Herod the Great’s sons.
• And speaking of names, ensure that the disciple does not confuse this John—John the Baptist—with other men named John, such as John, the son of Zebedee, who was Jesus’ disciple and who wrote the Gospel of John and the letters. (For some, it may be necessary to explain that the name “Baptist” has nothing to do with the modern-day denomination.)
• Make sure that the disciple sees the contrast between the unrighteousness of those named and the righteousness of John the Baptist.

3:3-6 – The message of John the Baptist: repentance
• It is vitally important that the disciple understands the significance of John’s message regarding “repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” The word “repent” actually means “to turn around,” implying a change of direction in one’s behaviors and habits, especially in terms of relationships. Without repentance for sins, there can be no real appreciation for the cross of Christ, no real appreciation for the concept of grace, and therefore, no real salvation through Jesus Christ.
• Have the disciple look up and read Isaiah 40:4-6. Explain the meaning of straight “paths” and filled “ravines.” Relate that concept to getting one’s life right with God. Relate how this passage is a “messianic” passage and refers to the royal kingship of the Messiah.

3:7-9 – The warnings of John the Baptist: Your repentance must bear fruit
• Explain the meaning of the phrases “You brood of vipers,” “wrath to come,” and “We have Abraham for our father.” Apply them to today’s Christian culture where so many call themselves “born again” but “do not bear fruit in keeping with repentance,” particularly in terms of relationships.
• Go into some detail here concerning the phrase “bear fruit in keeping with repentance.” The typical young disciple will name things like attending church, tithing, reading Scripture, et cetera. While all these things are good, the main focus should be on relationships. The next few verses should help with that.

3:10-14 – The instructions of John the Baptist: treat others with love
• Have the disciple identify the three groups and three questions asked of John concerning “Then what shall we do?” Have the disciple identify the main theme in John’s responses.
• But don’t stop there! Have the disciple identify people in his or her own life where the principle of treating others with love needs to be done to bear fruit. Have them identify friends, co-workers, fellow students, and especially family where treating others with love is the hallmark of the Christian disciple, thus bearing fruit in keeping with repentance. Ensure that the student understands that short of treating others with love, there is no true repentance, and confession and repentance become merely a religious exercise to make one feel better.
3:15-17 – The prophecy of John the Baptist: You will be baptized with fire (the Holy Spirit)

- Now the disciple is confronted with another ministry of the Holy Spirit. If the disciple hasn’t figured it out already, make sure that he or she knows that to be “baptized with fire” refers to the Holy Spirit. This was first seen at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-3). Being baptized with the Holy Spirit means to receive the Holy Spirit by placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ; that is, to believe. To be “led by the Spirit” means to be guided by the Holy Spirit to make the right moral and godly choices. To be “filled with the Spirit” means to boldly declare the wondrous acts of God through Jesus Christ.(The last ministry—to “walk by the Spirit”—is not discussed in this commentary, and is found only in Galatians 5:16 and 25. To “walk by the Spirit” means to live one’s life in a manner that is marked by the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—all of which are reflected in relationships. See Galatians 5:13-26.)

- Disciplers need to ask their disciples if they have been “baptized” by the Holy Spirit. If they have received Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, they have been baptized by the Spirit. Many disciples may say, “Well, I think I have, but I don’t feel any different.” Ensure that being baptized by the Spirit is not a matter of feeling, and there may be no emotional experience involved. It is simply a matter of believing, and therefore, the fact of being baptized by the Spirit is a matter of faith based on the word of God. The best way to tell if a person has been baptized by the Spirit is a change in behavior involving relationships, and a desire to know more about Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

3:18-20 – The imprisonment of John the Baptist: for confronting unrighteous leaders with their unrighteousness

- The sordid details of John’s imprisonment and subsequent death are not found in Luke. Therefore, the discipler, if asked, may refer to Matthew 14:1-12.

- Ask the question, “Why didn’t Jesus, with His power, rescue John?” There is an important lesson here. First, John’s ministry was ending and Jesus’ ministry was beginning. Second, John had completed the mission for which he was sent by God. Third, God does not rescue us when He has something better waiting. Death is not the enemy—sin is the enemy.

3:21-22 – The baptism of Jesus: an introduction to the Trinity

- Point out here the presence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit at Jesus’ baptism.

- Explain to the disciple why Jesus went to John for baptism.

- It is important here to point out what the Father says about His Son, Jesus: “You are My beloved Son….” Ask the disciple, “What else could the Father have said about His Son?” And, “Why is the term ‘beloved’ so important?” Point out how the Father’s description characterizes the relationship between the Father and the Son.

3:23-38 – The genealogy of Jesus Christ though the ancestors of Jesus’ mother Mary (the “seed line”)

- It may be helpful to point out that there are two genealogies for Jesus, the other being found in the Gospel of Matthew (1:1-17). Share with the discipler why there are two, and what each one represents. Point out that Luke’s genealogy goes all the way back to Adam, while Matthew’s goes back only to Abraham.

- In terms of application, how does a Christian have a “spiritual genealogy”? Ask the disciple to trace his or her spiritual genealogy.

- Make sure the disciple understand the concept of the “seed line.” This concept is very, very important when studying the genealogies of Jesus, as well as the genealogies found in the Old Testament. It also helps to understand God’s interaction—and intervention—with the nation of Israel.
Overview of Luke 4
In chapter 4, Luke introduces the reader to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus initiates His ministry by being led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Jesus spends forty days in the wilderness and successfully overcomes all temptations Satan throws at Him. Jesus then begins His ministry to a fallen world, starting in His hometown of Nazareth. There, Jesus receives a warm reception that turns quickly to great hostility resulting in a hazardous departure. That is because Jesus will clearly state in the synagogue in Nazareth that He and His message will be rejected by the Jews; God will therefore press His message of love and salvation toward the Gentiles. This message does not sit well with His countrymen in Nazareth. After Nazareth, Jesus will be well received in the next city He visits, Capernaum. There, He will heal many followers of various diseases and continue His mission to set captives free from the power of Satan. After ministering in Galilee, Jesus will then travel south and begin teaching in Judea, the home of Judaism itself.

What to look for in Luke 4
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the three key areas of temptation that Satan gave to Jesus.
3. Look for the difference between being “filled with the Spirit” and being “led by the Spirit.”
4. Determine what Luke means when he writes that Jesus began His ministry in “the power of the Spirit.”
5. Observe the reaction of the Jews in the synagogue in Nazareth when Jesus reads from the prophet Isaiah and states that God’s love will be extended to the Gentiles because of the Jews disbelief and rejection of Him.
6. Observe that twice Luke will point out Jesus’ power to exorcise demons, and note the significance of the demons’ responses.

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days, and when they had ended, He became hungry.

And the devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

And Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.’ ”

4:1 Here is yet another instance in which Luke refers to being “filled with the Spirit”; in this case, “full of the Holy Spirit.” The circumstances in this case are quite unique. Here again, being filled with the Spirit has nothing to do with speaking in tongues. As in all cases of being filled with the Spirit, it refers to giving glory to God. Jesus glorified God by proclaiming God’s word and overcoming the temptations presented to Him by Satan.

There is another important phrase introduced here by Luke—“led...by the Spirit.” Luke’s use of the phrase is probably the result of being a traveling companion of the apostle Paul. Paul uses this phrase twice in his letters: Romans 8:14 and Galatians 5:18. These three instances are the only ones in the New Testament where the phrase ‘led by the Spirit’ are found. In each case, the context is a choice...
Luke 4 40

5 And he led Him up and showed Him all

concerning moral behavior. Being led by the Spirit, therefore, refers to making moral choices that are consistent with God's will. Those who are led by the Spirit make moral choices based on the principles of God's word, and not upon the flesh, the world or the temptations offered up by the devil.

4:2 Both Moses and Elijah fasted for forty days (Ex. 34:28; 1 King 19:8), and the Israelites wandering “in the wilderness” for forty years (Num. 14:34). Moses represents the Law and Elijah represents the Prophets. The Holy Spirit was upon them both. Therefore, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). There is no teaching here that fasting forty days will make one more spiritual. In fact, the implication is clear that fasting forty days weakens a person to the point that he or she is more susceptible to temptation, especially the temptation of pride. While fasting itself is supported in Scripture (e.g., Acts 13:2), fasting for forty days as a spiritual discipline is not.

4:3-4 The first temptation Satan presents to Jesus is based upon satisfying legitimate physical needs and, more especially, using His position and power to meet His personal needs. There is nothing wrong with satisfying legitimate physical needs unless it takes precedence over fulfilling a spiritual principle, such as “You shall not steal.” Jesus’ physical need is obvious—He is literally in a state of starvation. However, the spiritual need is greater. First, He must not base His actions on suggestions by Satan. Second, He must trust that God and God alone will provide for all His needs. Third, He must make a statement that satisfying spiritual needs through the word of God is far more important than satisfying physical needs according to the world and the flesh. And fourth, He must not misuse the privilege of His position and power to satisfy personal needs.

According to the construction of the original Greek, Satan is actually saying to Jesus, “Since You are the Son of God….” Here we see Jesus’ love overcoming the temptation to put Himself before the needs of others; that is, to satisfy even His legitimate physical needs. Behind this temptation to eat is the temptation to meet His own needs first at the expense of others—the world that is lost to sin. Jesus’ love for a lost world was so great that He was willing to experience severe suffering so as not to jeopardize His mission to save mankind from sin. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 and declaring that our spiritual needs should take precedence over our physical needs. The lesson here should be obvious: true love for God means willingness to suffer on behalf of the needs of others.

4:5-8 Notice the point Luke makes by stating that...
the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6 And the devil said to Him, “I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7 “Therefore if You worship before me, it shall all be Yours.”

8 Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’ ”

And he led Him to Jerusalem and had Jesus was being “led around by the Spirit in the wilderness” (v. 1). Contrast Jesus being “led by the Spirit” with Jesus being “led” by the devil into temptation (v. 5). The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness, but it was Satan who led Jesus into temptation. In all three temptations, Satan leads Jesus into ever more tempting situations, all of which are designed to ease Jesus’ suffering and deprivation. Jesus is therefore faced with moral decisions that must be based, not upon the world’s standards or His own personal needs, but upon the will of God. The three temptations that Jesus faces represent, first of all, the supreme examples of what it means to be “led by the Spirit,” as opposed to being led by the flesh or led by the devil. But they also represent what it means to love others more than oneself, and by so doing, to love God.

There are two important points about this second temptation. First, it is a temptation to indulge oneself in the riches and pleasures of the world; that is, to love things more than people. The temptation here is also one of power and “glory”; that is, to be admired by men and desired by women. It is the use of wealth and material gain to exert power over others, therefore considering oneself more important than others. It is the very opposite of biblical love. What keeps Jesus from giving into this temptation is the same love for a lost world that is manifested by God the Father. By so loving the lost, Jesus the Son is imitating God the Father. God “so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son,” and Jesus so loved the world that He gave Himself. By loving the world as God loves the world, Jesus is directly showing His love for God. The temptation Satan is presenting is ultimately to get Jesus to fail to love.

Second, this temptation is aimed directly at an attempt to get Jesus to circumvent the cross, the place where God’s greatest love is demonstrated. It is an empty temptation, however. Satan knows Scripture well enough to know that Jesus will eventually inherit the earth when He returns in glory. Therefore, the temptation is to keep Jesus from going to the cross and setting Satan’s captives free from the bondage of sin. Any so-called church, therefore, that does not emphasize the cross of Christ in its teaching and preaching is guilty of this temptation. To avoid the teaching of the cross because it is too uncomfortable or socially insensitive is to avoid the will of God and bow down to Satan and serve him. No one can truly experience God’s love until he or she experiences the freedom and deliverance that comes through the cross of Jesus Christ.
Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here;
10 for it is written, ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,’
11 and, ‘ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.’ ”
12 And Jesus answered and said to him, “It is said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.’ ”

Therefore, this third temptation is unique in that Satan uses Scripture to validate his temptation (Ps. 91:11-12). The problem is this: the Scripture Satan uses is indeed true factually, but it is misapplied to gain an end that God never intended. This is a particularly hideous temptation because Satan twists God’s word to serve his own agenda.

Many, many Christian preachers, evangelists and so-called faith healers have fallen to this temptation; that is, misapplying Scripture to serve a selfish purpose and impure motive, often in the name of Jesus. Most heinous are those who teach what is called the “faith and prosperity gospel.” These false teachers use primarily Old Testament Scriptures intended only for the nation of Israel under the conditional covenant made through Moses. They hold massive rallies and crusades which generate millions of dollars in offerings and donations. Because they believe they are doing God’s will, they justify their flamboyant and affluent lifestyles using Scripture itself. As if gods, they promise riches, wealth and luxury for faithful (but deceived) donors. They call upon their followers to be loyal and sacrificial, while at the same time they are ignorant and disobedient to God’s warnings about the entrapment of mammon. They even apply the teachings of Jesus, like the parable of the nobleman (Luke 19:11-27), to justify sending money to their ministry coffers, while at the same time ignoring Jesus’ teachings on greed (e.g., Luke 12:15). These men and women who preach such non-biblical behaviors love only themselves, the notoriety they receive and the wealth they amass. Their message is evil and void of biblical love. Most television evangelists and many church leaders fall into this temptation. It is a biblical approach to the unbiblical saying “the end justifies the means.” What is worse is that they do it in the name of Jesus Christ.

The other point to remember about this temptation is that Satan is saying in essence, “Okay, since you are the Son of God, prove it by jumping off...” Satan tempts Jesus to exalt Himself. This is the third way that we fail to love others; that is, by exalting ourselves at others’ expense. If anyone is to be exalted, it is God who does the exalting. If Jesus is to be exalted, it is God Himself who will exalt His Son. This temptation can manifest itself in a multitude of ways: fame, ambition, pride, self-edification, self-actualization, loving the praise of others, desiring to please others rather than God, narcissistic tendencies of the flesh, and a host of other methods of bringing glory, attention, fame or notoriety to one’s self, often in the name of building one’s self-esteem. Satan knows that Jesus probably wouldn’t fall for that part of the temptation, so he throws into the mix the ultimate deception—using Scripture to justify the outcome.

Therefore, this third temptation is unique in that Satan uses Scripture to validate his temptation (Ps. 91:11-12). The problem is this: the Scripture Satan uses is indeed true factually, but it is misapplied to gain an end that God never intended. This is a particularly hideous temptation because Satan twists God’s word to serve his own agenda.

Many, many Christian preachers, evangelists and so-called faith healers have fallen to this temptation; that is, misapplying Scripture to serve a selfish purpose and impure motive, often in the name of Jesus. Most heinous are those who teach what is called the “faith and prosperity gospel.” These false teachers use primarily Old Testament Scriptures intended only for the nation of Israel under the conditional covenant made through Moses. They hold massive rallies and crusades which generate millions of dollars in offerings and donations. Because they believe they are doing God’s will, they justify their flamboyant and affluent lifestyles using Scripture itself. As if gods, they promise riches, wealth and luxury for faithful (but deceived) donors. They call upon their followers to be loyal and sacrificial, while at the same time they are ignorant and disobedient to God’s warnings about the entrapment of mammon. They even apply the teachings of Jesus, like the parable of the nobleman (Luke 19:11-27), to justify sending money to their ministry coffers, while at the same time ignoring Jesus’ teachings on greed (e.g., Luke 12:15). These men and women who preach such non-biblical behaviors love only themselves, the notoriety they receive and the wealth they amass. Their message is evil and void of biblical love. Most television evangelists and many church leaders fall into this temptation. It is a biblical approach to the unbiblical saying “the end justifies the means.” What is worse is that they do it in the name of Jesus Christ.

The other point to remember about this temptation is that Satan is saying in essence, “Okay, since you are the Son of God, prove it by jumping off...”
13 When the devil had finished every temptation, he left Him until an opportune time.

4:13 In all three temptations, Jesus is tempted to love the world, please the flesh and acquiesce to the devil. He is tempted to love Himself more than to love God or the lost world He came to save. Jesus overcame all temptation because He chose to love lost mankind over personal needs, power, pleasure, personal edification and exaltation. And He based all His responses on Scripture, rightly applied.

14 And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district.

4:14-15 Luke introduces us to yet another ministry of the Spirit, “the power of the Spirit.” As opposed to being “filled with the Spirit” and being “led by the Spirit,” the power of the Spirit is related directly to miracles, healings and exorcisms. Jesus begins demonstrating His power in Galilee, the northernmost portion of Israel. (Judea is located to the south, with its capital of Jerusalem; Samaria, for the most part, is located in the middle; Galilee is in the north). Upper Galilee was also known as “Galilee of the Gentiles” due to the large number of Gentiles that lived alongside the Jews. The area was distinct enough to have its own dialect and accent that could be recognized even in Judea. (A modern-day comparison would be a Southern accent with a New Jersey accent.) Jews in Judea tended to look down on Jews from Galilee as being less than orthodox, particularly because the Galileans could also speak Greek. Nazareth, Jesus’ home, was in lower Galilee, and all of Jesus’ disciples came from that region. Luke, the Gentile, would take particular notice of this fact.

Notice, too, that when Jesus teaches, He is “praised by all.” This praise will continue until He preaches at His own synagogue in Nazareth.

15 And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all.

4:16-30 Why Luke chooses to cite this incident
had been brought up; and as was His
custom, He entered the synagogue on the
Sabbath, and stood up to read.
17 And the book of the prophet Isaiah was
handed to Him. And He opened the book
and found the place where it was written,
18 “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE
GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO
PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND
RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET
FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF
THE LORD.”
20 And He closed the book, gave it back to
the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of
all in the synagogue were fixed on Him.
21 And He began to say to them, “Today
this Scripture has been fulfilled in your
hearing.”
22 And all were speaking well of Him, and
wondering at the gracious words which were
falling from His lips; and they were saying,
“Is this not Joseph’s son?”
23 And He said to them, “No doubt you
will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician,
heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done
at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as
well.’
24 And He said, “Truly I say to you, no
prophet is welcome in his hometown.
25 “But I say to you in truth, there were
many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah,
when the sky was shut up for three years and
six months, when a great famine came over
all the land;
26 and yet Elijah was sent to none of them,
but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon,
to a woman who was a widow.
27 “And there were many lepers in Israel in
the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of
them was cleansed, but only Naaman the
Syrian.”
28 And all the people in the synagogue
were filled with rage as they heard these
things;

instead of His initial preaching and healings in
Capernaum—south of Nazareth and His first major
stop—is because of Jesus’ statements at the end of
the reading. Follow the logic here: Jesus reads a well-
known messianic prophecy from Isaiah; He declares
that He is the fulfillment of that prophecy; He then
declares He will be rejected; finally, He states that
He, the Messiah, will take His blessings to the
Gentiles just as God had Elijah and Elisha take their
blessings to Gentiles. As a result of Jesus’ statement
at the end of the reading, He will find Himself no
longer “praised by all,” but instantly rejected and
threatened with death. This incident foreshadows the
cross as well as the fact that eventually, the gospel
will be taken to the Gentiles.

4:18-19 The “poor” are those who are financially
poor as well as “poor in spirit”; that is, depressed and
hopeless. The “captives” are those who have been
imprisoned by the Romans as well as those being
held captive by the devil to do his will. The “blind”
are those who can’t see physically as well as those
who are spiritually blind. The “oppressed” are those
who are oppressed by the Romans, as well as those
who are oppressed by the religious leaders under the
guise of the “traditions of the elders.” Jesus wants all
these to experience God’s love and learn to share His
love with others. If God’s love ruled the world, few
of these ills would be present. The term “favorable
year of the Lord” could be translated “the receiving
year of the Lord” in the sense that now is the time
God’s love and blessings can be received and
experienced. The blessings Isaiah prophesied over
800 years earlier are now about to be received.

4:21 The phrase “has been fulfilled” means the
blessings have already started in the past (Jesus’
birth), are presently being fulfilled (“Today”), and
will have consequences into the future. The extension
of God’s love is not a singular event.

4:22 Again, “all were speaking well of Him” and
considered His words “gracious” because He was
declaring that Isaiah’s messianic prophecy was being
fulfilled. On the other hand, He had just claimed
Himself to be the Messiah. Therefore, the question
arises about whether He was the son of Joseph or the
Son of God.

4:23 This proverb, probably well known by the
populace of Jesus’ day, is a prelude to what will be
said of Him at the crucifixion: “He saved others; let
Him save Himself…”

4:25 Biblical truth is a double-edged sword for
exposing the hearts of men and their unbiblical and
unloving beliefs. Suddenly His gracious words turn
into a challenge to the Jew’s disbelief that God would
care about Gentiles. Their inability (or unwillingness)
to extend love to Gentiles makes it impossible for
them to interpret correctly Isaiah’s prophecy that the
29 and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.
30 But passing through their midst, He went His way.

31 And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and He was teaching them on the Sabbath;
32 and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.
33 In the synagogue there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice,
34 “Let us alone! What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!”
35 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be quiet and come out of him!” And when the demon had thrown him down in the midst of the people, he came out of him without doing him any harm.
36 And amazement came upon them all, and they began talking with one another saying, “What is this message? For with authority and power He commands the unclean spirits and they come out.”
37 And the report about Him was spreading into every locality in the surrounding district.

Messiah would be a “light to the nations (Gentiles).” Jesus gives two examples, therefore, of Israel’s failure to repent and accept the words of Israel’s hometown prophets Elijah and Elisha—God passes over Israel and extends His love to Gentiles. As a prophet who is about to be rejected in His own hometown, Jesus is prophesying of what is about to take place in the very near future.

4:28-30 People do not like it when their sin and failure to love is exposed with biblical truth. Being confronted and offended turns into anger which turns into rage which eventually turns into murderous intent. How exactly Jesus passes “through their midst” isn’t stated, but one can assume that it is tied into the power of the Spirit.

4:31 He “came down.” Nazareth is in the hills of lower Galilee and Capernaum is on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee; thus down in elevation. It was the major town and fishing port of the region, the home of Peter and Andrew, and the city that Jesus will use as His headquarters. Once again, He is teaching in the synagogue. Capernaum is a part of Galilee, not Judea, and therefore Herod had no jurisdiction over the city.

4:32 One who teaches biblical truth boldly, confidently and knowledgeably, speaks with authority. His teaching will be contrasted with the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees who only taught by rote and according to the letter of the law. They taught the law like it was a hammer over men’s heads, emphasizing the negative and minimizing the positive; that is, maximizing God’s judgment and minimizing God’s love and grace. Jesus’ words, on the other hand, offered hope, and the words of Scripture that brought life encouraged people rather than threatened them. Jesus taught with perfect love, and later, the Apostle John will write in his letters, “Perfect love casts out fear.”

4:33 It is not certain what Luke means by “an unclean spirit,” but most likely it has to do with mental illness resulting in behaviors that are inconsistent with the Jewish laws of what makes a person clean or unclean.

4:33-37 That Jesus spoke with authority is proven in the incident of the man possessed with the unclean spirit. To have authority means just that: Jesus is in control. But there is a difference between authority and power. A policeman expresses his authority when he holds up his hand and blows his whistle in a traffic intersection. He does not have the physical power to stop a moving car, but he does have the authority. Jesus has both the authority and the power. Had the man not been exorcised, Jesus might have said that God gave Him the authority, but how could he prove it if He didn’t also have the power? That is
Then He got up and left the synagogue, and entered Simon’s home. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her.

And standing over her, He rebuked the fever, and it left her; and she immediately got up and waited on them.

While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them.

Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them.

But He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”

why the audience observes that Jesus had both authority and power.

Note, too, that the demons know long before the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah—“the Holy One of God.” Only God is holy. Therefore, if Jesus is holy, He must also be God. Note, too, that demons have rank. “Let us alone” but “I know who you are.” Exorcisms can result in physical harm to the one being exorcised; thus, Jesus’ instruction to the demons to do no harm, a double act of love on Jesus’ part. Also, demons are obliged to heed the words of Jesus, but mankind, sadly enough, has free will to accept or reject the words of the Holy One of Israel.

That Jesus “rebuked” the fever of Peter’s mother-in-law leads one to speculate that the fever was the result of Satan’s attempt to make Jesus pay for having cast out the demons in the man with the unclean spirit. There is no indication of sin here on the mother-in-law’s part. Also, note that the physician Luke describes the fever as a “high fever.” A high fever implies an illness that could have been life-threatening, such as pneumonia or sepsis. Jesus certainly did not heal Peter’s mother-in-law for the purpose of enabling her to prepare a meal for them. Peter’s mother-in-law waited on them as an act of gratitude, and was honored to wait on Jesus. This incident also proves that Peter was married.

The text doesn’t say, “those who were sick came to Him.” Read carefully. The text says, “all those who had any who were sick…brought them to Him.” This is a picture of the church in action. Those who care about the spiritual condition of others bring them to Jesus. Note, too, that Jesus was “laying His hands on each of them.” This demonstrates that Jesus loves the individual as well as the whole world; that this was not a mass healing, such as proclaimed by many TV evangelists.

Once again, the demons know full well who Jesus is. Jesus did not allow them to speak because, as John tells us, “His hour had not yet come.”

Luke will write more than once that Jesus tries to get alone by Himself. The purpose was prayer, and it was often done before anyone else was awake. Prayer will be a major theme throughout Luke’s gospel.

The theme of people searching for Jesus and Him “going away from them” is another theme that alludes to His ascension after the resurrection. In this case, His going away is to “preach the kingdom of God to the other cities.” In the case of the ascension, it is to intercede on behalf of the church and be a mediator between His church and God.
44 So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

(Rom. 8:34).

4:44 The thought here is, “He kept on preaching, and now began preaching in the synagogues in Judea,” the southern one-third of Israel. In doing so, Jesus has moved His message from Galilee into the heart of Judaism.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In the previous chapters, we have learned what it means to be “filled with the Spirit.” Now Luke introduces a new concept: being “led by the Spirit.” How does being “led by the Spirit” differ from being “filled with the Spirit”? How often have you heard someone say, “God led me to (buy this house / attend this school / date this person / fill in the blank)”? Was this person using the phrase biblically, or was this what is called “Christian-ese”?

2. Each of the gospels will list only three temptations. Why do these three temptations stand out? What is it about each of them that is characteristic of human nature? How does each of these three temptations apply to your own life and experience? What temptations are you dealing with today that fit into any of these categories? And, where does sexual temptation fit into these three?

3. How did Jesus overcome each temptation, and what was the compelling motive that resulted in His doing so?

4. When Jesus begins His teaching, healing and exorcism ministry, Luke informs us that He was “in the power of the Spirit.” What does this phrase mean, and how does it differ from the other two ministries of the Holy Spirit that were pointed out previously? Is it possible that any or all Christians can minister “in the power of the Spirit”?

5. Why do you think that a prophet is not welcome in his hometown? How does this apply to your life in terms of ministry with your family or neighbors?

6. The Jews in Nazareth did not like hearing that God’s love and blessings would be extended to the Gentiles. Is there any type of person in your life that you have a hard time believing that God can extend His love to them? How about someone with a different political viewpoint? How about a homosexual? How does the offer of God’s love extend to anyone who is “held captive,” “oppressed,” “poor” and “blind”? In other words, what’s the real problem with people’s lives these days? What will set them free? Are you free?

7. How much is gratitude a part of your prayer life? What can you do to change that?
4:1-13 – The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness:

4:3-4 – The temptation to __________________________

4:5-8 – The temptation to __________________________

4:9-12 – The temptation to __________________________

4:14-44 – The teaching and healing ministry of Jesus begins: it takes place mostly in ____________________

4:16-30 – Jesus’ teaching at the synagogue in __________________________

4:31-37 – Jesus’ teaching and healing at the synagogue in __________________________

4:38-44 – Jesus’ ministry in __________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 4

4:1-13 – The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness:

3-4 – The temptation to place His personal physical needs before God’s spiritual plan

- This is an excellent time to discuss “the 40s” in the Old Testament. Show how Moses was on the mount for 40 days, Elijah fasted 40 days, and the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. The discipler might also want to discuss the wisdom of attempting to fast 40 days. Make sure the disciple understands how Moses and Elijah represent “the Law and the Prophets.”
- This is also an excellent place to bring up the concept of being “led by the Spirit.” Separate for the discipler how Scripture uses the phrase and how Christians tend to use the phrase casually. Ask the question, “How does one know when he or she is being led by the Spirit,” and in what context would this take place? Bring in the concept of being led by the Spirit as opposed to be led by the flesh or by the devil.
- Make sure to mention that part of this temptation was for Jesus to use His position (the Son of God) and power (divine) to meet His personal needs. Have the disciple apply this temptation to the workplace.
- Another point to make is that God did not overcome Jesus’ temptations for Him. It was up to Jesus Himself to overcome temptation. God has done His part by giving us the strength through the Holy Spirit to recognize temptation and overcome it. It is up to each of us to do the overcoming.
- And lastly, help the disciple to see and articulate how Jesus exhibited love by overcoming this temptation.

5-8 – The temptation to achieve power & glory from the world rather than through trusting God

- Help the disciple discern the issues here, especially in regard to the lure of the world concerning things, wealth, prosperity, power and fame.
- Help the disciple discern the temptation to love things more than people. How does this relate to the desire of men to be admired by other men and desired by women? How does this temptation fit into that scenario?
- Make sure the disciple understands who it is that is offering to Jesus the things of the world. Does God offer the “things of the world”?
- Ensure that the disciple understands clearly that there are many false teachers in the world of Christendom who acquiesce to this temptation, and teach their followers to do likewise.
- Show the disciple how Satan is trying to get Jesus to bypass the cross, and how alluring that temptation might be in light of the fact that Jesus knows very clearly what it will be like to suffer on the cross.
- Show the disciple how Jesus’ love for the lost helped Him overcome the temptation to bypass the cross. Make sure the disciple understands that there is no such thing as experiencing the glory of God without the suffering, sacrifice and shame that goes before it.

9-12 – The temptation to misapply Scripture in order to justify an outcome

- Make sure the disciple understands the subtleties of Satan’s inappropriate use of Scripture. Did Satan quote the Scripture accurately and completely? More importantly, did Satan apply the Scripture correctly? (Have the disciple look up Psalm 91:11-12.) Did Satan take the Scripture out of context? The point here is to help the disciple learn discernment when it comes to applying the word of God.
- Show the disciple how subtle this temptation is, especially the part that miracles play in changing a person’s heart. Help the disciple determine how Jesus overcame this temptation by properly applying the word of God.
- Perhaps one of the most important concepts in this temptation is the Scripture Jesus uses to overcome the temptation. What does it mean to “put the Lord your God to the test”? Help the disciple discern the difference between putting God to the test and trusting God for the outcome? Is motive a factor here?
Help the disciple see how love played a role in all the three temptations. How strong was Jesus’ love for a lost world that would enable Him to fast for 40 days and then overcome all the temptations to alleviate His suffering? What’s the lesson for Christians here?

4:14-44 – The teaching and healing ministry of Jesus begins: it takes place mostly in Galilee.

4:16-30 – Jesus’ teaching at the synagogue in Nazareth, His home town.
- The disciple needs to know what a pivotal point this occasion is concerning Jesus’ ministry. It’s always helpful to have the disciple look up for himself the Scripture Jesus is quoting. Introduce the disciple to the concept of “messianic prophecies”; that is, Psalms or prophecies that point directly to the Messiah. Include in that context the incidences with Elijah and Elisha who ministered in the apostate Northern Kingdom of Israel. (Having the disciple find the passages in the OT helps them become familiar with it.)
- Make sure the disciple understands why Jesus’ listeners were so enraged at His teaching, and why “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.”

4:31-37 – Jesus’ teaching and healing at the synagogue in Capernaum, His headquarters.
- The key words in this incident are “authority” and “power.” Help the disciple understand the difference. Help the disciple see why Jesus’ teachings were rejected in Nazareth but accepted in Capernaum.
- Point out to the disciple the words that came out of the possessed man. What is significant about them, and who is speaking them? Why are these words so ironic? Ask what is significant about the name “the Holy One of God”? Ask the disciple why Jesus told the spirit to “Be quiet….”

4:38-44 – Jesus’ ministry in Simon Peter’s home.
- Ask the disciple what we learn about Peter from the experience in Peter’s home?
- Have the disciple read verse 40. How does this verse apply to the church?
- Impress upon the disciple the need go to “a secluded place.” Why did Jesus need to go there and what did He do?
Overview of Luke 5
Chapter 5 contains a list of firsts. Jesus has returned from His first preaching trip to Judea and is once again teaching in Galilee, the land of the Gentiles. We will now witness the call of His first apostles: Peter (and Andrew), James and John, and Levi (Matthew). We will also witness Luke’s first mention of Jesus healing a Jewish leper, something that the rabbis taught could only be done by the Messiah. Following that story will be the healing of a paralytic, only this healing will have a twist. In addition to the healing, the man’s sins will be forgiven, and Jesus will be accused of blasphemy. Lastly, we will see the first real conflict with the Pharisees and scribes. They will accuse Jesus and His disciples of associating with the wrong kind of people; specifically, tax collectors and “sinners.”

What to look for in Luke 5
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for Jesus’ encounter with Simon Peter. There will be more to this encounter than just a great fish story!
3. Look for Simon’s reaction to Jesus’ miracle with the fish, both in words and in action.
4. Identify two healings and note the significance of each.
5. Look for the call of Levi and how he responds to Jesus’ call.
6. Look for Jesus’ first run-in with the Pharisees and the scribes, and what they accuse Jesus of doing.
7. Look for the love theme that runs throughout the entire chapter.

1 Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret;
2 and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets.
3 And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon’s, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.
4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.”
5 Simon answered and said, “Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets.”
6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break;

5:1-3 In the first part of this chapter, Luke emphasizes Jesus’ teaching ministry. Word has spread about His miracles in Capernaum, which is near the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. He has now gathered a crowd anxious to know more about Him and His message. The “lake of Gennesaret” gets its name from a small fertile plain on the northwest corner of the lake. Because the lake is located in Galilee, it is often referred to by its other name, the Sea of Galilee. It is called a “sea” because of its size, about 13 miles long and 8 miles wide. (In the OT, it was called the “Sea of Chinnereth.” The Romans called it “Lake Tiberias.” It is the largest freshwater lake in Israel, and the lowest freshwater lake on earth.)

Jesus, knowing that sound travels better over water, gets into a boat and is taken a little way offshore so that He will be better heard by the large crowd. Jesus was teaching “the word of God,” though Luke does not elaborate on what exactly Jesus is teaching. The lesson here is that Jesus considered the word of God the most important thing He could give His followers.

In verse 2, Luke introduces his readers to “Simon.” Simon is his Hebrew name; Peter is his Greek name. Simon is obviously the owner of a small
7 so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink.

8 But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, “Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!”

9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men.”

11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

Luke 5

fishing business, as he owned two boats. Each boat was about 8 meters long (a little over 25 feet); thus, room for sail, four rowers and fishers, a helmsman, and nets. These boats could hold up to 15 people. Simon Peter, like most of us, was busy trying to make a living and run a small business.

The lesson here is that Jesus used whatever means was available to reach as many people as possible with the word of God.

5:4-7 Jesus instructs Simon to “put out into the deep water.” Deeper water yields bigger fish and more abundant schools of fish. Obviously, Peter and his crew had been out during the night fishing with lanterns. Peter, the experienced fisherman, indicates he’s already been fishing in the deeper water, without much luck. Nevertheless, he yields to Jesus in spite of his doubts. The result is a great haul of fish. (The lesson here is that without Jesus, our efforts can prove for naught, but with Jesus, our efforts eventually bear fruit.) Note, too, that Peter “signaled to their partners.” Peter and his partners, James and John, will become partners in a new and greater venture of helping others experience God’s love. That “the nets began to break” is a picture that gathering in the lost will result in stretching the resources of the church to the limit.

5:8 It is quite likely that Simon had already heard of this man Jesus and, perhaps, had even heard Him teaching. He may even had been present when Jesus taught in the synagogue in Capernaum. Prior to the great catch of fish, however, Simon probably had the perspective, “Jesus is a fine teacher, but I don’t have time to get involved.” It is the response of many who are locked into their profession. However, when Jesus’ ministry actually affected him, he had a change of heart. And, his reaction was not just to say, “Thank you, Jesus. That was very nice of You.” Instead, Simon, aware of his spiritual imperfections, “fell down at Jesus’ feet” (an act of worship), and acknowledged that he was unworthy to have received His blessings. Undoubtedly, some of Simon’s remorse may have been his initial doubting of Jesus. Note, too, that Simon did not say, “I must be a really bad fisherman,” or, “That was terrific! Can I learn how to do that?” The first thing Simon did was to acknowledge his sin. All who come to Christ, in order to receive the full benefit of His blessings, must first acknowledge personal sin. Unfortunately, many Christians today pass over the issue of personal sin and skip ahead to the blessings and benefits. By doing so, they miss the number one reason Jesus came into the world, and fail to grasp the beauty and wonder of His grace.

5:9-11 Jesus’ response to Simon was like that of the angels who appeared to Zacharias, Mary and the shepherds—“Do not fear.” Jesus did not come into
12 While He was in one of the cities, behold, there was a man covered with leprosy; and when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and implored Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.”

13 And He stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately the leprosy left him.

14 And He ordered him to tell no one, “But go and show yourself to the priest and make an offering for your cleansing, just as Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

15 But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their sicknesses.

16 But Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.

5:12 The next encounter Luke records is one of the most compassionate stories in the gospels. Leprosy is a hideous, contagious skin disease that is spread by physical contact with the person infected. It affects nerve endings in the skin and can result in terrible deformities and loss of limbs. There was no medical cure for it in Jesus’ day; therefore, lepers were considered “unclean” and colonized into camps away from uninfected people. The Jews knew well about Miriam’s sin against Moses, and therefore leprosy was considered the result of sin and a curse from God. Lepers were ostracized from society, unable to enter temple grounds, and left to fend for themselves, most ending up as scavengers for food and clothing. They were the most unloved people in Israel. This man is “covered” with leprosy. Whether his leprosy was the result of personal sin or not, leprosy is the universal biblical picture of sin. So there are two levels of meaning here: one is the physical level that prevents the man from becoming a functioning and accepted part of society, the other is the spiritual level that prevents the man from having a personal relationship with God. Being a leper meant that you were loved by neither man nor God. Obviously, when someone “covered with leprosy” approaches, the crowd scatters and he has immediate access to Jesus. This is a beautiful picture that the greater the sin the greater the grace. The leper prostrates himself before Jesus, a sign of complete submission, and states, “Lord, if You are willing, you can make me clean.” Notice that he does not say, “You can heal me.” Obviously, the man’s main concern is that he is unclean from a spiritual perspective. Jesus, out of his
love for the man, recognizes both his spiritual and his physical needs.

5:13 Notice that Jesus “touched him.” He did not have to touch the man to heal him—He touched him to show that He loved him. It is an ultimate act of love. According to the law, touching the man would make Jesus Himself unclean. Jesus has no fear of being infected and knows that more than anything, this man needed to know that someone loved him enough to touch him. Touching the unclean is one of the most loving things any person can do. Therefore, God was visibly and physically extending His love to this poor man. The leprosy affecting him left immediately; this could not be faked and all who witnessed it were amazed.

Rabbinical teaching of the day stated there were certain types of miracles that only the Messiah could do; that is, the performance of these miracles would help the Jews identify the Messiah. These were known as Messianic miracles, and are based primarily on Isaiah’s prophecies. One of those miracles was healing a Jewish leper, something that had never been done in Israel. (Miriam’s healing was before the law of Moses was completed, and Naaman’s healing was the healing of a Gentile leper.) This is the first of the Messianic miracles that Luke records.

(The exact number of miracles required of the Messiah varies with the interpreter. There are four miracles that are usually agreed on, miracles that could be performed only by the Messiah: 1) the Messiah could heal a Jewish leper; 2) the Messiah could heal a mute demon; 3) the Messiah could heal a man born blind, and; 4) the Messiah could raise someone who had been dead four days. Even though Jesus fulfilled all of these miracles, most Pharisees and scribes failed to accept Jesus as the Messiah, a shocking violation of their own teachings.)

5:14 Mosaic law dictated that one had to prove his leprosy had left him by being inspected by the priests. The apparent contradiction here is that not all skin diseases were leprosy, and therefore, some skin diseases that looked like leprosy would in fact occasionally turn out to be something else. Therefore, some skin diseases were healed, but leprosy was never healed; that is, true leper could never be healed. The offering was a thank offering to God for the cleansing. It would also later serve as proof that a true leper had been healed—the priests had received the offering.

5:15 Teaching and healing—this summed up Jesus’ earthly ministry.

5:16 This is the second time Luke mentions that Jesus had to leave everyone in order to spend time with God. And where did He go to do this? “In the wilderness,” the very place where He was tempted.
17 One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing.

18 And some men were carrying on a bed a man who was paralyzed; and they were trying to bring him in and to set him down in front of Him.

19 But not finding any way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down through the tiles with his stretcher, into the middle of the crowd, in front of Jesus.

20 Seeing their faith, He said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.”

21 The scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, “Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?”

22 But Jesus, aware of their reasonings, answered and said to them, “Why are you reasoning in your hearts?

23 “Which is easier, to say, ‘Your sins have been forgiven you,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?

24 “But, so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,”—He said to the paralytic—“I say to you, get up, and pick up your stretcher and go home.”

25 Immediately he got up before them, and picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God.

26 They were all struck with astonishment, and where demons were thought to dwell. But the point here is that in order for Jesus to have an effective prayer life, He had to get away from the crowd and the business of the day.

5:17 This verse opens in response to Luke’s observation in verse 15: “But the news about Him was spreading.” The Pharisees and teachers of the law obviously came to see what all the commotion was about, but not necessarily to learn from Jesus. Notice that in every verse where Luke writes of teaching and healing, the teaching always comes first. Note, too, that this is Luke’s first mention of the Pharisees—the heavyweights of the law of Moses are now a part of the picture.

5:18-26 This section will contain another proof that Jesus is the long awaited-for Messiah.

Jewish homes were often rectangular with an open courtyard in the middle. A protruding overhang or thatched roof helped shade the courtyard and keep out the rain. These men dug through the roof and lowered the man using ropes, a risky maneuver in itself. In was ingenious, however, and some bold and creative thinking went into finding a way to lower the man directly in front of Jesus. Notice that the text says, “Seeing their faith...” The healing that follows is not dependent upon the paralytic’s faith, but the faith of those who loved the man enough to take him to Jesus. Jesus then makes a remarkable statement: “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees are correct in their assertion that only God can forgive sins, but can’t bring themselves to consider that Jesus may indeed be God in the flesh. Jesus then asks a rhetorical question; that is, a question that has an obvious answer. “Which is easier to say...?” The point is clear. It is a lot easier to say “Your sins are forgiven” because how would anyone know if they are forgiven or not? But to say, “Get up and walk” is a lot harder because an observer will instantly know if healing has taken place, and if the healer is the real deal. If the man doesn’t get up and walk, then Jesus is a fake. If he does get up and walk, then Jesus is the real deal and therefore His other words about forgiveness must also be true. Now, this does not mean that the man’s paralysis was a result of sin. It simply means that, as a sinner like all men, Jesus is able to forgive sins. The event is loaded with irony.

This healing embodies many spiritual lessons. First, it is a picture that sin results in spiritual paralysis. Man cannot help himself and free himself from sin. Second, it is a picture of the resurrection. He who is paralyzed by sin is lowered down, and then raised up by the One who is able to forgive sins. Third, it is a picture of the church. Those who cared enough for the one paralyzed by sin brought him to Jesus. Fourth, those whose sins have been forgiven...
27 After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.”
28 And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

29 And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them.

30 The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?”

Bring glory to God.

5:27-28 Tax collectors, called “publicans” in the KJV, were Jews employed by the Romans to exact taxes on the Jews. By keeping taxes high, the Romans could keep the oppressed people poor and therefore incapable of equipping an opposition army. Those Jews who collected the taxes were considered traitors and conspirators, and therefore hated by other Jews. The Pharisees labeled them “sinners” in that they were unclean by association with Gentiles. They were considered on the same level as prostitutes and pimps. Note, therefore, the similarities between the outcast Levi and the outcast leper. Additionally, tax collectors often defrauded the people by collecting more than what was required, therefore enriching themselves at the expense of those who were already poor. The Romans, of course, looked the other way.

Only God could see what was good in Levi, whose Greek name is Matthew. Regardless, when Jesus calls Levi to “Follow Me,” Levi immediately leaves his position and begins following Jesus. One wonders what Peter, James and John thought about Jesus calling a tax collector to become one of His disciples.

The lesson here is quite wonderful. Love opens the door for anyone to follow Jesus. The depth of people’s goodness or badness is measured only in their response to Jesus. Those who are truly bad and do really bad things will most likely not follow Jesus (e.g., an evil dictator). Those who are bad and try to cover it up by appearing to do good things will also not follow Jesus (e.g., the Pharisees, or any religious hypocrite). Obviously, those who are good and do good works in love will most likely respond positively to Jesus and follow Him (e.g., Peter). And, as in Levi’s case, those who are essentially good but doing bad things may end up following Jesus because they realize they have a spiritual need. The point here is that no one should automatically be counted out from following Jesus, as many prison ministries attest.

Finally, this is the second “Follow Me” call. So far, everyone called has followed. Unfortunately, Luke will record that not everyone called to follow will indeed heed the call.

5:29-32 Levi the tax collector is using his personal—but probably illegally gained—resources to hold a banquet for Jesus. Obviously, Levi’s only other friends are also tax collectors and their associates, most of whom were of dubious reputation. There may have women present, and most of them would probably be considered “loose women.” Jesus and His disciples are invited to attend the reception. It is a strange mix, to say the least. One cannot
31 And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick.
32 “I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

33 And they said to Him, “The disciples of John often fast and offer prayers, the disciples of the Pharisees also do the same, but Yours eat and drink.”
34 And Jesus said to them, “You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you?
35 “But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.”
36 And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the old becomes worse. And he pulls out the new thread and makes a hole in the old.”

5:33-35 The conflict that arose at Levi’s reception continues into the next paragraph. This kind of conflict is ageless and propels itself into the church today. It is a conflict of religious activity versus spiritual freedom. Paul will write about this conflict in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 14. Anywhere there is religious law, customs or mores, this conflict will raise its ugly head. There are those who judge a person’s spiritual maturity based on whether or not they adhere to a certain set of rules, follow an unwritten code of behaviors, participate in rituals, or advocate spoken or unspoken social standards, most of which are arbitrary. And then there are those whose spiritual walk and maturity is not based on keeping a set of rules, but on something much harder—living by a greater principle to guide every
piece from the new will not match the old.

37 “And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined.

38 “But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins.

39 “And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’ ”

situation individually. For the law-keeper, everything is black and white. There is no gray area, for gray areas are subject to interpretation, and only those in power can make the proper interpretation. For the freedom-seeker, however, every situation is gray; that is, the action is contingent on the context. In this case, Jesus is informing the Pharisees that one’s behavior is based—not upon a rabbinical standard that never changes—but on a greater principle that takes a different form in different situations. That Jesus’ disciples “eat and drink” fits the context of Jesus’ earthly ministry. With Jesus physically present, it is as if there is a wedding reception in progress. But there will come a time when prayers and fasting are more appropriate, that time being His death and ascension.

Obviously, Jesus is not advocating lawlessness. He is inferring that there is a principle greater than the spiritual disciplines of fasting and praying. That principle is like a river running through this entire gospel—it is the river of love. God cares for the lost, and He cares so much that “…He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

5:36-38 To illustrate Jesus’ point, He now alludes to that overriding principle of love, without actually saying what it is. This is the first of Jesus’ parables in the Gospel of Luke, and they are appropriate ones indeed. A parable is a story that teaches a spiritual lesson. It could be true but isn’t necessarily true. It can be understood by those who choose to believe, but is considered nonsense to those who don’t want to believe or don’t care. The key words in these parables are “new” and “old.”

There are actually three parables here, but they all illustrate the same common-sense truth. The first parable involves clothing. If you patch old material with new, the new will shrink when it is washed, and therefore tear. The same principle is true of the second parable involving wine skins. Unfermented grape juice was always put in fresh new wine skins so that as the juice fermented, the skin would expand. If the wine-dresser tried to ferment grape juice in an old wine skin that had already expanded, then it would burst because it had already been stretched. The third parable had to do with the wine drinker himself. Aged wine is better than wine that has not aged.

The point of all three parables is the same: you cannot patch something old with something new. It just doesn’t work. The spiritual lesson, of course, is pointing to the new covenant. What Jesus is bringing to the world is new, and it cannot be fit into something that is old. Applied to the complaint about the disciples eating and drinking, Jesus is alluding to the new principle coming that will completely
eliminate the need for the Old Testament law. This will not only shake the foundations of Judaism to the core in Jesus’ earthly ministry, but it will become a huge issue in the ministry of the apostle Paul.

5:39 This last statement (the third parable) is actually a condemnation of the Pharisees. It seems at odds with the two other parables because, normally, aged wine is better than new. But Jesus is not talking about aged wine; He is talking about wine that has soured and turned to vinegar by oxidation. Jesus is actually saying to the Pharisees that they are so used to drinking the vinegar of the law that they will probably never change to the new, fresh wine. Why? Because in their eyes “the law is good enough.”
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, Jesus calls for two individuals to follow Him—Peter and Levi. Describe the response of each. Notice that Peter had an emotional response and Levi had a social response. But both had one thing in common. What was it? When Jesus called you to follow Him, how did you respond? Now, the greater principle here is that Jesus bids us to come and follow Him every day. In what specific ways do you respond to His call?

2. What lesson did you learn about Jesus’ miracle in catching the fish? How do you plan to apply that lesson to your life? Is there something you need to do to increase the catch? What events in this chapter represent pictures of the church?

3. What does the leper symbolize? Are there people in your world who are outcasts of society? Would you be willing to “touch” them? Remember that there are many ways to “touch”: prayer, financial support directly, or financial support of those who do the actual physical touching.

4. There is a powerful love theme coursing throughout this chapter. Can you find all the instances where Jesus’ love manifests itself? Determine how God’s love is the central motivating factor behind Jesus’ earthly ministry. How will this message affect your relationships today?

5. How does sin paralyze one’s spiritual life? Can sin also paralyze emotional life? Social life? Relationships? Is there any sinful act in your past that is paralyzing some part of your life? Can you identify it? If so, are you willing to repent of it and start walking anew?

6. What part of the story about the paralyzed man represents the church? How does that principle affect your life?

7. Are you a law-keeper or a freedom-seeker? Or do you try to walk a thin line between both? If you do not have a set of rules and laws to guide your moral and ethical behavior, what principle do you use? Have you been able to discern that principle thus far in the Gospel of Luke?
The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 5

5:1-3 – There is no mention of miracles or healings here—just Jesus teaching _______________________________

5:4-11 – This is the first mention of the making of ___________________________ (note the relationship with 1-3)
   Note vs. 5 & 8: in verse 5, Simon calls Jesus “Master”; in v. 8, he calls Him “ ____________________________ ”
   Most important thing Simon says in verse 5: “ ____________________________________________________ ”
   Most important thing Simon does in verse 11: he “ ____________________________________________ ”

5:12-16 – The healing of the leper is a picture of cleansing from ________________________________

5:17-26 – The healing of the paralytic is a picture that Jesus frees us from sin, because sin ________________

5:27-32 – The calling of Levi (Matthew) and his reception—Jesus is calling ______________________________

5:33-39 – The illustration of the wine skins is a picture of the __________________________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 5

5:1-3 – There is no mention of miracles or healings here—just Jesus teaching the word of God

- The “Lake of Gennesaret” is also called the Sea of Galilee, as detailed in the commentary.
- An interesting question to ask is “What exactly was Jesus teaching?” Of course, the answer is “the word of God.” But what does that mean? Was He teaching the Old Testament Law and/or Prophets? Most likely He was teaching parables about the kingdom of God, or the substance of what He taught in the sermon on the mount. If it were the latter (and probably was), then Luke is saying that Jesus’ teachings are equivalent in authority to the Old Testament.
- Ask the disciple, “What is the most obvious application here?” It should be clear: the most important thing a pastor or teacher can do for God’s people is to give them “the word of God.”

5:4-11 – This is the first mention of the making of disciples (note the relationship with 1-3)

- Remember, the disciples has only read the text, not the commentary. So ask the disciple why Jesus chose to teach from a boat? How does that affect sound when no loud speaker is available?
- As a great learning tool, have the disciple recall the story after reading it aloud. See how much he or she remembers, and ask, “What stands out in your mind after reading the story?”

Note vs. 5 & 8: in verse 5, Simon calls Jesus “Master”; in v. 8, he calls Him “Lord”

- What is the difference between “Master” and “Lord”? The Greek word for “Master” means “chief, commander,” or “the one in charge.” The Greek word for “Lord” is “kurios” which, in this context, refers to God. Peter is actually saying that Jesus must actually be God in the flesh.

Most important thing Simon says in verse 5: “I will do as You say.”

- Help the disciple see that Peter is skeptical that Jesus, an itinerate preacher, has the knowledge and experience to know where to fish or how to catch them. Therefore, Peter is willing to do as Jesus says in spite of his skepticism.
- Help the disciple make an application. One application is that we trust God in every situation, even though we don’t know how He could possibly make things work out. We simply say to God, “I will do as You say,” even though we may not have an answer or the knowledge of what to do.

Most important thing Simon does in verse 11: he “left everything and followed Him”

- First, it might be important for the discipler to point out Peter’s response in verse 8 when, after doing as Jesus says, he catches a great haul of fish. He kneeled before Jesus and acknowledged that he was a “sinner.” Make sure that the disciple understands that unless a person sees himself as a sinner before God, he can never appreciate what Jesus has to offer; that is, the forgiveness of sins.
- The second point is also important—Peter’s proactive response. Realizing who Jesus was, “he left everything and followed Him.” It will be important for the discipler to attempt to make a personal application here. The main application is this: there should be a profound course correction in life. To leave “everything” may mean leaving a bad habit, an ungodly relationship, a value system that is more of the world than the kingdom of God, or even leaving a lifestyle that is inconsistent with God’s plan. In some cases, men and women have left secular employment to become missionaries, ministers or Christian workers. Ask the disciple what he or she has left, or plans to leave.

5:12-16 – The healing of the leper is a picture of cleansing from sin and restoration of righteousness

- The discipler will need to explain the significance of leprosy in Israel. Almost all skin diseases were classified as “leprosy,” whether it was true leprosy or not. (True leprosy is caused by an organism called bacterium lepromatosis. Psoriasis, dermatomyositis, and eczema are examples of other skin diseases that would have been classified as leprosy.) Because leprosy is a chronic condition that never heals spontaneously and always gets worse, a leper could never be declared “clean.” By being declared clean by
the priest, the leper could return to his family, associate with society, become employed, and reenter the temple grounds for worship.

- As stated in the commentary, leprosy is a picture of sin. It is incurable and completely deforming, and one cannot make oneself “clean” (that is, righteous). Only the Messiah, Jesus, can take away the sin (unclean) and make one righteous (clean) and restored to a right relationship with God.

5:17-26 – The healing of the paralytic is a picture that Jesus frees us from sin, because sin paralyzes us

- The disciple may have difficulty understanding the subtleties of Jesus’ initial response, “Friend, your sins are forgiven you.” The discipler may have to explain the phrase, “Which is easier to say….” Once the disciple understands Jesus’ clever question, he should then be introduced to the four lessons given at the end of the section in the commentary. The key lesson is this: sin paralyzes spiritually, physically, emotionally and relationally, but when our sins are forgiven, we are given new life.

- For the more advanced disciple, the discipler may want to teach through Romans 6:1-11.

5:27-32 – The calling of Levi (Matthew) and his reception—Jesus is calling sinners, not the “righteous”

- The discipler may need to explain the role of tax collectors and why they were so hated by other Jews, especially in regard to collecting more than the tax money itself. (This will prepare the disciple for understanding Jesus’ encounter with a tax collector named Zaccheus in chapter 19.) He or she may also need to explain why Jesus’ association with tax collectors and their kind was so unsettling to the Pharisees and religious elitists.

- Help the disciple see why Jesus’ statement that He came to call “sinners to repentance” and not the “righteous” is so ironic. The point here is that those who consider themselves righteous and in no need of repentance will never be able to see a need to follow Jesus. It is those who are willing to take a good look at themselves spiritually and recognize their need for forgiveness that will realize their need for salvation through the One who can forgive sins.

5:33-39 – The illustration of the wine skins is a picture of the new covenant

- The discipler may need to explain the difference between the old covenant, based on the law of Moses, and the new covenant that will be instituted by Jesus the night before His crucifixion (the Last Supper). The sign of the old covenant is the Sabbath; the sign of the new is the Lord’s Supper (Communion, Mass). The old covenant was conditional based on keeping the law; the new covenant is unconditional offered by grace through faith. The old covenant was fulfilled at the cross; the new covenant began with the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The old covenant is summed up in the Ten Commandments and the statement, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (Deut. 6:5). The new covenant is summed up in the statement, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). The old covenant is characterized by obedience (Deut. 30:2); the new covenant is characterized by love (Rom. 13:10).

- The discipler may need to explain the meaning of the three parables given at the end of the chapter, especially the irony hidden in the last.
Overview of Luke 6
Chapter 6 contains three major portions, each with its own significance and relevance. The first portion presents additional conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees, but this time the subject focuses on laws about the Sabbath. In the eyes of the Pharisees, Jesus routinely violates Sabbath law. One of those conflicts about the Sabbath involves the healing of a man with a withered hand. This conflict will reveal the true evil hearts of the scribes and Pharisees. The second portion of the chapter describes Jesus’ calling “the twelve” as apostles. The last portion of the chapter is Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Mount, which the author is calling the Sermon on the Plain. It is important to understand the relationship between Luke’s record of Jesus’ sermon, and the teaching of John the Baptist.

What to look for in Luke 6
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees and determine the intent of the hearts of the Pharisees.
3. Throughout the chapter, underline each instance of the word “good.”
4. Discern the hearts of the Pharisees when Jesus heals the man with the withered hand.
5. Look for the naming of the twelve apostles, and what activity Jesus was engaged in before He appointed them.
6. Look for the key elements of the Sermon on the Plain, and determine what are the central themes.
7. Look for Jesus’ warning concerning the words He taught during the Sermon on the Plain.

1 Now it happened that He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain.

2 But some of the Pharisees said, “Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?”

3 And Jesus answering them said, “Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him,

4 how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?”

5 And He was saying to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

6:1-5 Luke continues his theme of conflict with the Pharisees, only this time it is regarding the Sabbath. Luke’s purpose in recording this incident is to demonstrate that the Pharisees were not knowledgeable about God’s law, the Torah, the law of Moses. This first incident involves plucking and eating corn. According to the law, plucking and eating corn as the disciples were doing was permissible under the law (Deut. 23:25). It was using a tool to cut the grain or harvesting for the purpose of selling the grain that was considered work on the Sabbath, and therefore not permissible. Jesus asks the Pharisees, “Have you not even read...?” implying they had spent more time memorizing the 2000 manmade laws about the Sabbath than studying what God’s word actually says. Essentially, they were holding their own laws above the Law of the Lord. Therefore Jesus directs the Pharisees to the incident when David and his men ate the showbread; that is, the sanctified bread of the Tabernacle that only the priests were to eat. David did what was unlawful, but the Pharisees didn’t seem to have a problem with that. The irony in this story is that the Pharisees accuse Jesus of violating the law—which He didn’t—while ignoring David’s infraction eating the
On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered.

The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse Him.

But He knew what they were thinking, and He said to the man with the withered hand, “Get up and come forward!” And he got up and came forward.

And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?”

After looking around at them all, He said to him, “Stretch out your hand!” And he did so; and his hand was restored.

But they themselves were filled with showbread, which he did. This clearly demonstrates that the Pharisees had an agenda against Jesus which defied logic, reason, biblical facts and truth.

This is the second time in Luke that Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of Man,” the first being when He forgave the sins of the paralytic. “Son of Man” is a title used once in Psalms, once in Daniel and eighty times in Ezekiel. Interesting enough, it is used 82 times in the gospels. The title was not necessarily messianic, but did come to have the meaning of God’s acceptable representative of mankind. There is also an eschatological significance in that the Son of Man is the one to whom God’s plan and will for mankind has been revealed.

“The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath” is another way of saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Lost in the conflict over Sabbath law is a love issue. God created the Sabbath out of love for mankind. Of all the Ten Commandments, the fourth commandment regarding Sabbath rest is the only one that encourages man to act in love toward himself; that is, to take care of himself. The Sabbath is to be a time of rest, refreshing and relaxation, not fear and anxiety over potentially breaking some law. Jesus Himself is showing love for His disciples by letting them take time to eat. There is an underlying theme of caring here. Unfortunately, it is a theme the Pharisees cannot grasp, for they are more concerned about maintaining power over people’s lives than doing what is best for God’s people. Although the Pharisees make this incident an issue of law, the real issue is one of love.

In this next encounter with the Pharisees, Luke will once again highlight the incompetence of the Pharisees, how far they had strayed from God’s word, and their total inability to understand the intent of God’s word. The key word in this incident is “good.” The second conflict over the Sabbath is the most disturbing of all, for it clearly demonstrates that the Pharisees had so idolized their own laws that they had lost the primary purpose of God’s law—to do good. The man in subject has a withered right hand. In Middle Eastern culture, each hand has its purpose. The right hand is considered the “clean” hand; that is, it is used to shake hands, eat and transfer something to another. The left hand is considered unclean and is used for personal hygiene, including wiping oneself. The fact that this man’s right hand was unusable meant that he could only use his left, or unclean hand, for everything. That would essentially make the man unclean, and that is why Luke includes the fact that it was the man’s right hand that was withered. Verse 7 demonstrates that the relationship between Jesus and the Pharisees has become hostile; they are
rage, and discussed together what they might do to Jesus. 

“watching...to accuse Him.” It is a very sad scene that the spiritual leaders of the community are more interested in Jesus keeping their laws than in healing someone. Jesus is not intimidated by the religious leaders and commands the man to “come forward.” Before the healing, Jesus asks what should have been an unqualified rhetorical question: “Is it lawful to do good...on the Sabbath?” Without answering—for the answer was obvious—Jesus commences to heal the man’s hand.

The reaction of the Pharisees and scribes is beyond comprehension. They were “filled with rage.” Why? Because Jesus violated one of the 2,000 rules the rabbis had concocted concerning the Sabbath. Clearly, they had supplanted God’s word for their own. Let’s see how it came to this.

In the giving of the Ten Commandments, the fourth commandment prohibited “work” on the Sabbath. However, there are very few passages in the Torah (the Law) that define what actually comprises work. Therefore, over the years, an oral tradition developed called the Midrash, meaning “interpretation.” The Midrash first started as oral traditions for the purpose of “filling in the gaps”; that is, interpretation of that which was found in scripture, and supplying information on things not found in scripture. Therefore, the rabbis concluded, someone needs to interpret what God means by “work” and subsequently began to elaborate on what comprised “work.” These laws began to be codified during the period between Ezra and Jesus, to the extent that by the time of Jesus, there were approximately 2,000 laws defining what a Jew could or could not do on the Sabbath. Jesus, in confronting the Pharisees about this, warns, “You weigh men down with burdens hard to bear....”

One of these Sabbath laws specified that non-emergency healing was not allowed on the Sabbath because it comprised “work.” Jesus challenges the Pharisees about this law, which is not found in the Old Testament, but in the rabbinical laws which are not from God, but from man. Therefore, the Pharisees are more concerned about Jesus keeping their rabbinical laws than they are concerned about the man himself. And herein lies the tragedy of the situation. They love the law more than they love the man.

What should have been the reaction of the Pharisees and scribes? They should have rejoiced for the man! They should have praised God for caring enough about the man to allow him to become “clean” and a normal part of society. They should have crowded around him, congratulated him, hugged him and been glad for him. And they should have fallen at the feet of Jesus and confessed their unbelief, as Peter did.
It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.

And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles:

Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew;

and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot;

Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

But instead they were “filled with rage,” huddled together and discussed how they might undo Jesus. It is a terrible, tragic and disheartening scene, and one of the most pathetic scenes in the gospels. This is the hideous outcome of valuing law over love. The Pharisees had substituted their own law for God’s, and in so doing, lost the whole point of the law of the Lord which is to love and care for one another.

6:12-16 The spiritual leaders of the Jews have disqualified themselves, as demonstrated in the two incidents above concerning the Sabbath. Not only do they not know God’s word, but they have substituted God’s word with their own—the “tradition of the elders,” as it will be called. Therefore, God must begin anew. New spiritual leadership is going to be established and this will come in the form of the apostles. This new leadership will proclaim the true law, which James will call “the royal law”; that is, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (James 2:8). Once again, Jesus departs from the crowd and spends the night on a mountain in prayer. Jesus demonstrates His complete dependence on the Father, for the two are One. The result of this night in prayer is the appointing of twelve of the disciples (for there were many) who would also take on the role of “apostles.” An apostle literally means “one who is sent out,” or “messenger.” They will also be referred to as “the twelve,” as other apostles will be identified later in the Early Church. These twelve men have symbolic significance to the twelve tribes of Israel, although there is no indication that each man was from a different tribe. When the church first begins, as described in the Book of Acts, false apostles will arise. Therefore, true apostles needed to be identified. There were three qualifications for becoming a true apostle. First, he had to have been with Jesus from the very beginning. (Paul was the only known exception to this.) Second, he had to be a witness of the resurrection; that is, he had to have seen Jesus after the resurrection. And third, he had to be able to perform the “signs and wonders of a true apostle.”

Today, there are no more apostles, no matter what a person, preacher, evangelist or healer chooses to call himself (or herself). Anyone today who calls himself an apostle is a false apostle.

There are four lists of the apostles in the New Testament, three in each of the synoptic gospels and once in Acts. Peter is always the first one named. Note that there are two Simons (though Simon Peter is always identified as Peter or Simon Peter), two James, and two men named Judas. Judas Iscariot is always identified as the “traitor.”

To help the student not be confused with who is whom, neither James the brother of John nor James the son of Alphaeus are the author of the Epistle of
Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.

who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.

And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all.

And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.

Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of James. That James was not one of the twelve but was a half-brother of Jesus and became the leader of the church in Jerusalem. John, the apostle James’ brother, is the author of the Gospel of John, the letters of John, and the Book of Revelation. Matthew, or Levi, is the author of the Gospel of Matthew. Peter himself wrote two letters in the New Testament.

Few details are known about the twelve after the resurrection, and especially after the end of Acts, with the exception of the James the brother John who was executed by Herod Antipas. Most of what is known about each of the twelve is gleaned from the writings of the early church fathers; that is, theologians who anchored the church after the twelve had passed away. Tradition states that all of the twelve were martyred except for John, who for a while was exiled on Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation and, after his release, eventually died of natural causes.

Luke is about to share with us the basic precepts of Jesus’ teaching. This teaching is the essence of “the gospel” before the resurrection, gospel meaning “good news.” Notice that those who have come to hear Him and be healed are coming from as far away as “Tyre and Sidon.” They are probably Jews living in these Gentile towns, but it is possible there were Gentiles in the crowd. Sidon is about 50 miles northwest of Capernaum.

Note that Jesus stood “on a level place” whereas in Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was on the side of a mountain or hillside. Yet the text of the sermons are almost identical. This means that Jesus probably preached essentially the same message everywhere He went, perhaps hundreds of times. That is why the authors of the gospels can record Jesus’ words so accurately. The primary means of memorizing in that day was audible (rather than visually in writing) and no doubt they had every teaching of Jesus thoroughly memorized. Therefore we can safely say that the words the gospel writers have preserved for us are the actual words of Jesus, word for word.

Oh! The volume of commentary that could be written on this section! The writer will do his best to summarize the main points.

Jesus now explains what it means to be “good,” something the Pharisees were incapable of comprehending or expressing. Those who are good love others and care about them in a manner that is consistent with God’s word. Those who are evil do not.

The poor are blessed because they know they have a need and are willing to learn about the kingdom of God. Those who are self-sufficient don’t
Luke 6

23 “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets.

24 “But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

25 “Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

26 “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way.

need God. God loves those who are legitimately poor.

When Jesus uses the term “blessed,” He is actually invoking a blessing; that is, He is blessing the poor. He is speaking for God because He is God, and He is promising better things to come. Better things will come because, by following Him and obeying Him, they will receive the benefits of the kingdom of God. This will eventually result in joy, peace, happiness and contentment. The rich will not be interested because they are being “blessed” (made happy and content) by the things of the world. Therefore, they do not perceive that they need anything more. The poor, on the other hand, know what it is to live in need, and therefore are open to good things promised.

6:21 God loves those who are oppressed and all the more those who weep out of grief from great loss. All their losses, their sufferings, their afflictions, and their deprivations will be replaced by the fullness of all things lacking. Those who weep will learn to laugh because all that is lost will seem trivial to all that is gained. As the martyred missionary Jim Elliot wrote, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” The kingdom of God will turn their hunger into satiation and their grief into joy.

6:22-23 Christians who are persecuted, ostracized, rejected, mocked, scorned, belittled and even sued for taking a moral stand will receive a great reward for their faithfulness and their unwillingness to yield to the intimidation of those who do not know God. Those who persecute do not love Christians because they do not love God, and they do not love God because they are blinded to the fact that God loves them and still has a plan for their life. They either cannot see it or their refuse to see it. Those who identify with Jesus Christ will be scorned and rejected by the same ignorance and hatred with which Christ was scorned and rejected. God loves those who, in spite of all threats, maintain their loyalty to God and their faith in Jesus. Persecuted Christians will receive a greater reward in heaven, for they have paid a greater price for their faith. The great prophets also suffered; therefore, Christians who suffer can take refuge in the truth that they are not alone.

6:24 The rich are rich only because God has allowed them to be rich. Self-made men are self-made men only because gave them the wherewithal to become self-made men. Therefore, they should take no credit for their own success, and give all the glory to God.

The rich are also rich because they keep what they gain. They (we) fail to share with those who are legitimately poor. Their (our) richness is a failure to love others as God loves others. The teaching of Scripture is clear—keep only what you need, and
27 “But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.
29 Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away
your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either.
30 Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.
31 Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.
32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love
those who love them.
33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.
34 If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to
receive back the same amount.
35 But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and
give the rest to those who have legitimate needs.

The those who hoard their riches, there is an eternal price to pay. “Woe” is a negative interjection
referring to horror, denunciation, and judgment. The sentence could be paraphrased, “Judgment is coming
upon you who are rich…. Your world may be luxurious and pleasurable now, but in eternity, it will
be the very opposite.” (cf. Luke 16:19-31)
6:25 Merriment must never be at the expense of those who suffer. There is nothing wrong with eating
or laughing, but it is a failure of love if the legitimate needs of others are being ignored.

The reference to “those who laugh now” is not contradictory to what Jesus has said in verse 21. The context is the same for those who are rich and
dwelling in luxury and comfort at the expense of others. Once again, it is a failure to love others; the
love of oneself has overruled the command to “love one another.”
6:26 Those who seek the approval of men rather than God, and those who desire to please men rather
than God are deceived and deceivers. The gospel of Christ is an unpopular message, and the world hates
the truth because biblical truth always exposes personal sin.

6:27-36 This next section of Jesus’ teaching goes into somewhat more detail that what is recorded by
Matthew in his gospel. However, the content is essentially the same when it comes the subject of
one’s enemies.
6:27 No other religion teaches that one should love his enemy. The message of the Bible is unique in
this. Truth always trumps love because true love requires biblical definition. This is one of the
definitions of biblical love—it is a love so great and so inclusive that it reaches out even to one’s enemies.

Note that Jesus says, “Love your enemies.” He does not say, “Like your enemies.” There is a huge
difference, and it is often a stumbling block to those who first hear these words. The nature of biblical
love (agape) is that it is a love that supersedes emotions and feelings. Agape is not void of emotions
and feelings, but emotions and feelings are not to get in the way of doing the right thing; in this case,
treating your enemy like you would want him to treat you. Why is this an imperative for the Christian?
Because all who have sinned are essentially enemies of God: enemies of all that is good, enemies of all
that is holy, and enemies of all that is righteous. Yet “God so loved the world that He gave His only
begotten Son…. The world could be considered an enemy to God, yet He loved the world anyway.”

“Do good to those who hate you” is the only way to respond. The world’s method of treating those who
hate you is “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a
your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.

36 “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

tooth.” One cannot watch the news these days without seeing that same endless cycle of vengeance played out in every conceivable arena. But it is not the way of Christ. The law of Christ is to “love one another,” and that includes one’s enemies.

6:28 Doing good to those who hate you, blessing those who curse you and praying for those who mistreat you is the only chance of breaking up the cycle of worldly violence. The church is called upon to reflect God’s love in the world and to be the forerunners of those who break up the cycle. This is why it is so tragic when churches split, sue one another, and treat each other in the same manner the world treats its own.

6:29 Love requires that possessions should never interfere with relationships, even adversarial ones. Verse 29 could be taken literally, but not necessarily so. The issue is caring more about oneself and one’s material possession than demonstrating the kind of love that only comes from God. It does not mean that one should be careless or allow himself to become a target of scammers and con men. But it does mean that in the arena of personal relationships—neighbor to neighbor, worker to worker, church member to church member—it is agape that should define the outcome, not selfishness.

6:30 Love insists on letting go of the things of this world. People, especially those held captive by the devil to do his will, hang on to the things of the world. They have yielded to the second temptation of Jesus.

Once again, the same principle applies concerning those who would take advantage of someone. The lesson is more about what a person loves more—people or possessions.

6:31 If you want others to treat you with love and respect, treat all others with love and respect, even your enemies.

6:32 Loving those who love you is far easier than loving the unlovable. God loves everyone, especially the unlovable and those who are unloved. The church of Jesus Christ is called to do the same—love the unlovable. Unfortunately for evangelical Christianity, the Catholic church does a better job at this. Equally unfortunately, they do not have the message to go along with the good works.

6:33 Loving others is not necessarily having great feelings of love, but rather it is willingness to do good and show love in spite of feelings. True love is not void of feelings, but true love is never ruled by feelings.

6:34 Lending to those in legitimate need who may not be able to pay it back is another definition of agape. Failure of those who have to give to those in need is a failure to love others as God’s has loved the one who has. It is also a failure to trust that God will
37 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.

38 “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

provide for the follower of Jesus Christ. Here again, the issue is one of loving others more than loving one’s possessions.

6:35 This is the second time there is a command to love your enemies. That also means doing good to them. Remember that God is not expecting His people to feel loving toward their enemies; that may be impossible to do. But one can still do good in spite of feelings. Indeed, doing good to enemies in spite of feelings is an ultimate act of love. Why does Christ ask His followers to do these things? Because He will demonstrate this very love at the cross.

The last statement in verse 35 is absolutely contrary to Jewish thinking and theology. Old Testament theology teaches that God blesses righteous people and withholds blessings from the unrighteous, or removes blessings from those who sin. This principle is well spelled out in the Book of Deuteronomy, and that is why the Book of Job was difficult for Jewish rabbis to reconcile. Jesus’ statement here would be astonishing to His listeners: “For He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.” In their thinking, God is to do away with and judge ungrateful and evil men. But what Jesus has introduced in this entire sermon is the expansiveness and inclusiveness of God’s incredible love—“God so loved the world.” What Jesus is introducing is that anyone is capable of receiving God’s love. This new theology will be instrumental when Gentile Christians begin entering the church. God wants everyone to experience His love and learn to express His love to others. How else will even evil and ungrateful men experience God’s love if Jesus’ followers are not there to demonstrate it?

6:36 Thus the final command in this section—Jesus’ followers are to reflect God Himself.

6:37 This statement by Jesus is one of the most frequent misapplied quotations, especially by non-Christians. Unfortunately, many Christians are intimidated and do not know how to respond to the statement when used in an adversarial context.

“Do not judge” does not mean that Jesus’ followers are not to judge in terms of discernment. It means that Christians are not to judge out of prejudice or a spirit of criticism and condemnation. Christians must discern truth and love.

Instead of clamming up with intimidation, the Christian should respond to the sarcastic skeptic with something like, “Oh really? Where do you find that in the Bible. What is the context. Is that what Jesus meant?” Or, “Are you actually quoting Scripture to correct me? Then you must believe in the Bible.”

And then, “speaking the truth in love,” gently inform the skeptic what the real meaning of the passage is, and then get them to agree that not
39 And He also spoke a parable to them: “A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit?
40 “A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.
41 “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
42 “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother’s eye.
43 “For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit, nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit.
44 “For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush.
45 “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.
46 “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?
47 “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like:
48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built.
49 “But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”

6:46-49 The word “Lord” here is not “God” but “master.” That is, if a person calls Jesus his or her master, then as a servant he or she should actually carry out the Master’s will and commands. This statement applies to all that has been recorded above in verses 21 through 45; that is, the Sermon on the Plain. This poses a problem for the one who reads these words as well. Once a person has decided to call Jesus Christ “Lord,” he or she is obligated to live in a manner consistent with that relationship. This most likely means a lot will change in the person’s life. Habits, behaviors and relationships that are not biblical must be done away with, and new habits, behaviors and relationships must replace them. Only then will a Christian’s life be built on solid ground, and only then will that life be able to truly experience God’s love. Once God’s love has been experienced, that person is now in a position to express God’s love to others.

6:21-49 In summary, reread these verses and see how many are referring to relationships. Then make an assessment of how many verses have love as the basis for one’s behavior. Finally, note how many verses mention the Sabbath, rituals, sacrifices, or laws concerning what is clean or unclean. Here we see an expansion of John the Baptist’s instructions to those who came for baptism and asked, “What shall we do?”
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, there are three easily remembered sections. Can you name them? Can you determine what is the relationship between each section and why Luke constructed his gospel in this way? What do all three sections—particularly the first and the last—have in common, and why is that important?

2. Review the first conflict between Jesus the Pharisees. What are the Pharisees most concerned about, keeping the law or meeting legitimate human needs? Were they correct in saying that Jesus and His disciples were breaking a Sabbath law? An important question to ask is, “Why did they even care how Jesus and His disciples were getting food?”

3. Review the second conflict between Jesus and the disciples; that is, the healing of the man with the withered hand. Why was it important for Luke to specify that it was the man’s right hand that was withered? How did the Pharisees and scribes come to the place where they were teaching that it was wrong to heal on the Sabbath? What is the relationship between healing on the Sabbath and doing good?

4. If you haven’t already, go back and underline the number of times you find the word “good” in chapter 6. What is the context for each time the word is used? How is Jesus using the word “good” throughout His teaching, and what does it mean? Throughout the chapter, there is a contrast between good and evil. What portion of the chapter illustrates evil and what portions illustrate good?

5. Identify three key themes throughout the Sermon on the Plain. How do they relate to the definition of good and evil?

6. How do Christians identify those who are good and those who are evil? What does Jesus liken them to? How is a follower of Jesus supposed to respond when he or she reads Jesus’ words?

7. How do we know that Jesus’ teaching are accurate and word for word?
6:1-11 – Jesus is confronted by some Pharisees concerning His supposed breaking of Sabbath laws:

(Note – The significance of the Sabbath to Jews is that it is the “sign” of their ________________ and is based on the ________________.)

6:1-5 – Regarding working on the Sabbath: Jesus says He is ________________

(The title “Son of Man” comes from Ezekiel and means a ________________.)

(cf. Mark 2:27 where it states, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not ________________.”)

6:6-11 – Regarding healing on the Sabbath: Jesus says it is okay ________________

6:12-16 – The choosing of the twelve – done only after ________________

The twelve: ________________ ________________ ________________

____________________ ________________ ________________

____________________ ________________ ________________

____________________ ________________ ________________

____________________ ________________ ________________

Note: There were other apostles who were not part of the twelve. For example, ________________

6:17-49 – Luke’s record of one of Jesus’ sermons, here called ________________

6:20-26 – Called the ________________

6:27-36 – The key theme here: ________________

6:37-38 – How God responds to ________________

6:39-45 – Various pronouncements, with the emphasis on ________________
6:1-11 – Jesus is confronted by some Pharisees concerning His supposed breaking of Sabbath laws:

(Note – The significance of the Sabbath to Jews is that it is the “sign” of their covenant with God (the law) and is based on the Fourth Commandment to keep the Sabbath Day holy.

- The discipler will need to help the disciple understand why the Sabbath was so important to the Jews. (See Exodus 31:16-17)
- Provide some of the background why the Pharisees instituted almost 2000 laws concerning the Sabbath.

6:1-5 – Regarding working on the Sabbath: Jesus says He is Lord of the Sabbath
(The title “Son of Man” comes from Ezekiel and means a good representative of mankind
(cf. Mark 2:27 where it states, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath.)

- The title “Son of Man” may be a bit confusing for the disciple; therefore, some background of where the term comes from may be necessary (see commentary).
- Explain that if Jesus is the Son of Man (the representative of mankind) and the Sabbath is made for man (and not man for the Sabbath), then the Son of Man is the one who dictates what is acceptable activity on the day of rest, and how to interpret and implement the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath.
- The discipler may also want to point out how wrong the Pharisees were of accusing Jesus of breaking the Sabbath.
- Most importantly, help the disciple understand why the conflict over the Sabbath is actually a conflict over love. Help the disciple use some critical thinking skills here.

6:6-11 – Regarding healing on the Sabbath: Jesus says it is okay to do good

- This incident will probably be more obvious to the disciple than the one above. The natural reaction will be, “Of course we help others on the Sabbath.” So help the disciple see why the word “good” is related to the issue of love.
- Ask the disciple what the reactions of the Pharisees should have been. Also, explain why Luke was so careful to mention that it was the man’s right hand that was involved, and why that is so important in Middle Eastern culture (even to this day).

6:12-16 – The choosing of the twelve – done only after spending a night in prayer

The twelve: Peter (aka Simon Peter, Cephas), James & John (brothers; sons of Zebedee) Andrew (Peter’s brother), Philip, Bartholomew (aka Nathaneal) Matthew (aka Levi), Thomas, James (son of Alphæus) Simon (the Zealot), Judas (son of James), Judas Iscariot (the traitor)

Note: There were other apostles who were not part of the twelve. For example, the apostle Paul

- This is actually a very important section of the commentary for a disciple or a new believer to understand. It has to do with the definition of “apostle” and who apostles are (were). Using the commentary, help the disciple learn how the early church defined an apostle, and why there can be no more true apostles today, no matter what someone calls himself.
- This explanation will have to be tempered by the fact that there is the “office” of apostle, and there is the “ministry” of apostle. Whereas there can be no more official apostles today, there can be those who are doing apostle-like ministries, such as missionaries or church planters.
- Make sure the disciple understands that anyone calling himself or herself an apostle today is a false teacher and is looking more to be highly esteemed by men rather than highly commissioned by God.
- It might also be important that the disciple is able to differentiate between the apostle James and the writer of the Epistle of James, and that two of the twelve had the name James.)
6:17-49 – Luke’s record of one of Jesus’ sermons, here called the Sermon on the Plain

- Explain the similarities and differences between the Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5-7. It’s important here for the disciple to realize that Jesus probably gave the same message hundreds of times, and that’s why the writers of the gospels could quote Him so accurately.
- Knowing this information will help the disciple answer the skeptics and scoffers who claim who question the accuracy of the words of Jesus.

6:20-26 – Called the beatitudes (these contain blessings and woes)

- Explain to the disciple that to be “blessed” is to be made glad and happy, whereas a pronouncement of “woe” is a warning that requires urgent attention and indicates a theme of judgment.
- It may take awhile, but a great exercise—especially in a group setting—would be to go through each verse in this section and ask, “Why?” For example, why would the poor consider themselves “blessed”? The same question can be asked about the word “Woe.” The exercise is called “brain storming” which allows the group freedom of thought and expression. Generally, there are no wrong answers, and it becomes an opportunity for the discipler to learn from the disciple!

6:27-36 – The key theme here: love your enemies

- It is important for the disciple to understand that Christianity is the only religion that teaches to “love your enemies” and “pray for them.”
- No doubt the disciple will raise the question about loving one’s enemies because they do not understand the nature of biblical (agape) love. Agape love is not without feelings, but feelings—such as warmth and tenderness toward another—must never overrule loving actions toward them. The Christian is to act in love toward their enemies, even though they may have ill feelings about that person.
- The reason God wants His children to love their enemies is twofold: (1) all unsaved people on the earth are “held captive by the enemy to do his will” (2 Tim. 2:26). Love is the only power that will free that captive. And (2), all of us were enemies of God when Jesus went to the cross to die for our sins, yet He loved us.

6:37-38 – How God responds to one’s willingness to obey these teachings

- This section is another way of saying, “You reap what you sow.”
- Perhaps the most important question the discipler can ask the disciple is, “Now, how do you plan on implementing the things you’ve learned from verses 20-49.

6:39-45 – Various pronouncements, with the emphasis on bearing good fruit

- An important part of this section is helping the disciple discern what is good fruit and what is bad fruit. Good fruit always involves love, and bad fruit always involves the absence of love (biblical love, that is).
- Help the disciple see that almost every verse in this Sermon on the Plain involves relationships in one way or another. Suggest to the disciple that he or she go through the sermon verse by verse and point out why it involves relationships.
- Ask the disciple how he or she plans to “act on” these words (v. 47).
- After the lesson is over and the disciple is dismissed, the one doing the discipling should take some time to reflect on these verses and see what areas of one’s life needs improvement.
CHAPTER 7

Overview of Luke 7
In studying the gospels, particularly Luke, it is important to look for links between events or paragraphs. For example, how does the beginning of this chapter relate to the latter part of chapter 6? Chapter 7 begins with the healing of a centurion’s slave. Read carefully and you will discover that the character of the centurion and those Jews who make his request have an important trait in common—they care for one another. Therefore, Luke is now giving an example of what it means to fulfill the Sermon on the Plain, and will show that one need not be a Jew either to “do” Jesus words or to receive blessings from Him. Also in chapter 7 we will witness the first resurrection. This event points to one of the great Old Testament prophets. This incident will then link to John the Baptist’s question to Jesus, “Are You the Expected One?” Lastly, we will discover the difference between someone who thinks he is righteous but doesn’t love, and someone who knows she is unrighteous, but who loves. One of them will receive a great gift from Jesus. Once again, this incident will point back to the Sermon on the Plain.

What to look for in Luke 7
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the links between the healing of the centurion’s slave, the raising of a dead son, John the Baptist’s question to Jesus, and the incident with someone who thinks he is righteous, but is not.
3. Look for love and compassion in someone who wasn’t a Jew, but acted like someone who manifests the essence of the Law of the Lord.
4. Look for the similarity between Jesus’ raising of a widow’s son and a great Old Testament prophet.
5. Note how Jesus answers John the Baptist’s question about who He is. Does He give a direct answer, or does He help John discover the answer for Himself?
6. Look for the inhospitable ways the Pharisee treated Jesus when he invited Him to dinner. Compare that with the way the woman treated Jesus.
7. Look for three blessings that result for those who believe Jesus is “the Expected One.”

1 When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum.
2 And a centurion’s slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.
3 When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.
4 When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him;
5 for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.”
6 Now Jesus started on His way with

7:1-10 Jesus, having completed a tour of ministry in southern Galilee, returns to His headquarters in Capernaum. There He will bring blessings to someone who isn’t a Jew but demonstrates perfect faith in Jesus, something the Jewish leaders should have been doing. This is the first time in Luke that Jesus has a direct encounter with a Gentile; He offers him the same blessings as He offers Jews. This encounter foreshadows an encounter in the Book of Acts by Peter with a Gentile by the name of Cornelius, also a centurion (Act 10:1-48).
7:2-5 A centurion was a commander of one hundred Roman soldiers. He may or may not have been Roman, as centurions could have been appointed from any country in the Roman Empire. What is certain is that he is not Jewish. But also certain is that he demonstrates love and faith in a manner that all
them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; 7 for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. 8 “For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” 9 Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.” 10 When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jews were supposed to, according to the Law of the Lord. His concern is for one of his slaves. One mustn’t confuse the term “slave” with the concept of an American slave of the 1800s. “Servant” would be a better translation for today’s reader, but “slave” is indeed the more accurate translation. The Greek word here is doulos which is often translated “bond-servant.” Paul, James, Peter and Jude all called themselves “bond-servants” of the Lord Jesus Christ. A slave in this setting was owned by his master, but also taken care of and provided for. Slaves often earned a salary, and their status with their master could be very high, such as a master’s financial officer (steward) or someone who was in charge of the household. Exodus 21:1-6 lays the foundation for the concept of a bond-servant (“bondslave” in the KJV). After six years of service, the slave was free to leave. However, if he decided to remain employed to the master, a ceremony took place in which the slave’s ear was pierced with an awl to the master’s door. This constituted a life-long binding relationship between the master and the slave. This was the concept of the true bond-servant: a mutual loving relationship in which the bond-servant pledge his life-long allegiance and service to his master, and the master pledged his willingness to care for the servant and his household.

In this story, there is a loving relationship between the centurion and the slave. The words “highly regarded” indicate that the centurion respected the servant and cared about his well-being. The centurion, being a Gentile, apparently does not feel worthy to approach a Jewish holy man, and therefore sends a contingent of elders to make his request. The elders tell Jesus that the centurion is “worthy.” This is another way of saying the centurion is a “righteous Gentile”, that is, a Gentile who is worthy to be counted righteous in relationship to the God of the Jews, Yahweh. The elders justify the centurion’s righteousness before Jesus: “for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.” This means that the centurion paid for the materials and the construction of the synagogue, no little amount of money. Whether or not the centurion was a Jewish proselyte (i.e., one who converted to Judaism) is not stated, but there is no indication that he was. It appears that his part in building the synagogue was motivated purely by love for God’s people. On a side note, a synagogue at Capernaum from Jesus’ day has been unearthed by archaeologists.

7:6-10 Jesus heads off toward the centurion’s house, honoring the request of the Jewish elders. The humble heart of this centurion is exposed in verse 6 when he sends word that he is unworthy of having Jesus come into his house. This is not just a polite gesture. According to Jewish law, Jews were
11 Soon afterwards He went to a city called Nain; and His disciples were going along with Him, accompanied by a large crowd.

12 Now as He approached the gate of the city, a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and a sizeable crowd from the city forbidden to enter into the house of a Gentile, or especially to touch anything in the house. This would make the Jew ceremonially unclean. The centurion is basically deferring to Jewish laws of cleanliness and defilement. Whereas before, Jesus had entered into the house of a sinner and tax collector, Levi, entering into the house of a Gentile was an entirely different matter. Out of love Jesus was willing to do so. But also out of love, the centurion was willing to have Jesus not come into the house, fearing that doing so might defile the holy man. Here again, it was a gesture of love on the centurion’s part. Therefore, he sends word to Jesus that coming into his house is not necessary. Based on faith—and logic—the centurion states that because of who Jesus is, He should be able to heal the slave simply by commanding it; that touching the slave wasn’t necessary. This assumption is probably made on all the reports that are being made about Jesus’ healings. Jesus, hearing the centurion’s statement, is impressed by the centurion’s faith and contrasts his faith with the faith of the Jewish crowd following Him and the Jewish nation in general. The Gentile centurion was demonstrating more regard in who Jesus was than the Jews following him. Such irony is not lost on Jesus—or Luke.

There is an important note here about the centurion’s faith. The centurion’s faith did not assume that Jesus would heal the slave, but faith that, based on who Jesus was, He could heal the slave simply by commanding it to be so. Therefore, it was neither the centurion’s faith nor the slave’s faith that brought about the healing. Jesus Himself brought about the healing. The faith exhibited here is not a “name it and claim it” kind of faith, but faith in who Jesus was and what He was capable of doing.

This incident with the centurion is an important one from the Gentile Luke’s point of view. It is an incident that foreshadows the future of the church that will be established after Pentecost. The picture here is that, based on faith, Gentiles too can receive the benefit of Jesus’ power and authority. Like the centurion, those who love and care about others will be drawn to seek Jesus, and those who put their faith in Him will receive His blessings. This healing is as much a lesson about love as it is about faith.
was with her.

13 When the Lord saw her, He felt compassion for her, and said to her, “Do not weep.”

14 And He came up and touched the coffin; and the bearers came to a halt. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise!”

15 The dead man sat up and began to speak. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.

16 Fear gripped them all, and they began glorifying God, saying, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” and, “God has visited His people!”

17 This report concerning Him went out all over Judea and in all the surrounding district.

18 The disciples of John reported to him about all these things.

19 Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the nation, he was nevertheless not considered a part of it, and as a result disqualified from receiving any of God’s earthly blessings or heavenly rewards. So this incident with the raising of the widow’s son alludes to the fact that Jesus can also raise a Gentile from the dead, based on the Gentile’s faith. Therefore, Jesus’ love supersedes Jewish law—He can raise even a Gentile from the dead and grant him heavenly rewards as well.

Additionally, Luke is setting the reader up for the following section regarding John the Baptist.

7:11-12 Nain, a few miles southeast of Nazareth, was just one of the many cities Jesus preached the gospel in. The fact that there was a “large crowd” indicates that mother was probably of a well-known if not prominent family. She apparently had only one son, obviously a grown man by this time, and had already lost her husband. The loss of her son had terrible implications. The son was the only one who could take care of her and provide for her. Without the son, she had no means of income and no one left to carry on the family name. Without a son, her future became perilously uncertain. Therefore Jesus “felt compassion for her” and instructs her not to weep. Jesus is not denying her loss but giving her hope.

According to Numbers 19:16, anyone touching a dead person or “grave” (coffin or bier implied) would become ceremonially unclean. (Notice the pattern regarding Jesus challenging the Jewish laws regarding what is clean and what is unclean, and how the laws affect a righteous person. Entering into the house of the centurion would have made Him unclean, and touching the bier would have made Him unclean. Jesus is setting new standards for determining clean and unclean, and what defiles a man.) What happens next shocks the crowd. When the procession comes to a halt, Jesus reaches up, touches the coffin and speaks to the dead man. The dead man sits up and begins to speak. It is the next words, however, that have profound implications. Luke records, “And Jesus gave him back to his mother.” These are the exact words that are used to describe Elijah’s actions when he raised the widow of Zarephath’s son (1 Kings 17:8-24). These words are not lost on the crowd, who declare, “A great prophet has arisen among us!” Little do they realize that more than a prophet has arisen among them.

Once again, love and compassion are at the forefront of the story. This time the source of love is Jesus Himself.

7:18-30 So far in Luke, we’ve witnessed numerous miracles by Jesus; specifically lepers being cleansed, demons being cast out, paralyzed men made to walk again, the dead being raised, and those who are poor in spirit being given good news. Who knows how
Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’”
20 When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’”
21 At that very time He cured many people of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many who were blind.
22 And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have the Gospel preached to them.
23 “Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.”

many other miracles and healings Luke left out in his gospel. Luke will now pull all of Jesus’ ministry together to justify His answer to a critical question by John the Baptist: “Are You the Expected One?” Other than John’s early ministry, Luke has written little about all that has happened to him, other than that during this time he was in prison (3:20). So Luke now returns to John the Baptist for the purpose of not only validating his ministry, but providing the reader what Jesus thought about John.

7:18-23 “Expected One” can also be translated “Coming One”; both are references to the expected appearance of the Messiah. If we return back to chapter 3 and review John’s preaching, it is quite obvious that John’s emphasis was not upon the healing aspects of the Messiah’s message, but upon the issues of the judgment of unrighteousness and sin. When John said that the Messiah would baptize with “fire,” he is referring to the fiery purification of sin brought about by judgment, as affirmed by his statement, “…He will burn up the chaff and unquenchable fire.” So far, John has heard nothing of judgment, either in Jesus’ teachings or in His actions. Therefore, it is quite logical for John to wonder if Jesus is actually the Messiah that he had anticipated would bring judgment, or just another prophet.

Jesus’s response to John is to quote Messianic passages from Isaiah 35:5,6 and 61:1. So the return message back to John is clear: Jesus is the Messiah, but the judgment aspect of His ministry has yet to be fulfilled. This is a foreshadowing of an important message that will eventually become evident in the New Testament: one Messiah but two comings. The reason? There must first be a judgment of sin before there can be a judgment of the world and its unrighteousness.

There is one other interesting observation here. Luke has recorded all the miracles listed in verse 22 but one—that the deaf hear. The only gospel writer who actually refers to a deaf man being made to hear is Mark, in chapter 7. There are two possible explanations for this. First, the healing of people who were deaf is assumed in Luke’s earlier statements that Jesus was “healing them all” (e.g., 6:18, 19). Second, there is the implication that those who are rejecting Jesus’ message are “deaf” to His teachings, another swipe at the Pharisees and scribes, and a precursor to Jesus’ statement in the next chapter, “…And hearing they may not understand” (8:10). Thus, an explanation of why Jesus spoke in parables.

The practical lesson being taught in this passage about John’s question and Jesus’ response has to do with our expectations of Jesus and our expectations of God’s plan. We may not always be able to see God’s plan being carried out in the world or in our
24 When the messengers of John had left, He began to speak to the crowds about John, “What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?
25 “But what did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Those who are splendidly clothed and live in luxury are found in royal palaces!
26 “But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I say to you, and one who is more than a prophet.
27 “This is the one about whom it is written, ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’
28 “I say to you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet he who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.”
29 When all the people and the tax collectors heard this, they acknowledged God’s justice, having been baptized with the baptism of John.
30 But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God’s purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John.

personal lives because our expectations of Jesus are different from God’s will and plan. God’s greater plan in John’s day was that His love for all mankind must be made manifest through the cross before His judgment of all mankind can be fulfilled at His second coming. John is actually getting what he had hoped for—repentance. But unknown to John, God is going to give the whole world a chance to repent because “(God) so loved the world.” Therefore, as a result of the cross, Jesus’ followers can now experience the unbelievable love of God and learn, through His word and the Holy Spirit, how to express that love to a lost world.

7:23 Jesus simply states, “How happy and blessed those will be who see, understand, follow and conform to God’s plan,” rather than take offense at Jesus if He does not immediately exact judgment on the world’s unrighteousness. There will, however, be those who actually do take offense at Jesus because He does not bring judgment on the Romans and reestablish Israel to its former glory.

7:24-30 Jesus now turns to the crowd and affirms the ministry of John the Baptist. Along the theme of expectations, verse 24 has the sense, “What did you expect to see in the wilderness?” If the people expected to see someone other than a prophet, they were mistaken. But John wasn’t just another prophet: he had a unique calling, and that was to announce the arrival of the Messiah. Once again, Jesus indirectly affirms that He is indeed the “Expected One” and that John’s ministry was to fulfill the Messianic prophecy found in Malachi, the last writing Old Testament prophet (3:1).

In verse 28, however, Jesus places John the Baptist in perspective regarding the true kingdom of God. As far as Old Testament prophets go, John was the “greater” in the sense that he was privileged to announce the arrival of the Messiah. But compared to those who eventually receive the blessings of the Messiah by the forgiveness of sins, they will be even “greater.”

This is the third time Luke has recorded the phrase “kingdom of God” (see 4:43 and 6:20). Luke, along with John and Mark, use the phrase “kingdom of God” whereas Matthew prefers the phrase “kingdom of heaven.” The two phrases are virtually identical in meaning. The kingdom of God refers to God’s plan for how humanity should be. It is a good-news message, full of hope, healing and the forgiveness of sins. But it is also a message of judgment against all things that are not a part of the kingdom of God; that is, the kingdom of man, the world, and Satan. Therefore, those who receive Jesus’ message will be “greater” than John the Baptist because they will see, understand, experience and be
Luke 7

31 “To what then shall I compare the men of this generation, and what are they like?
32 “They are like children who sit in the market place and call to one another, and they say, ‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not weep.’
33 “For John the Baptist has come eating no bread and drinking no wine, and you say, ‘He has a demon!’
34 “The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, ‘Behold, a gluttonous man and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!’
35 “Yet wisdom is vindicated by all her children.”

36 Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He eternally blessed by the kingdom of God. Those who are least in this kingdom of God will have a greater message even than John the Baptist because they will be empowered by the Holy Spirit individually and proclaim not only that the Messiah has come, but that through the Messiah all sins may be forgiven, eternal life may be assured, and anyone can experience God’s wonderful and magnificent love and learn to express that love to others.

Luke observes in verse 29 that those who had accepted and received John’s message were vindicated, and that they were on the right side of God’s plan and on their way to receiving the fullness of the kingdom of God.

In verse 30, Luke uncharacteristically inserts his own commentary rather than make a purely historical observation. He clearly states that those who rejected the message of John the Baptist—that repentance is needed—have rejected “God’s purpose” and plan, and therefore will reject the message of the Messiah. Luke will prove his point when Jesus is invited to the home of a Pharisee named Simon, as recorded at the end of the chapter.

There is therefore an important practical lesson here: there is no experiencing the kingdom of God without first repenting and experiencing the forgiveness of sins that comes by virtue of the cross of Christ. The gospel, void of the message of repentance, is a false gospel.

7:31-35 Luke now proves his observation in verse 30 with the words of Jesus. The key words are, “What are (men) like?” (referring to the Pharisees). Jesus states that the “men” of His generation are like children complaining when others don’t do what they expect them to do. Flutes were used for making melodies appropriate for merriment and joyful dancing. A dirge is a song of mourning associated with a funeral procession. The Pharisees are therefore like annoying children who whined when John the Baptist came with a message of judgment (dirge) and Jesus comes with a message of joy (flute). Either way, the Pharisees are not happy. Why? Because the message of both the flute and the dirge is one of personal repentance. Without repentance, there is death. With repentance, there is joy. But the Pharisees, rejecting both messages, will only experience judgment and never experience joy. For those who have received “God’s purpose” (v. 30), they will be vindicated (justified) in the end. This point is painfully illustrated in the next event Luke records.

7:36-50 This is perhaps one of the most touching and poignant events Luke records. It is an exercise of contrasts. There is Simon the Pharisee who thinks he
entered the Pharisee’s house and reclined at the table.

37 And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume,

38 and standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.”

40 And Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to say to you.” And he replied, “Say it, Teacher.”

41 “A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

42 “When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?”

43 Simon answered and said, “I suppose the one whom he forgave more.” And He said to him, “You have judged correctly.”

44 Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 “You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet.

46 “You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume.

47 “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.”

48 Then He said to her, “Your sins have been forgiven.”

49 Those who were reclining at the table is righteous but is spiritually dead in his sins, and there is the “sinner” woman who knows she is unrighteous but is spiritually alive by virtue of forgiveness through Jesus.
with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?”

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

some point of the law and find reason to accuse Him, or he is going to find some reason for telling others, “I invited Him to dinner, and He didn’t seem like much of a prophet to me!” That he would test Jesus in this way betrays a lack of belief and failure to repent from the beginning, and fulfills Jesus’ words condemning “children who sit in the marketplace.”

7:40 Notice that Simon does not say, “Say it, Lord,” or “Say it, Master.” He says, “Say it, Teacher,” which is to call Jesus an ordinary rabbi, or teacher. Simon grants Jesus no more recognition that being just another Jewish rabbi.

7:41-50 Jesus now gives a parable that even Simon can interpret, but most likely will assuredly never fully understand and certainly not apply to himself. The parable is about two debtors. From Simon’s perspective the debtors are people who owe money to others. But the meaning of the parable is deeper. The debtors are sinners who owe God the penalty for their sins. Simon is unable to see this because he does not believe Jesus and feels he has no need of repentance; that is, he does not see himself as a sinner who owes God anything. In the parable, the one who is owed the debt forgives both debtors, even though one debtor owes a lot more than the other. Simon does not make the association that the woman at his table is the debtor who owes more, and that he himself is also a debtor because of his own personal sin. Continuing to see this parable as merely a story about money, Simon “judged correctly” when asked, “which one of them will love him more?”

One must not miss the relationship between love and the forgiveness of sins. Simon, feeling himself as righteous, does not love Jesus because he does not feel he needs forgiving of anything. But the woman, who knows she is a sinner and has been under bondage to sin for quite some time, feels the immense power of Jesus’ love for her because He is capable of forgiving her of her sins, no doubt having heard of Jesus forgiving the paralytic.

Notice, too, that Jesus describes the forgiveness as “graciously forgave.” That means a kind of forgiveness that is offered without consequences and without owing anything in return. This is not “conditional” forgiveness, or forgiveness offered with strings attached. The debt is completely written off without any demands for repayment and without any contingencies. The forgiveness is offered with grace and therefore complete and final.

7:44-46 Here is the most glaring contrast and perhaps the reason the woman wept over Jesus’ feet. She witnessed Simon’s complete lack of love, acceptance and hospitality toward Jesus, something abhorrent in Jewish culture.

It was customary in Jewish homes to wash the feet of guests. Offering hospitality, which in the
Greek means “loving strangers,” is high on the list of standard Jewish culture. It is a practice that is to be followed as a way of showing love and affection for guests, and according to the law, was to be offered even to strangers. Part of hospitality upon inviting a guest into a house was foot washing. Usually a servant performed this task. Jars of water were kept near the entrance of the house. Feet would become dirty due to the accumulation of sand, dust, dirt or even mud from the wearing of sandals. The guest would sit on a bench while the servant would scoop water out of the large jar and pour it into a pan or basin. He would then remove the sandals, wash the feet, and wipe them dry with a towel. The guest would then be offered indoor sandals for the household, a Middle Eastern custom that continues to this day. If the guest were special, the host would then pour a little oil on the head as a symbol of anointing, signifying that the guest was indeed special and loved by the host. Simon, seeing Jesus as no one special, neglects to offer any of these common hospitalities to Jesus. Most likely, this shocks the woman and she cannot contain her grief over Simon’s lack of hospitality and his condescending attitude toward Jesus.

Jesus now ties the parable into the real-life situation with the woman. Here again, Jesus relates love with forgiveness; this time, however, there is a twist. The pronouncement of the forgiveness of her sins comes only after she has performed an act of love. He states, “…her sins…have been forgiven, for she loved much.” You might expect Jesus to say it the other way around: “She loves much because her sins have been forgiven,” which fits better with the parable. The unusual—and surprising—phrasing by Jesus puts a whole new slant on the relationship between love and forgiveness. Jesus is actually saying, “She is forgiven of her sins because she has shown much love to Jesus by worshipping Him and recognizing Him as Lord.” The clear implication is that by truly loving and worshipping Jesus, sins are forgiven. Jesus probably phrased His statement this way in contrast to how Simon did not show love to Jesus. The point is this: Simon, who thinks he is righteous and does not need the forgiveness of his sins, is still in his sins and unforgiven because he has not loved Jesus and recognized Him as Lord.

The irony of the response of those reclined at the table is not lost on Jesus. The thought behind the guests reasoning is that only God can forgive sins. To acknowledge that the woman’s sins have been forgiven by Jesus is to acknowledge that Jesus is indeed the Messiah. This incident with the woman being forgiven of her sins is not as demonstrably dramatic as the paralytic’s in chapter 5, but this incident is unique in the clear relationship between
love and forgiveness. It implies that without love, or in this case the withholding of love, there cannot be the forgiveness of sins.

Verse 50 points to the key that opened the door to forgiveness—faith. In the original language, the word “faith” is the noun form of the verb “to believe.” Therefore it was the woman’s belief of who Jesus was and what He could do that opened the door for forgiveness. Therefore, in the end, her love was the result of her faith, and it was the faith that saved her, not her act of love.

There is one final point that requires consideration. There may be a separation here between being saved and having sins forgiven. Being saved is obviously the result of faith. But it is also possible to interpret from this passage that unless one is willing to demonstrate love for others, the forgiveness of sins is hard to come by.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. How did God speak to you through His word in this chapter? Name three principles that stand out in your mind. Now that you’ve narrowed down what those principles are, what are you going to do about them to have God’s word become incarnate in you? How will those principles change your behavior, and especially, your relationships.

2. There is a theme of judgment throughout this chapter, though it is not eternal judgment. It has to do with the issue of judging others based on some religious or cultural stereotype. Is there any one or any type of person that you tend to judge? How will that affect your love and interaction with that person?

3. Go through the chapter and count the number of times the word “love” or its variations are used (in the biblical text, not the commentary). How does love play a part in how Jesus responds to those who love? What lesson will you walk away with as a result?

4. How would you identify yourself in regard to the two debtors? Are you one who owes little or are you one who owes much? How does that affect your relationship to Jesus?

5. What is the relationship between love and forgiveness? Is it possible to love someone and not forgive them? Is it possible to forgive someone and not love them?

6. Once again examine the relationship between love and forgiveness. How does the forgiveness of your sins cause you to love God more? If you’ve concluded that you love God more as a result of the fact that He has forgiven you of your sins, how does that affect your relationship with others, and your willingness to forgive them of their sins against you? Specifically, how quick are you to forgive others and show them the love and grace that has been shown to you?

7. John the Baptist had expectations of Jesus that He, being the Messiah, would bring judgment on all unrighteousness. That didn’t happen, and John began wondering if Jesus really was the Messiah. What unrealistic expectations do you have about God? Are some of your expectations unrealistic? Are some perhaps not in line with His will and plan for all humanity? Do you expect God to answer your prayers immediately, and in accordance with the way you want them to be answered? If God isn’t working in your life the way you would expect Him to, what needs to be adjusted?
7:1-10 – The healing of the centurion’s servant; the centurion’s life was characterized by ______________________

7:11-17 – The raising of the widow’s son from the dead; a sign of ________________________________

7:18-22 – The query by the disciples of John the Baptist: “Are You the _____________________________?”

7:23-30 – The results of the call for repentance by John the Baptist: some accept, others __________________

7:31-35 – Jesus’ judgment on the generation: not only is the generation like children (childlike), it is __________

7:36-50 – The incident in a Pharisee’s house: the woman’s faith in Jesus resulted in her __________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 7

7:1-10 – The healing of the centurion’s servant; the centurion’s life was characterized by love
- Perhaps the first thing that needs to be explained to the disciple is what a centurion is.
- Explain the consequences for a holy Jewish man to be responding to a Gentile and what implications there would be if Jesus were to enter the centurion’s house?
- The discipler will certainly want to point out the love exhibited by the centurion, both concerning his servant and in his help for the Jewish people, as well as his respect for Jesus.
- Explain what a “bond-servant” is, and how one became a bond-servant in biblical times (as opposed to an ordinary servant).
- Ensure that the disciple understands why Jesus said of the centurion, “...Not even in Israel have I found such great faith.”
- Ensure that the disciple understands that Jesus’ interaction with the Gentile centurion will have great implications in the Book of Acts when Peter is called by God to visit the centurion Cornelius.

7:11-17 – The raising of the widow’s son from the dead; a sign of Elijah (1 Kings 17)
- Help the disciple see the relationship between the spiritually “dead” centurion (from a Jewish point of view) and the physically dead son of the widow.
- Explain to the disciple why the loss of a widow’s son was such a terrible thing in Jesus’ day.
- Explain the implications of a Jewish person touching a dead body (clean vs. unclean), and why it was an important act that Jesus touch the dead son.
- The discipler might want to have the disciple look up the passage in 1 Kings 17 to see the comparison with Elijah.
- Have the disciple find the “love message” in this incident.

7:18-22 – The query by the disciples of John the Baptist: “Are You the Expected One?”
- Remind the disciple who John the Baptist is, and not to confuse this John with the writer of the gospel.
- Define “Expected One” and, if necessary, review for the disciple the Jewish expectation of a Messiah.
- Allow the disciple to speculate why John the Baptist may be questioning whether or not Jesus is the Expected One. Perhaps the disciple might want to look up the passages from Isaiah.
- This is a good place to introduce the concept of “One Messiah but two comings of the Messiah.”
- Ask the disciple what expectations he or she has from becoming a Christian. Are those expectations realistic and according to God’s plan, or are they unrealistic, based on hope, and not substantiated with Scripture. Apply that to John and what expectations he may have had.
- See if the disciple can figure out why the second coming of Christ has not taken place. (The answer is simple: God is delaying Jesus’ return so that as many people as possible can hear the gospel message and be saved.)
7:23-30 – The results of the call for repentance by John the Baptist: some accept, others reject

- If this hasn’t been done already in chapter 3, review the ministry of John the Baptist compared to other Old Testament prophets, and in light of Malachi 3:1.
- See if the disciple can figure out the answer to verse 28; that is, that there is “no one greater than John,” yet “he who is least...is greater than he.” (The answer is in the commentary.)
- Explain to the disciple that the phrase “kingdom of God” and “kingdom of heaven” have the same meaning.
- Very important for the disciple to comprehend is why both John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ messages were rejected by Israel’s spiritual leaders. (Hint: it all has to do with the issue of personal sin and the need for repentance.)

7:31-35 – Jesus’ judgment on the generation: not only is the generation like children (childlike), it is illogical

- Explain the difference between music made by a flute and music that is a “dirge.” Show how these two types of music are associated with both John the Baptist’s and Jesus’ messages.
- Make sure the disciple understands that what Jesus is saying in verses 31-35 is that it is a lose-lose situation for the messenger. The spiritual leaders will always find something wrong with the message and the messenger. However, verse 35....
- See if the disciple can figure out the meaning of verse 35. The key word is “Yet,” and the meaning is essentially this: those who choose to believe and follow John the Baptist and Jesus will eventually be vindicated (proven correct; avenged) in the end.

7:36-50 – The incident in a Pharisee’s house: the woman’s faith in Jesus resulted in her being saved

- Explain to the disciple how a Jewish dinner took place; that is, reclined at a table (as opposed to da Vinci’s painting of the Last Supper!).
- Explain what were the normal customs for inviting a guest into a house, and how Jesus was neglected in regard to those customs. Show how that relates to the behavior of the woman.
- As a good exercise, have the disciple tell the story in his or her own words. It’s a good way to get the story right!
- Make sure the disciple picks up on the irony of who is the “greater sinner” and the real sinner here.
- Ask the disciple why the Pharisee’s answer to Jesus question in verse 42 is so ironic.
- How do the Pharisees betray their true heart by asking the question, “If this man were a true prophet....”
- Have the disciple describe the relationship between love and forgiveness. Make sure the disciple understands why this concept is so important in understanding the gospel.
- Help the disciple see the contrasts of love from the woman and the lack of love from Simon.
- Help the disciple sort through these three concepts: faith, love and forgiveness of sins. Which came first? What resulted in sins being forgiven? (The answer is this: faith comes first, then comes the forgiveness of sins, then comes the love and gratitude for Jesus once one knows that their sins have been forgiven. The woman’s acts of love were the result of her faith. It was not love that saved her...it was her faith in Jesus.)
### Overview of Luke 8
This chapter opens with the observation that there were quite a few women following Jesus, as well as His disciples. As the crowds become larger and larger, it becomes more difficult to determine who is really receiving Jesus’ words, and who is just a curious onlooker. Therefore Jesus provides His disciples with a parable, perhaps one of His most important ones. It concerns how people respond to His teachings. There is then a short paragraph concerning Jesus’ own family, and how Jesus defines His spiritual family. The scene then shifts to a region across the Sea of Galilee where Jesus confronts a mad man who is demon possessed. On His return, He is asked to heal the daughter of a synagogue official, and on the way brings healing to one who fulfills Jesus’ teaching concerning who is really a part of His family.

### What to look for in Luke 8
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the theme of “faith” throughout the chapter.
3. In the stories at the end of the chapter, look for the similarities between the woman with the issue of blood and Jairus’ daughter.
4. Ask, “Why does the writer Luke include the story about the calming of the sea, and how will this event prepare the disciples for the future?”
5. In the parable of the sown seed, look for the four different types of soil, and then ask which type of soil describes you?
6. Look for the purpose Jesus gives His disciples when they receive God’s word with faith.
7. Look for the “family” theme in regards to those who have faith in Jesus.

---

1 Soon afterwards, He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God. The twelve were with Him,

2 and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses: Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out,

3 and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod’s steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means.

8:1-3 The thematic connection between chapter 7 and chapter 8 is the woman mentioned at Simon’s dinner. Luke is recording that not only were there many men disciples following Jesus, but also a fairly large contingent of women disciples. The woman at Simon’s party may have been one of them. (There is no indication, however, that the woman mentioned at Simon’s dinner was the Mary Magdalene of 8:2, an assumption that early Christian theologians mistakenly made.) So Luke begins the chapter by introducing us to some of the more notable women disciples who were following Jesus.

The first woman mentioned is Mary, a disciple from the town of Magdala, or modern-day Migdal on the western short of the Sea of Galilee. Note that she is not offended—as some would be today—by allowing Luke to tell the world that she had seven demons cast out of her. Most likely, she is so wonderfully grateful for her deliverance that she wants the whole world to know that Jesus is her deliverer. Her love for Him would have been very great. The nature of the demons that inhabited Mary are not stated, but an issue of sickness is implied. There is no reason to assume that her demons resulted
4 When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable:

5 “The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up.

6 “Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture.

7 “Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out.

8 “Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

9 His disciples began questioning Him as in prostitution. Her love for Jesus will find her at the foot of His cross and at the tomb of resurrection.

Contrary to popular belief, nowhere in Gnostic or other heterodox literature is there the suggestion that Jesus had a physical relationship with Mary Magdalene. Only present-day sensationalistic docudramas emanating from Hollywood suggest that Jesus may have had a son with Mary Magdalene. Such suggestions are not only completely out of touch with the reality of the relationships between rabbis and their disciples, but they are projections of personal debauchery and hideous perversions of love, not to mention a very low view of the person of Jesus Christ. Those who propagate and profit from such heinous conjectures are guilty of sacrilege and blasphemy, and betray their own crude depravity and banality.

Nothing is known about Joanna, but her association with Herod’s household probably resulted in privileged information about John the Baptist’s death and the events surrounding the crucifixion. Nor is anything known about Suzanna, and she is not mentioned again in Scripture.

It was common in the day for disciples to support itinerate rabbis. Note, too, that unlike modern-day ministries, there is no hint of offerings being taken for the building of Christian empires. The support offered by Jesus’ followers was completely voluntary and of a good will, with no strings attached or promises of healings or prosperity, and sufficient only to provide for daily rations of food and possibly for clothing.

8:4-15 What follows next in Luke’s narrative is what is called the “Parable of the Sown Seed.” This is not a parable about salvation—although some conjectures may be made—but a parable about how people react when hearing the teachings of Jesus. The present-day equivalent of this is how people react to God’s word, the Bible, which contains the words of God. Ultimately, the issue is truth. But this parable focuses on Jesus’ teaching itself and relates primarily to those who are coming to hear His teachings and to be healed. The context to this parable is 8:4a: “When a large crowd was coming together….”

8:5-8 A parable is a story that could be true but isn’t necessarily true. It is based on what happens typically. Parables are always designed to teach a spiritual truth; in this case, the lesson involves the crowd’s response to Jesus’ teaching. Therefore, parables are spoken to provide truth to those who are willing to listen (believers) and to hide truth from those who are unwilling to learn from the speaker, and therefore remain blinded from seeing the truth.

Jesus gives a simple parable that those who grow crops can relate to. Not all seed lands on good soil.
to what this parable meant.

10 And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that Seeing they may not see, and Hearing they may not understand.

11 “Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God.

12 “Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

13 “Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.

14 “The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity.

15 “But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance.

Anyone who has sown seed in a large field realizes that some seed falls on the road or path, and makes for easy picking by birds. Other seed falls on parts of the field that have not been prepared. They fail to receive water and therefore never grow beyond initial sprouting. Yet other seed falls on relatively good soil, only this soil also has weeds, and the seed and weeds grow together. However, some seed falls on well-tilled and prepared soil and, along with the water, produce the desired growth and crops.

The phrase, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear” means, “Those who have the desire to understand need to listen carefully and seek to understand the spiritual truth behind the parable.”

8:9-10 The key phrase here is “began questioning Him.” In other words, the disciples desired to know the spiritual truth behind the parable. Caring about the truth is the first step to learning it. Jesus responds that His disciples are in a privileged position: God has granted to them the opportunity to know the “mysteries of the kingdom of God.” The word “mysteries” does not have the same meaning as used in a mystery novel. This word means that which has been hidden from man by God will now come to light. God is granting the disciples—those who have faith in Jesus and desire to know the truth—the blessing of having this spiritual truth revealed to them. It is not a new truth but a spiritual truth newly revealed.

Jesus then quotes from Isaiah 6:9 which is part of a passage involving Isaiah’s commissioning: “Who will go for us?” to which Isaiah responds, “Here am I, send me.” God then informs Isaiah that because of the unbelief of his generation, his message will fall on deaf ears; that is, people who don’t really want to know the truth will reject Isaiah’s message. Jesus is therefore likening Himself to Isaiah. However, that section of the Isaiah continues on to describe a believing remnant. Jesus is likening His disciples to the believing remnant who will hear the message, understand it, take it to heart, and act upon it because of their faith.

One must be careful in interpreting this passage not to come to the conclusion that God is withholding truth from unbelievers. What is being said here is that God is blinding the eyes of those who have already rejected the truth, for they are so far gone there is no turning back from their unbelief, and that all the truth and facts in the world will not change their minds. This is not an unloving act on God’s part, but a supreme act of love, protection, privilege, blessing and revelation for those who are willing to listen and receive the truth.

8:11-15 Jesus now explains the parable to His disciples. The seed is the “word of God.” Today’s equivalent is the Bible. Where the sown seed falls
represents the “ears” of those hearing it. The first seed—that falling on the road—represents those who are blinded by Satan from understanding the truth. In other words, they have allowed Satan to so rule their lives that they are prevented by him from coming under conviction. Most likely, this soil is referring to the Pharisees and scribes who work in opposition to Jesus.

The second soil represents those who “believe for a while.” In other words, the word of God never takes “root” in their lives. They have very little spiritual depth and it doesn’t take much to cause them to forget the word of God and continue living for themselves. An illustration would be a candle that is lit but has little wax to sustain it, and it eventually flickers out. Unlike the third soil that follows, these hearers are those that fail to grasp and maintain the significance of God’s word. There may be narcissistic elements to their personality. When trials or afflictions come their way, they have not allowed God’s truths to penetrate deep enough into their psyche and beliefs systems to trust in, rely upon, and adhere to those truths.

The third soil represents those whose lives are so wrapped up in the world and the cares of the day that they pay little attention to God’s word. This is the person who believes he or she is a follower of Jesus but spends little time in prayer or study of God’s word, mostly because they are just too busy doing other things. God’s word is low on the priority list when it comes to time or interest. Most American evangelicals typify this kind of soil.

The final soil is soil represented by the disciples. In this soil, the word of God is incarnated to the point that their lives are changed as a result. This is the soil of those who actually “do” God’s word; they are not only hearers of the word, but doers (James 1:22). The truths of God’s word not only penetrate their belief systems and their world view, but result in changed behavior, particularly when it comes to relationships. They take seriously the command to “love one another” and to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The result is a changed life and one that produces lasting spiritual fruit, regardless of the circumstances.

How one responds to God’s word is a barometer of how one responds to God Himself. If there is no love for God’s word, then there is most likely no real biblical love for God. Why? Because God’s word is literally God’s voice to us today. Someone might ask, “Why doesn’t God speak to us today like He spoke to the prophets in the Old Testament, or like the Holy Spirit in the New Testament?” The fact is that God does speak to us today—He speaks to us through His word. If one wants to hear the word of God, one need look no further than the Bible. The Bible is literally God’s voice to us today—it is designed to change us.
“Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. So take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”

Luke 8:16-18  Jesus now explains what to do with the word of God once it has been received. This passage can be applied only to the “good soil.” Once receiving the word of God, it is to be shared. It is not to be like a lamp that is covered with a container (in which the lamp would be extinguished due to lack of oxygen) or to be put under a bed (in which the bed would catch fire and become destructive to the holder). The word of God is light because it is the truth about God. It is the light that sets souls free. Therefore, it is to be placed in a position so that it not only lights up a room but serves as a guide for all who see it. The purpose of receiving the word of God, then, is to share the word with others who still walk in darkness. Eventually, light exposes everything. The word of God can expose the hearts of all mankind. It is the light that reveals the truth. A person’s heart may be judged by how he or she first responds to the word of God, as in the earlier picture of the soils. The word is the light and the light is the truth. It is the truth that exposes the depravity of all people in regard to sin,
19 And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.

20 And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”

21 But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.”

and it is the truth that sets people free from depravity and bondage to sin.

Jesus ends His discourse with a warning—“take care how you listen.” This warning refers back to “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” In other words, listen carefully and take the words seriously. Do not just let them go in one ear and out the other, but take them to heart to the point that the word of God is incarnated into one’s life resulting in transformation and sanctification. The warning also implies that one will not always have the word forever. If one hears the word of God but does not act on it, God Himself will remove the word from him. The word of God is “living and active” and not just stagnant information. It is a living organism of truth that stays with those who receive it and act upon it, and is taken away from those who don’t.

8:19-21 The gyrations of illogical reasoning that have attempted to explain away verses 19 and 20 are legion. Some of these maneuvers are designed by liberal scholars to dismiss the miracle of the Virgin Birth altogether. Other maneuvers are designed to defend a corrupt theology surrounding Jesus’ mother, Mary. The glorification of Mary by the Roman Catholic church—which borders often on deification and idolatry—has been around since the beginning of church history, but did not become official until the time of the Reformation. The reasoning behind Mary’s glorification goes like this: if Jesus was born without sin, then it would have been impossible for Mary to have had sin. Therefore, whereas Jesus had a Virgin Birth, Mary had an immaculate conception herself, meaning that she, too, had a miraculous birth and was born without sin. And, to preserve her uniqueness, she could not have had other children, lest they too would have been born without sin. Therefore, the traditional Roman Catholic explanation for verse 19 is that “mother and brothers” refers to Jesus’ followers, not His biological mother and brothers. This interpretation by Maryologists faces grave discrepancies with passages like Matthew 13:55-56 which unequivocally name Jesus’ brothers, and states as well that He also had biological sisters. Recent Roman Catholic scholars, realizing the above interpretation to be tenuous at best, have come up with another heretical explanation. This explanation is that Joseph had children from a previous marriage. Therefore, “mother” does refer to Mary but “brothers” refers to stepbrothers (and stepsisters, in the Matthew passage). The problem with this argument is that there is no shred of evidence in Scripture that Joseph was previously married, a detail that Luke, a thorough and accurate historian, would surely have included in his gospel. The reason for Luke’s omission of this detail, Roman Catholic
22 Now on one of those days Jesus and His disciples got into a boat, and He said to them, “Let us go over to the other side of the lake.” So they launched out.

23 But as they were sailing along He fell asleep; and a fierce gale of wind descended on the lake, and they began to be swamped and to be in danger.

24 They came to Jesus and woke Him up, saying, “Master, Master, we are perishing!” And He got up and rebuked the wind and the surging waves, and they stopped, and it became calm.

25 And He said to them, “Where is your faith?” They were fearful and amazed, saying to one another, “Who then is this, that He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him?”

8:22-23 The boat is probably the same kind of boat Jesus preached from in chapter 5. Jesus directs His disciples to take Him to the other side. The boat would have been large enough to hold all thirteen men, but it would have been quite laden down and low in the water. Whether strong winds from Mt. Hermon sweeping down through the gorges or a thunderstorm with a strong downdraft, either would have been sufficient to make the boat uncontrollable and to swamp it. There was no doubt that the men were in danger, and the assessment by the experienced fishermen was correct. As a result, they panicked and cried out to Jesus.

8:24-25 What happens in the next two verses is a deliberate attempt by Luke to show that Jesus is more than a simple rabbi. Jesus has already demonstrated His authority over demons, He has demonstrated His authority over disease, and He has demonstrated His authority over death at the funeral in Nain. The response of the people has been to refer to Him as “a great prophet.” But Jesus wants His disciples to be witness to the fact that He is more than just a rabbi or a great prophet. Jesus is God.

It is possible that the disciples were recalling the prophet Jonah and his trials, and perhaps wondering which one of their companions was guilty of sin. It is possible that the disciples expected Jesus to identify the culprit and throw him overboard to save their skins. (It was already known by then that Judas Iscariot was dipping into the purse.) They certainly had no expectations that Jesus might actually stop the storm; that thought didn’t even enter their minds.

Note that the disciples call Jesus “Master.” The Greek word is epistates, meaning “chief” or “commander.” So far in Luke, other than one incident when Peter calls Jesus “Lord” (Grk kurios), that is the only term the disciples have used to address Jesus. (Luke himself and others have addressed Jesus as “Lord,” but not the disciples.) This will change at the end of chapter 9; the only term the disciples use thereafter is “Lord” (kurios). This is to point out that up to a point, the disciples were having a difficult
Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes, which is opposite Galilee.

And when He came out onto the land, He was met by a man from the city who was possessed with demons; and who had not put on any clothing for a long time, and was not living in a house, but in the tombs.

Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me."

For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion"; for many demons had entered him.

They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.

Now there was a herd of many swine feeding there on the mountain; and the time acknowledging Jesus as Lord, the Old Testament equivalent being Adonai, thus equating Jesus with God. Luke’s purpose in recording this incident is to help the reader see how the disciples themselves were moving closer to discovering the divinity of Jesus.

That Jesus had authority over nature gave proof of His deity, although the disciples would continue to have a difficult time grasping the significance. Perhaps only after the disciples recalled Psalm 107:23-30 would His deity be apparent and undeniable. The answer to their question, “Who then is this…?” will not be fully answered until the resurrection. Looking back, they will have remembered they witnessed the hand of God on the sea.

When Jesus asks, “Where is your faith?” He is neither rebuking them nor implying that if they had had sufficient faith, they, too, could have commanded the storm to stop. The faith issue here is one of trust in the person of Jesus. With Him present, how could anything happen to them? This lesson is not just a present lesson for the disciples, but one that will abide with them when the storms of persecution arise after Pentecost.

The region where Jesus and the disciples land is an area known as the Decapolis. The region got its name from a string of fortified cities to guard against invasion from the east. Although there were Jews living in the area, the Decapolis was comprised primarily of Gentiles.

Today’s interpretation of the man described here is that of someone with a psychiatric disorder. If not institutionalized, he certainly would have been prescribed heavy psychotropic drugs and extended counseling. The medical community would, of course, dismiss any notion of demon possession, attributing Luke’s diagnosis as appropriate for the day but ignorant in modern times. The reader, therefore, is forced here to make a decision as to whether or not this man was actually the victim of demons or the victim of pure psychiatric disorder. The possible answer is that both are true—this man had a psychiatric disorder as well as demonic possession. The reason is that there is legitimate physiological, pathological and medical explanations for what appears to be schizophrenia, and can be treated with medication and counseling. But what is also true is that demons take advantage of psychiatric weaknesses, finding an open door for possession. Which comes first is hard to say, but either may be true. A psychiatric illness may open the door for demonic possession, or demonic possession may lead to psychiatric illness, which appears to be the situation in this poor individual’s case. Regardless,
demons implored Him to permit them to enter the swine. And He gave them permission.

33 And the demons came out of the man and entered the swine; and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

34 When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they ran away and reported it in the city and out in the country.

35 The people went out to see what had happened; and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting down at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they became frightened.

36 Those who had seen it reported to them how the man who was demon-possessed had been made well.

37 And all the people of the country of the Gerasenes and the surrounding district asked Him to leave them, for they were gripped with great fear; and He got into a boat and returned.

38 But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying,

39 “Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

those who choose to describe this man’s problems as purely psychiatric in nature will be hard pressed to explain the behavior of the swine after his healing.

Note the interplay between the man talking and the demon talking. This is not atypical of demonic possession. Note as well that the demons know full well who Jesus is, quite unlike the men around Him. The name “Legion” refers to the number of demons inhabiting the man, yet there appears to be one who is the leader, and he is called “the unclean spirit.” Some demons are more difficult to send away than others, and the primary spirit appears to have been particularly strong. He is resistant to leaving the man because he is well aware of the fate awaiting him, called “the abyss.” In Greek culture, the abyss refers to a bottomless pit. The abyss is also described as “the outer darkness” in Matthew and “the lake of fire” in Revelation. It is the place where Satan, his demons, and Satan’s human followers go at the end of the age.

It is obvious in this passage that this unfortunate individual has been suffering for quite some time. His demon is described as an “unclean” spirit because of the man’s preoccupation with filthy and self-deprecating habits. It is not unusual for people who are possessed by unclean spirits to handle their own feces which, of course, would make him unclean in Jewish culture.

8:32-33 The herd of swine would have belonged to a Gentile, not a Jew, although the ethnicity of the demon-possessed is never stated. It is quite possible, however, that the demon-possessed man is a Gentile, and this incident is a picture of Christ freeing Gentiles from the bondage of Satan. It is appropriate that the demons wanted to enter the swine; they were unclean spirits wanting to enter unclean animals. This incident also informs us about demons—they can inhabit anything or any living creature. When the demons entered the swine, the herd stampeded off the cliff and drowned in the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is not showing compassion or love for the demons, but instead withholding final judgment. He could have sent them straight to the abyss, their final destination, but this action was not in accord with God’s immediate plan for them.

8:34-39 When the people come out to see what had happened, they witnessed an amazing thing—the man was “in his right mind.” Such a dramatic turnaround would make anyone sit up and take notice. Not only was he in his right mind, but he was sitting at the feet of Jesus who, obviously, was teaching and ministering to the man.

There is a sequence of events that must not be overlooked. When someone has mental illness and demon possession is involved, the first thing that must happen is the person must first come to Christ.
The second thing that must happen is that demonic elements must be dealt with—the demons must be cast out, whether by an exorcism involving a power encounter, or, better yet, a truth encounter through discipleship. Either way, once a person has been led to Christ, the next step is to get demons out of the way from blocking the mind (v. 33; “…and the demons came out of the man…..”). It is only then that medical management (healing) will be effective and lasting. This is where medication and clinical counseling can be helpful (v. 36; “…had been made well.”). Finally, discipleship must take place (v. 35; “…sitting down at the feet of Jesus…..”).

Consistent with a modern-day reaction, the people “became frightened” (v. 35). People become frightened about things they do not understand, and this fear can be manifested as skepticism, especially by the medical community. The result was that “…the people….asked Him to leave” (v. 37). Again, this reaction is typical of a modern-day skepticism concerning the demonic. The restored man, however, begs Jesus to accompany Him. Jesus, knowing that the man could better serve as a witness, sends him away, instructing him to tell others and give his testimony as to the miraculous powers of Jesus to deliver from darkness. The man was obedient and went off preaching the greatness of Jesus.

Deliverance, healing and discipleship should always have as its fruit the proclamation of the good news about Jesus. If this man were indeed a Gentile, then he would have been the first evangelist to Gentiles.

What is truly sad about this story is the reaction of the people. They were not only frightened to see the man in his right mind, but they were probably furious at Jesus over the loss of the herd which would have had a substantial financial impact. So their concern over the loss of profit overruled their concern for the man. That he had been delivered and healed seems of no relevance to the people. This reaction is not unlike the callous response of the Pharisees when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand. Whereas Jesus showed great love for the man, the people showed great love for their financial security. Therefore, instead of inviting Jesus to stay awhile and enjoy the blessings of His healings and teaching, they asked Him to leave.

Finally, the question might be asked, “Did Jesus fail to show love for the people by allowing their livelihood to perish?” The answer to this is simple: He was actually protecting the people, for where else would the legion of demons gone but into other people? (Not to mention, of course, that swine were considered unclean, an appropriate habitat for unclean spirits.)
And as Jesus returned, the people welcomed Him, for they had all been waiting for Him.

And there came a man named Jairus, and he was an official of the synagogue; and he fell at Jesus’ feet, and began to implore Him to come to his house;

for he had an only daughter, about twelve years old, and she was dying. But as He went, the crowds were pressing against Him.

And a woman who had a hemorrhage for twelve years, and could not be healed by anyone,

came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped.

And Jesus said, “Who is the one who touched Me?” And while they were all denying it, Peter said, “Master, the people are crowding and pressing in on You.”

But Jesus said, “Someone did touch Me, for I was aware that power had gone out of Me.”

When the woman saw that she had not escaped notice, she came trembling and fell down before Him, and declared in the presence of all the people the reason why she had touched Him, and how she had been immediately healed.

And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace.”

Notice the different reaction of “the people.” Just awhile ago, a crowd of people had asked Him to leave. Now “…the people welcomed Him….”

Jesus is approached by “an official of the synagogue.” A synagogue official was a layman who arranged services and took care of the administrative matters of the synagogue. He may or may not have been a Pharisee; in this case, it is unlikely that he is. He even may have been present when Jesus cast out a demon in his synagogue in chapter 4.

As the story of Jairus’ daughter unfolds, note that she was twelve years old and she was dying. There will be important similarities in the other story imbedded in this one.

This woman probably had a medical condition called menometrorrhagia; that is, a persistent and excessive menstrual flow, often accompanied by pelvic pain. Physiologically, the condition is very debilitating due to the constant loss of blood. Persistent blood loss results in anemia (low hemoglobin) which in turn causes weakness and excessive fatigue. There were spiritual consequences as well; because of her persistent flow, she would have been declared ceremonially unclean (Lev. 15). Being unclean, she would not have been allowed entry into the Court of Women in the temple, and she would be obligated to inform everyone around her that she was unclean, for touching another person would cause them to become unclean as well. Note, too, that the woman has had this condition for “twelve years,” so that her physical problems started about the same time as Jairus’s daughter was born. There is, of course, no relationship here, but the number twelve has spiritual significance as far as the nation of Israel is concerned.

Stealthily and unannounced (a violation of the law), the woman presses through the crowd and touches the “fringe” of Jesus’ cloak, probably a tassel tied to the edges of the cloak to remind a person of the law. The cloak was a larger and heavier outer garment not tied around the waist. It was a cloak, or mantel, that Elijah passed down to Elisha. Though the woman did not touch Jesus Himself, He senses that someone drew His healing power out of Him, and He asks, “Who…touched Me?” Justifiably terrified and fearing retribution for touching a rabbi, she meekly approaches Jesus and, as did Jairus, falls at His feet, for she realizes she has been healed.

Expecting severe punishment by Jesus and chastisement from the crowd, the woman hears the contrary: “Daughter, your faith has made you well.”

Note a number of similarities in the two stories. First, it is Jairus’ daughter who is ill. Jesus addresses
49 While He was still speaking, someone came from the house of the synagogue official, saying, “Your daughter has died; do not trouble the Teacher anymore.”

50 But when Jesus heard this, He answered him, “Do not be afraid any longer; only believe, and she will be made well.”

51 When He came to the house, He did not allow anyone to enter with Him, except Peter and John and James, and the girl’s father and mother.

52 Now they were all weeping and lamenting for her; but He said, “Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep.”

53 And they began laughing at Him, knowing that she had died.

54 He, however, took her by the hand and called, saying, “Child, arise!”

55 And her spirit returned, and she got up immediately; and He gave orders for something to be given her to eat.

56 Her parents were amazed; but He instructed them to tell no one what had happened.

8:49-50 Jesus now proceeds onto the house of Jairus. Meanwhile, word is brought the Jairus’s daughter has died, and Jairus informs Jesus that coming to his house is no longer necessary. Apparently, Jairus never heard about Jesus raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain. If he did, he isn’t applying that story to his daughter.

Jesus once again turns to the issue of faith. He encourages Jairus, “Only believe.” Was Jesus telling Jairus to simply believe that his daughter would live again? Surely not. He was telling Jairus to believe who Jesus was and what He was capable of doing.

8:51-56 Jesus enters the house. Of the disciples, He has only Peter, John and James accompany Him. This is the first time in Luke that we see Jesus’ inner three disciples. Also with Him are the girl’s parents.

Already the official mourners had arrived at the house and were busily engaged in their wailing and cries of grief. When Jesus instructs them to stop their mourning, that the girl is only “asleep,” He is mocked.

Jesus addresses the girl as “Child,” once again affirming those who are a part of His family. The physician Luke records that her spirit returned to her body and she became alive. Unlike the previous encounter with the demoniac, Jesus instructs everyone “to tell no one what had happened.” This is a curious instruction because the mourners were sure she had died. Thus we understand now why Jesus said to everyone that she was only “asleep.” The mourners who mocked Him because of their lack of faith would now go away thinking that she really had
been only asleep, rather than to believe Jesus raised the girl from the dead. Thus, those who “only believe” are rewarded for their faith, but those who “laugh” and mock are sent away continuing in their unbelief.

The common theme, therefore, echoing throughout this chapter is “faith” and believing who Jesus is and what He can do. The faith theme has been introduced in the parable of the soils, was directed toward the disciples during the storm, was addressed toward the woman with the issue of blood, and was preeminent in the raising of Jairus’ daughter. Those who have faith and received God’s word are the good soil, but those who did not believe are placed in the other kinds of soil that produce no fruit.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, Luke states that Jesus and His disciples had a financial support group. Does Luke call this a tithe? What was the purpose of those who provided for Jesus and His disciples? Was the financial support for basic necessities, for running an empire, or for providing luxury housing and transportation for the team?

2. What is your opinion about those who propose that Jesus and Mary Magdalene became secretly married and possibly had a child? What do you think will be the final outcome for those who make those suggestions, or who make financial gain from such speculations?

3. Are you able to explain the four types of soil that Jesus described in His parable of the sown seed? Which category would you fit yourself in? If you do not fit yourself in the “good soil,” what do you plan on doing about that?

4. How does the parable of the sown seed relate to the “faith” theme throughout the chapter? If the good soil produces fruit, what is to be done with the “seed” that is received and the fruit that is produced? Are you presently engaged in fulfilling that instruction? If not, why, and what do you plan on doing about that?

5. What is an application of the story about Jesus calming the sea? Can you identify with that application personally? If Jesus can immediately calm the storm, why do you think He is not immediately calming the storms in your life?

6. The common theme in the story of the calming of the sea, the healing of the woman with the issue of blood, and the resurrection of Jairus’s daughter, is faith. But does this faith need to be qualified? Is simply having faith and believing strongly in something the key to healing? In other words, is believing in something strongly the key, or is it trust in the Person rather than the outcome? What is the primary qualification for the faith?

7. Do you know anyone who has mental or emotional problems? Is that person receiving medication and counseling only, or has the issue of demonic influence ever been addressed? Is it possible that there may be a demonic aspect to this person’s problems? If that is a possibility, what do you plan on doing about it? (Of course, this question can be applied to oneself!)
8:1-3 – The companions following Jesus: many who followed were ________________________________

8:4-15 – The parable of the sower and the seed: a picture of how people respond to __________________________

8:16-18 – The warning following the parable of the sower: take care how ______________________________

8:19-21 – Jesus’ family: Jesus had __________________________________________________________________

8:22-25 – Jesus calms the storm: Jesus rebukes the disciples for their ________________________________

8:26-39 – The healing of the Gerasene demoniac: from demon possession to ______________________________

8:40-42, 49-56 – The resurrection of Jairus’s daughter: a Jewish ruler believes Jesus can _________________

8:43-48 – The unclean woman with an issue of blood: her faith ________________________________

8:53-56 – The response to the question of the Sabbath day: teaching ________________________________
8:1-3 – The companions following Jesus: many who followed were women
- See if the disciple can find the connection between the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8.
- Inform the disciple that of all the gospel writers, Luke was the one who most often mentioned women.
- Ensure that the disciple understands that women were just as important disciples as were the men. They especially took on the role of securing provisions for Jesus and the twelve apostles. And women followers of Jesus were just as important as the men in remembering the details of Jesus’ earthly ministry, and it was to Mary Magdalene that Jesus first presented Himself at the resurrection.

8:4-15 – The parable of the sower and the seed: a picture of how people respond to the word
- Ensure that the disciple knows what a parable is: a story that could be true (but isn’t necessarily), that always teaches a spiritual lesson, and one that reveals spiritual truth to believers but hides spiritual truth from unbelievers.
- Have the disciple tell the parable of the seed sown in his or her own words. See if the disciple can remember people he or she has known who fit into each category.
- Make sure the disciple does not attach the concept of being saved to this parable, as is often done from the pulpit. The point of the parable is clear: it is a parable that teaches how people respond to God’s word. Any attachment of salvation is deductive, not inductive.
- Make sure the disciple is able to describe the different types of soil, and especially for the second and third soils. Have the disciple come up with specific examples from everyday life.
- This parable can be a great source of encouragement to the disciple. The disciple’s desire to study the word is a good indicator of seed that is falling on “good soil.”
- The disciple may have difficulty understanding the meaning of verse 10. The discipler may refer the disciple to the source, Isaiah 6:9. This verse has become a stumbling block to those who have not “been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.”

8:16-18 – The warning following the parable of the sower: take care how you listen
- Help the disciple see the relationship between the first parable (sown seed) and the second parable (lamp). (Hint: it is related to “bear fruit with perseverance.”)
- Make sure the disciple understands the meaning of the second parable.
- Ensure that the disciple knows and can explain the significance of the word “listen.” The discipler may want to have the disciple look up James 1:22.

8:19-21 – Jesus’ family: Jesus had brothers and sisters
- If the disciple was brought up as a Roman Catholic, he or she may have some difficulty with verses 19-21. To reinforce the fact that Jesus had brothers and sisters, have the disciple look up Matt. 13:55-56 where they are named. Ask the disciple state the clear and logical meaning of the texts.
- It’s very important that the disciple understand that the Catholic doctrine of “Immaculate Conception” does not refer to Jesus’ conception by the Holy Spirit, but to Mary’s conception by her parents, and that it states that Mary herself was without sin. Inform the disciple that the doctrine of Immaculate Conception was not officially recognized by the Catholic church until about the time of Martin Luther and the beginning of the Reformation in the mid-1500s.
8:22-25 – Jesus calms the storm: Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith in Him
- There are two important points for the disciple to grasp in his incident. First, it is the acknowledgement that Jesus is not just a very good teacher or miracle worker. The disciple should realize that this incident demonstrates clearly that Jesus is divine and has powers that only God has. This is a proof to Jesus’ disciples that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Second, the disciple should attempt to make application out of this incident. If Jesus can control the weather, He can control anything. But be careful; the disciple mustn’t assume that Jesus will make all trials and “storms” of life go away. This is the lesson: “Where is your faith?” The faith is not that Jesus will make all “storms” become calm, but that He is still in control. Of course, after this life is over, all storms will indeed be calmed.

8:26-39 – The healing of the Gerasene demoniac: from demon possession to evangelist
- Ask the disciple what he or she thinks was wrong with the man described in verse 27. If the disciple states there was a mental or psychiatric disorder, have the disciple read the text again. Make sure that the disciple understands that the source of the man’s problems were demonic, and that it was the demon possession that affected his mental and behavioral health. If the man wasn’t demon possessed, how else could the reaction of the swine be explained?
- This may not be the time, however, to launch into the subject of demonology. Be careful that it does not distract from the true message of Jesus’ encounter with the man; that is, his deliverance.
- Have the disciple describe the reaction of the townspeople. Why is this such a sad situation?
- Have the disciple describe why Jesus instructed the man not to go with Him. What was the man’s greater mission?
- Finally, have the disciple discover the elements of love—or sometimes lack of it—that are interwoven throughout this incident.

8:40-42, 49-56 – The resurrection of Jairus’s daughter: a Jewish ruler believes Jesus can raise the dead
- The love motif continues into these next two encounters. Have the disciple identify them.
- This, of course, is not the first resurrection performed by Jesus. With the widow in Nain, it was her only son who had died. In this incident, it is Jairus’s only child. What was significant about Jairus’s status in the Jewish community, and why is that important to the story?
- When Jesus arrives at the house, He is greeted by official mourners. What is ironic that they so quickly move from mourning to “laughing”?
- Have the disciple determine how faith plays a role in Jairus’s request of Jesus. Obviously, Jairus believed that Jesus could heal his sick daughter, but it never occurred to him that Jesus could also raise her from the dead.
- When arriving at Jairus’s house, ask the disciple why Jesus only allowed Peter, James and John, and the girl’s parents, to be witnesses to the resurrection.
- Jesus instructs the parents to give the girl something to eat. Why did He do that? (It falls into the category of proof.)
- How does the act of raising from the dead fit with the story of the woman with an issue of blood?

8:43-48 – The unclean woman with an issue of blood: her faith saves her
- Ask the disciple to describe the similarities of these two encounters by Jesus. How were both Jairus’s daughter and the woman with the issue of blood raised from the dead?
- What role did the woman’s faith play in her healing? How did her faith differ from Jairus’s?
- Ask the disciple to describe how this woman’s social and spiritual life would change as a result of her being healed from a constant flow of blood. (This may require some review of Jewish laws concerning a woman’s menstrual cycle. See Lev. 15:25-30.)
Overview of Luke 9
This chapter turns the corner on Jesus’ ministry. He now must begin challenging His disciples on their expectations regarding the Messiah and His mission. The chapter begins by Jesus sending the twelve apostles out on their own to prepare them for when He will no longer be with them— their first on-the-job training session. This training will be reinforced by the feeding of the five thousand, as Jesus will make it clear to the disciples what their role will be when He departs. Jesus will also take up to a mountain His inner three disciples—Peter, John and James—and allow them a snapshot of what the millennial reign will be like; this event is called the transfiguration. Following that experience, Jesus will then begin to inform the disciples that following Him will not be easy, and they will, in effect, have to give up their own lives and become fully committed to a life, not of glory, but of hardship.

What to look for in Luke 9
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for change that should be taking place in the thinking of the disciples as to who Jesus is and in regard to their expectations.
3. Look for the cost of being a truly committed disciple of Jesus Christ.
4. Look for the numerous “training episodes” that Jesus exposes the disciples to.
5. Look for the metaphorical relationship between bread and the word.
6. Look for some false conclusions the disciples come to as they perceive their role with the Messiah.
7. Identify why Jesus is the sum of the Law and the Prophets, and what event confirms this.

1 And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases.
2 And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.
3 And He said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not even have two tunics apiece.
4 “Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that city.
5 “And as for those who do not receive you, as you go out from that city, shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”
6 Departing, they began going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.

9:1-6 This is the first on-the-job training session for the twelve apostles on their own. Note that verse 1 states Jesus gave them “power and authority over all the demons….” There is a difference between power and authority. Power implies force and physical strength; authority implies a delegated right to influence. A traffic policeman does not have the physical power to stop a car at an intersection, but he has the authority. He blows his whistle and raises his hand to stop; the driver is obligated to stop his car. Authority is positional; that is, authority has been delegated to the traffic officer to control the flow of cars. He directs traffic by virtue of his positional authority. Power, on the other hand, is physical in nature. For the twelve, the power is the spoken word invoking the name of Jesus. That is all the power they need because they have been given authority over the demons. Because of the twelve’s authority and power, the demons are obligated to obey, for the disciples’ authority and power has been given to them by Jesus Himself. The power and authority is also extended to include healing diseases. This power and authority will remain with the disciples after
7 Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was happening; and he was greatly perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead,

8 and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the prophets of old had risen again.

9 Herod said, “I myself had John beheaded; but who is this man about whom I hear such things?” And he kept trying to see Him.

Pentecost.

One must be careful not to attribute all diseases to demonic influence. While it is true that disease can be the result of demonic influence, that is certainly not true concerning all disease or illness. The true source of all sickness is man’s fallen nature which has resulted in corrupted flesh which is prone to fallibility and disease.

Offering healing is one of the greatest and most powerful ways to show love. In their physical distress, people need to know there are those who care and some who are actually medically qualified to bring about healing. Few Christians these days, however, are qualified to offer healing from diseases that are indeed the result of demonic powers, and that is what made the apostles unique. But anyone today can offer help to those who are genuinely physically hurting.

Notice, too, that the healing that was offered was to be accompanied with proclamation. When the apostles brought physical healing and deliverance from demonic powers, what they had to say about the kingdom of God had more credibility. And it is the proclamation of the kingdom of God that heals the soul. Physical healing and deliverance from demonic powers do not heal the soul and bring about salvation. It is the proclamation that brings about eternal life and, again, anyone can proclaim the kingdom of God.

Finally, the apostles are not to waste their time trying to bring healing or proclaim the kingdom to those who have already made up their minds to reject the message. “Dusting off your feet” is a Hebraism for leaving the rejection behind and moving on, as dirt is a metaphor for being unclean.

9:7-9 (For Herod, see commentary on 3:19). It is surprising that those surrounding Herod would share with him that some were believing John the Baptist “had risen from the dead.” Herod was surrounded mostly by the Sadducees—who did not believe in a resurrection—and the Herodians, who were a political party supportive of Herod from a Roman perspective. Others believed that Jesus was Elijah or some Old Testament prophet who had come back from the dead. The reference to Elijah comes from Malachi 4:5-6 and is specific to the appearance of the Messiah. The rabbis often argued whether Malachi’s reference to Elijah was literal (that Elijah would reappear, as it is clear in 2 Kings 2:14 that Elijah did not die) or figurative (that someone like Elijah would come along). From Matthew 17, we know that it is clear the latter view prevailed, as Jesus referred to John the Baptist as Elijah. This makes Herod’s statement in verse 9 all the more ironic—he thought he had gotten rid of “Elijah.” From Herod’s perspective, the return of Elijah would mean that the
10 When the apostles returned, they gave an account to Him of all that they had done. Taking them with Him, He withdrew by Himself to a city called Bethsaida.

11 But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing.

12 Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place.”

13 But He said to them, “You give them something to eat!” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people.”

14 (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, “Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each.”

15 They did so, and had them all sit down.

16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the Messiah was about to arrive, which would in turn would mean the overthrow of his government. Perhaps even more ironic is that the real Elijah will appear toward the end of this chapter. So, in that case, both views were correct, but only the followers of Jesus would come to understand that.

One application here is the self-deception of those who are incapable of love. Herod, incapable of love, had John beheaded at Herodias’s request. Is it even possible that he would have shown love toward Jesus and turned his life around? Unlikely. The point here is that those in positions of political power do not get there by acts of love, but by acts of violence and greed. In regard to government, it is the way of the world, and that is why followers of Jesus Christ long for His return, that the world might be ruled by love rather than power.

9:10-11 Bethsaida, a town located along the Jordan River as it empties into the upper part of the Sea of Galilee, was the original home of Peter, Philip and Andrew. (Peter later relocated to Capernaum.) Jesus’ love for others is manifested by His willingness to minister to the crowds, most likely at the dismay of the disciples who were tired and ready for a vacation! Nevertheless, they will learn from this experience that there is no such thing as biblical love without personal sacrifice. It is hard to minister to others in need when you are tired and want to get away. Nevertheless, the administration of love is a tireless occupation, as we will see in the next paragraph.

9:12 There is great irony here. Note the phrase, “…here we are in a desolate place.” People without the word of God are in a desolate place spiritually. The “feeding” that is to come is a picture of feeding God’s word to those who are in desolate places spiritually. The most loving thing any Christian can do for those who are in desolate places spiritually is to feed them God’s word.

9:12-17 It may not be obvious to the casual reader of the Scripture, but the key word in his section is “twelve.” It was the “twelve” who came to Jesus and suggested He send the crowds away, but when the feeding of the five thousand is over, there will be “twelve baskets full!” Matthew and Mark include in their gospels that there was another feeding, called the feeding of the four thousand. There are many lessons to be learned from both.

First of all, Jesus and the disciples had left Bethsaida and were out in the hills east of town, but perhaps within walking distance of Bethsaida and other villages. When they suggest to Jesus that the crowd be sent away from Him and seek food and lodging, Jesus makes an amazing statement: “You give them something to eat,” with the emphasis on
people.
17 And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full. “You.” Their response is logical: they don’t have enough food to feed that many people. (If there were an equal number of women and children, there would have been about 10,000 people!) That there are five loaves of bread and two fish is symbolic: the bread represents the word and the fish represents the gospel, or the message about Jesus. (The fish symbol became representative of the gospel, as the Greek word for fish is icthus, which served as an acrostic for “Jesus Christ, God’s Son, Savior.”) Jesus is instructing His disciples to give the people the word and the gospel. However, the disciples are not ready to understand Jesus’ teaching, and continue to think only in logical, material terms.

The first thing Jesus instructs the disciples to do is to organize the people into groups of fifty. This grouping is symbolic of the church; that is, the assembly of believers. Mark includes the detail that Jesus had the people sit on “green grass” (6:39.) This is symbolic of good food for sheep. He then takes the bread and fish, blesses them (the word and the gospel message are blessed), and begins breaking them into small pieces, and the disciples set “the food” “before the people.” The bread and the fish keep coming! So it is with the word of God and the gospel. It is to be dispensed before the followers of Jesus, and it will never run out. As a result, all the people were “satisfied.”

The final piece of this story involves the twelve baskets full. There were two kinds of everyday baskets in Jewish culture. Smaller baskets, like these presented here, and “large baskets” referred to by Mark in the feeding of the four thousand. Both types of baskets have symbolic significance. This incident—the feeding of the five thousand—takes place in Galilee where Jews lived. The twelve small baskets are symbolic of two things. First, they are symbolic of the twelve disciples, each of whom can only provide a portion of the total. Second, the twelve baskets represent the word and gospel given to the twelve tribes. Many Jews will reject the gospel, and therefore the baskets are small.

In the feeding of the four thousand in Mark, however, there are “seven large baskets.” The significance here is that this feeding takes place in the Decapolis, a land of the Gentiles. The number seven represents an infinite or perfect number, or number untold, and is representative of the Gentiles; that is, the word and gospel which will be spread throughout the whole world with untold numbers of followers.

It will not be until well into the early church that these events become evident to the twelve. When they see the gospel is taken to the Gentiles, first through Peter, and later through the apostle Paul, they will come to realize the significance of the feedings.

Finally, there is the motivation behind feeding of
18 And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the people say that I am?”

19 They answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others say Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”

20 And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”

21 But He warned them and instructed them not to tell this to anyone,

22 saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

God’s sheep the word and the gospel. Mark states, “When…(Jesus) saw a large crowd…He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.…” The motivation for giving God’s sheep the word and giving the unsaved the gospel is the same motivation by which God sent His only Son into the world—love (John 3:16). Jesus was ultimately teaching the disciples that if they truly love God’s sheep and a lost world, they will feed them out of love and compassion.

9:18-22 Notice that Jesus was praying alone. What do you suppose He was praying about? Most likely, based on the context, He was asking the Father if it was the right time for Him to reveal His true identity to the disciples. Note that this event occurs right after He has displayed His deity during the feeding of the five thousand. Yet the disciples are still having a hard time accepting that He is indeed the Christ, the Messiah.

Jesus doesn’t just tell the disciples that He is the Christ. He wants to know if the Father has revealed His true identity to any of the disciples. So He asks them, “Who do the people say that I am?” Notice that the answer is the same as found in verses 7 and 8. But it is interesting that no one is saying that He is the Messiah. So finally Jesus asks the disciples who they think He is. It is Peter who declares that Jesus is the Messiah, “the Christ of God.” Matthew includes the fact that coming to the realization of who Christ is wasn’t of his own doing; it was God who revealed that knowledge to him.

There is an important point here. Realizing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, comes from God Himself through the Holy Spirit. Recognizing Jesus as the Christ is an act of divine will, not man’s will.

Now, the next two verses are crucial to understanding Christ’s mission. The background is this: all Jews were looking for the Messiah. Based on Old Testament Scriptures, their assumption was that the Messiah would come in glory, overthrow the Gentile nations, and establish His kingdom on earth. That is why Jesus instructs the disciples to “tell no one,” for chaos would break out with anticipation of a new king, and the bloodshed amongst the Jews by the Romans would be horrific. But what the majority failed to see was one Christ, two comings. The Scriptures, such as Isaiah 53, clearly stated that the Messiah must first be rejected, suffer, and be killed. What no one realized at the time was that the Messiah had to come first to pay for the sins of all mankind. In other words, mankind’s sin needed to be dealt with before Christ could come and set up His kingdom on earth. Therefore, when Jesus announces that He must first be handed over to the religious authorities, be scourged and eventually crucified, no one is willing
23 And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.

24 “For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.

25 “For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?

26 “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.

27 “But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

to accept that. According to Matthew, Peter rebukes Jesus for suggesting that, and Jesus turns and scolds Peter.

The other part the disciples missed in Jesus’ statement is that He would be resurrected. Had they paid close attention to “…be raised up on the third day,” they might have realized that His death would not be permanent.

In terms of practical application, the call to suffer and sacrifice for the sake of Christ is often lost on the American Christian. The truth of God’s word, however, is that suffering and sacrifice go hand in hand with following Jesus. Christians are not always called upon to suffer for Christ’s sake, but Christians are always called to sacrifice. No Christian will accept suffering and sacrifice for Christ unless he or she is able to accept that God’s love was at the root of Jesus’ suffering and sacrifice. It was Jesus’ love that drove Him to the cross. Being willing to suffer and sacrifice in His name only occurs if the follower is willing to love Him as He has loved us.

9:23-27 The suffering that Jesus will be taking upon Himself is going to be shared with His followers. To deny oneself is to sacrifice for the sake of the cause; in this case, the gospel. To “…take up his cross” is a euphemism for suffering and sacrifice, well known in Jesus’ day and clearly understood—but not necessarily accepted—by the disciples. The implication is clear: the true follower of Jesus is willing to suffer and sacrifice in the name of Jesus. This can only be done through love. One might sacrifice and suffer for a cause for a while, but without love as the root motive, the sacrifice will be short-lived.

The love motif continues in verse 24. Followers of Jesus have a choice. Who will they love more, themselves or Jesus? True followers of Jesus love Him more than themselves, and therefore are willing to suffer and sacrifice on His behalf. However, this concept must be kept in perspective. There are many Christians today, just as there have been in the history of the church, who do terrible things to others, thinking that they are demonstrating their love for Jesus. That is why, as we will see clearly later in the Scriptures, that Christians are to be under “the royal law” according the James 1:15: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no such thing as loving Jesus and failing to love your neighbor. Any notion short of that is clearly deception.

Verse 25 carries the suffering and sacrifice teaching into the realm of materialism; that is, one’s lifestyle and interaction with the things of the world. A cursory interpretation of this verse tends to put the onus on non-Christians; that is often how this verse is applied in evangelical conversations. But those who
28 Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.

29 And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming.

30 And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,

31 who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.

32 Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.

33 And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying.
34 While he was saying this, a cloud formed and began to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.
35 Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, My Chosen One; listen to Him!”
36 And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

37 On the next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met Him.
38 And a man from the crowd shouted, saying, “Teacher, I beg You to look at my son, for he is my only boy,
39 and a spirit seizing him, and he suddenly screams, and it throws him into a convulsion with foaming at the mouth; and only with difficulty does it leave him, mauling him as it leaves.
40 “I begged Your disciples to cast it out, and they could not.”
41 And Jesus answered and said, “You unbelieving and perverted generation, how long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

reader that they were talking about Jesus’ “departure.” This would involve Christ’s crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.

9:32-36 This is the first of at least two occasions when the disciples fall asleep while Jesus is praying. Upon awakening, Peter immediately wants to build a memorial of the occasion. Most likely, he has the Feast of Booths in mind which, for Christians, is a type of Millennium, the future glory of God on earth. To Peter, this is proof that the Messiah is coming in glory. But Jesus has already informed Peter that He must “suffer many things…and be killed…” It has not yet been revealed to Peter that Jesus must first die for the sins of all mankind. That is an important lesson all Christians must learn: before the glory comes the sacrifice.

9:35 Peter is sternly rebuked by God. The key instruction is “…listen to Him!” In other words, obey Jesus’ words. Peter’s initial response is typical of all mankind: he wanted to build a monument to remember an event or a person. God is not the least bit interested in grand edifices or sacred monuments—He is interested in His sheep. Jesus’ followers are themselves to be the monuments to Christ, and they are to reflect His glory. It is infinitely easier to build a structure, such as a church, than it is to build the glory of God into the life of the believer. Just as it is easier to keep the law than to love one another, it is easier to build memorials than to obey. Ironically, Peter gets the number right—three. Peter, James and John will become the living tabernacles (memorials) of Christ’s glory.

9:36 Peter will never again suggest building a structure. There is no record in the Book of Acts that building a church structure was ever discussed.

9:37-43 While Peter, James and John were with Jesus on the mountain, the rest of the disciples were busy ministering to the crowds as best they could. However, they have encountered a father whose only son is destructively controlled by “an unclean spirit.” They are unable to cast out the demon.

9:41-43a Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples is an indication that they have yet to fully grasp their role in the kingdom of God. They have yet to realize that through Christ, they have authority over all demonic powers, in spite of their earlier adventure at the beginning of the chapter. They will appreciate this in the early days of the church, however, after they have been anointed by the Holy Spirit.

What is more important here is that the disciples are lumped into the rest of the “generation.” That is, there does not appear to be any difference in their faith and the faith of the crowd. This is a stunning rebuke, having been with Jesus for a while and having recently returned from a spectacular
Luke 9

42 While he was still approaching, the demon slammed him to the ground and threw him into a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the boy and gave him back to his father.

43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God.

But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples, 44 “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”

45 But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

46 An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.

47 But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,
48 and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.”

One must be careful in interpreting verse 48. Jesus is not teaching the disciples here that they must have the faith of a child, or in Matthew’s words, “humble himself as a child” (Matt. 18:4). Luke omits that part of the equation. Note carefully that Jesus’ teaching here rests upon the notion “to receive” (stated four times). Any discussion of greatness always results in a hierarchy of importance. In Jewish culture, women, and especially children, were at the bottom of the totem pole in terms of their importance. Jesus is stating clearly that a child is just as important to the kingdom of God as any one of the disciples. This concept will be played out later when it comes to receiving Gentiles into the church. Jesus is clearly saying that receiving those who are considered “least” is akin to receiving Him. Luke, the Gentile and the companion of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, would particularly focus on this teaching.

The lesson here is clear: if a disciple of Jesus Christ truly obeys the commandment to love one another, there is literally no one who cannot be received into the church. This principle will be become evident when the gospel is taken to the Samaritans. The message of salvation to the Samaritans will be written about in the Book of Acts, which is why Luke includes the incident a few verses down (51-56).

49 John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.”

50 But Jesus said to him, “Do not hinder him; for he who is not against you is for you.”

The point here is this: Jesus is not as concerned about who casts out demons as He is about making disciples, and preparing them for the coming church age. It’s not casting out demons that makes one great, it’s obeying Jesus’ words and reflecting His glory that makes one great in the kingdom of Heaven.

51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for that Satan himself may have been the instigator of this dissension within the ranks.

9:49-50 This next dialogue is a continuation of the words “in My name” in the previous verse. John has not only missed the true meaning of “in My name,” but he is saying that “in Your name” is a formula that anybody can use in an attempt to be great. The person mentioned by John appears to be having some success casting out demons. (There were many Jewish exorcists at the time.) John’s concern is twofold: first, can just anybody use “in Jesus’ name” as a formula? Second, if he is using “in Jesus’ name,” shouldn’t he be following along and making the same sacrifices as the rest of the disciples?

The point here is this: Jesus is not as concerned about who casts out demons as He is about making disciples, and preparing them for the coming church age. It’s not casting out demons that makes one great, it’s obeying Jesus’ words and reflecting His glory that makes one great in the kingdom of Heaven.

9:51 Verse 51 marks a major subject change and is a turning point in Luke’s gospel. This section continues through chapter 19, verse 17. The next 10 chapters, therefore, focus on Jesus’ determination to fulfill His mission in Jerusalem; that is, the crucifixion and resurrection.

9:52-56 The Samaritans were a hybrid race of Jewish
53 But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.
54 When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”
55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;
56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” And they went on to another village.

57 As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.”
58 And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”
59 And He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.”
60 But He said to him, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.”
61 Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.”
62 But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”

and non-Jewish settlers, the latter having been brought in by the Assyrians after the collapse of the Northern Kingdom (722 B.C.). Over the centuries, the Samaritans had forged their own religion. Instead of Mt. Zion, their temple was on Mt. Gerizim. Their religion was part Jewish and part pagan. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews and considered unclean. Unfortunately, their territory lay between Galilee and Judea, and Jews traveling to Jerusalem would either have to travel through the unclean land of Samaria or take a longer route on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

Here we encounter the word “receive” again. (See verse 48.) In this case, Jesus and His disciples are not welcomed in one of the villages. They were most likely rejected because they had made their intent clearly to worship in Jerusalem, an insult to the Samaritans.

James and John’s brash attempt to punish the Samaritans for not receiving Jesus is rebuked. Jesus informs them that their spirits are not right; they are not aligned with Jesus’ mission: not “to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” This instruction is the essence of God’s love expressed even toward those who are “least.” The clear message for the Christian is that God will exercise His wrath, not on the ignorant, but on those who are truly wicked, and do so according to His timetable. The kind of love that God expresses will be learned by the disciples as they later take the message of salvation to the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25). It’s love that wins people to Christ, not threats.

9:57-62 As Jesus and His disciples head toward Jerusalem and the inevitability of the cross, He encounters a number of individuals who want to jump on the bandwagon. Each person wants to be part of the excitement, but none of them truly understand the cost and the consequences.

Someone shouts, “I will follow You wherever You go.” This is clearly a commitment made without considering the cost, for the cost of following Christ will result in suffering, sacrifice and even death.

Unfortunately, the gospel is often preached minimizing, if not completely ignoring, this truth. There is no such thing as following Christ without also being willing to suffer and sacrifice “in His name.” Churches, in order to gain members, have often been guilty of creating cultural Christians; those who enjoy the benefits and blessings of being a Christian without having to pay a price. Jesus makes it clear here that in order to follow Him, things of the world, even some legitimate things, must be sacrificed.

In verses 59-60, another person is specifically called by Jesus to follow Him. This individual has an
excuse, however. He needs to stick around the farm until his father passes away. Then, not only will he have gained an inheritance, but he believes he will be free to follow Jesus. This is clearly a case of self-deception. If truth be told, there is never a good time to follow Jesus, and there is always a good time to follow Jesus. There is only now. Jesus puts the man’s thought processes in perspective: his father is already dead spiritually. If he wants a real inheritance, experience the joy of proclaiming the gospel and watch people change from being spiritually dead to spiritually alive. Then he will receive an inheritance in heaven.

The last person Luke records (verses 61-62) has good intentions but a divided loyalty. One cannot go in and out of following Jesus. The follower cannot pick and choose when and how he wants to follow. Following Jesus is a life-long commitment that is always, always, always moving forward and never backward.

Behind all of these excuses is a love for the world that is greater than a love for the lost. The heart of the issue is not just becoming a disciple of Jesus. The heart of the issue is love for a lost world. If these individuals truly had a love for the lost, they would have left everything instantly.

Hopefully, they realized their error after the resurrection.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? What key events or sayings stand out in your memory? Chances are, what has stuck in your memory is what the Spirit is causing you to think about. Take a moment to reflect on your memory. Is the Lord teaching your something, something about yourself that needs to change?

2. Did you notice that in the first paragraph, verses 1-6, there is a very strong emphasis on healing as a part of the proclamation of the gospel? Why do you think that Christians do not see as much of that today? That is, why aren’t Christians who are involved in evangelism equally given the gift of healing? Do you think it may be a question of authority, or do you think that physical healing in this chapter may be a “type” of something else?

3. What are some of the lessons that can be learned from the feeding of the five thousand? Better yet, how can these lessons be applied to your belief, behavior and lifestyle today?

4. What has God told you about suffering and sacrifice in regards to being a follower of Jesus Christ? Do you have a specific plan to do anything about it?

5. Where would you place yourself in Jesus’ phrase, “You unbelieving and perverted (twisted, misled) generation…”?

6. Have you ever fallen into the trap of considering “greatness”? What are some of the subtle ways in which we can fall into that trap, such as thinking a lot about what others think of us, or doing things to find favor with others, or promoting or glorifying ourselves? Is there a sin here that needs to be confessed?

7. In the last paragraph of the chapter (verses 57-62), do any of the statements would-be followers asked Jesus sound familiar? What is holding you back from being a “right now” follower of Jesus?
9:1-6 – Jesus sends out the twelve apostles and gives them ________________________________

9:7-9 – The perplexity over Jesus by ________________________________

9:10-17 – The feeding of the five thousand; key words are “ ______________________________ ”

9:18-22 – Jesus queries the disciples on His identity, and informs them that __________________________

9:23-27 – Jesus’ call for ________________________________

9:28-36 – Jesus takes Peter, James and John on the mountain, the ________________________________

9:37-45 – Jesus casts out a demon that the disciples could not; He chastises them for their _________________

9:46-48 – The argument over which one of the disciples is greatest; Jesus instructs them with a _________________

9:49-56 – The turning point in Luke’s gospel: Jesus is determined to go to ________________________________

9:57-62 – Jesus’ instruction on what it means to ________________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 9

9:1-6 – Jesus sends out the twelve apostles and gives them power and authority

- It will be important for the discipler to explain the difference between having point and having authority.
- Have the disciple define what was the primary mission of the twelve. (It was not healing and casting out demons; it was “to proclaim the kingdom of God.” Power and authority were given to them to help them do their job.)
- Make sure the disciple knows what the response of the twelve was in regard to those who out-and-out rejected them.
- It will be important for the discipler to help the disciple make personal application to this event. In other words, how is God speaking to the disciple through this event?

9:7-9 – The perplexity over Jesus by King Herod

- The discipler might want to have the disciple look up Malachi 4:5-6 to completely understand this passage.
- If the disciple doesn’t know already, explain the different views of the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerning resurrection. (The Pharisees believed in resurrection; the Sadducees did not. A clever way to remember the difference is the saying, “That’s so sad, you see” for Sadducee.)

9:10-17 – The feeding of the five thousand; key words are “You give them something to eat!”

- Have the disciple speculate on how the twelve might have been responded to Jesus when they returned from their mission (9:10-11). (Most likely, they would have been super excited with lots of stories to tell.)
- Have the disciple explain in his or her own words the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Help the disciple understand the meaning of the “bread” and “fish,” and what they represent. Also, explain why there were twelve baskets full left over, and what that represents.
- Make sure the disciple can make personal application to this event; that it is not just a nice story about Jesus, but a lesson for all disciples of Jesus Christ.

9:18-22 – Jesus queries the disciples on His identity, and informs them that He must suffer

- As an interesting exercise, have the disciple describe what people today say who Jesus is. That is, “He was a great teacher,” “He was the founder of a religion called Christianity,” “He was a great prophet,” or “He was an angel.” Now ask, “But who do you think Jesus was?”
- Have the disciple speculate on why Jesus told His disciples to tell no one that he was the Christ (aka the Messiah).
- Have the disciple speculate on how Peter came up with the answer that Jesus was the Christ.
- Make sure the disciple understands that this is the first time Jesus informs His disciple that He must suffer and “be killed.” Help the disciple understand why the twelve would have had a hard time accepting that information from Jesus. What were the disciples expecting the Messiah would do?
- It’s very important for the disciple to understand that our expectations of Jesus and God may be entirely different from what God’s plan actually is.

9:23-27 – Jesus’ call for sacrificial discipleship

- Help the disciple to see the relationship in theme and thought between verse 22 and verses 23-26. What is the relationship between Jesus suffering and the call of the disciple to suffer? Make sure the disciple knows the difference between suffering and sacrifice. (Not all of Christ’s disciples are called to suffer, but all are called to sacrifice.)
- The disciple may have difficulty interpreting verse 27. Explain from the commentary.
9:28-36 – Jesus takes Peter, James and John on the mountain, the transfiguration
- The Transfiguration is an important event for the disciple to understand. The discipler will need to explain the importance of Moses and Elijah in regard to the Law and the Prophets. The disciple may not be aware of the fact that Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land when he led the Israelites out of Egypt, but now is with Jesus in the Promised Land. Ask the disciple how that relates to resurrection.
- Have the disciple attempt to describe why Peter wanted to build three tabernacles, and how that could have fed into sinful man’s tendency to worship idols.
- Inform the disciple that this is the second time the voice of the Father has been recorded. Where was the first? (At Jesus’ baptism.)

9:37-45 – Jesus casts out a demon that the disciples could not; He chastises them for their unbelief
- Ask the disciple to describe what happened when Jesus, Peter, James and John came down off the mountain of Transfiguration.
- In verse 41, make sure that the disciple understands that the NASB translation “perverted” does not have sexual connotations as it does in American culture. The term basically means “twisted,” “distorted,” or “not thinking correctly.”
- Ask the disciple why he or she thinks Jesus chastised His disciples for their unbelief.

9:46-48 – The argument over which one of the disciples is greatest; Jesus instructs them with a child
- Have the disciple speculate on why the disciples started arguing as to who would be “greatest.” What did they have in mind about their expectations of Jesus? Have the disciple relate verse 46 with the previous verses, 44-45. What’s the relationship?
- What example did Jesus use to help the disciple understand the lesson about greatness? What lesson should the disciple walk away with concerning Jesus’ teaching on “least” and “great”?

9:49-56 – The turning point in Luke’s gospel: Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem
- Have the disciple read verses 49-50. What is the key phrase in verse 49? (Hint: “in Your name....”) The discipler may want to point out to the disciple the power of Jesus’ name, especially when it comes to spiritual warfare and the issue of demonic influences.
- Have the disciple read verse 51. Ask why this is such an important observation by Luke about Jesus’ ministry.
- The discipler may have to explain to the disciple the whole issue of bitterness between the Jews and the Samaritans, and why the latter did not want Jews traversing their territory on the way to Jerusalem.
- Have the disciple describe the reaction of the disciples to the rejection by the Samaritans, and why Jesus rebuked them on that suggestion. Explain that Jesus’ rebuke of the disciples’ suggestion to destroy the Samaritans has a great effect on them when the church begins to grow. (See Acts 8:4-17.)

9:57-62 – Jesus’ instruction on what it means to follow Him
- Have the disciple describe the three people that stated they wanted to become a part of Jesus’ ministry. What were two excuses that people gave for not immediately following Jesus? How does that apply to reasons people give today for not following Jesus?
- For those who chose not to follow Jesus, what great events did they miss? (The crucifixion and resurrection, and 50 days later, Pentecost.)
- Have the disciple explain the meaning of Jesus’ statement to each of the three persons, two of whom came up with excuses not to follow Jesus. What does Jesus mean when He says:
  - “…the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head”?
  - “Allow the dead to bury their own dead”?
  - “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God”?
- Ask the disciple if he or she is making any excuse for not being “sold out” to following Jesus.
Overview of Luke 10

Chapter 10 resumes Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. However, during this journey, Jesus sends out another group of disciples to proclaim the gospel and to heal diseases. They will return excited about their ministry and all the things they have accomplished. Jesus Himself will praise God for allowing “infants” to do the mighty works of God. As they travel along the road to Jerusalem, Jesus will be confronted by a scribe who wants to get some things very clear about Jesus’ new teaching. In doing so, he will attempt to entrap Jesus into making statements that are contrary to traditional teaching, similar to what Satan attempted to do in the wilderness. That encounter will include the parable of the good Samaritan. Lastly, Jesus will teach His friend Martha a hard lesson about priorities.

What to look for in Luke 10

1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the specific strategy Jesus uses to prepare people to receive Him and His message when He comes to their town.
3. Look for the words, “Woe to you…” (NASB), to whom they are uttered, and why.
4. Look for the response of the seventy disciples when they return from their mission, and Jesus’ response to them.
5. Locate the “foremost” commandment and its associated “second” commandment.
6. Observe carefully the details of the parable of the good Samaritan.
7. What’s going on in the story about Martha and Mary?

1 Now after this the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them in pairs ahead of Him to every city and place where He Himself was going to come.
2 And He was saying to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.
3 Go; behold, I send you out as lambs in the midst of wolves.
4 “Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes; and greet no one on the way.
5 “Whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace be to this house.’
6 “If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him, but if not, it will return to you.
7 “Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.
8 “Whatever city you enter and they

10:1-12 This section foreshadows the spread of the gospel and the beginning of the church. Note here that God’s love manifests itself by giving hearers an opportunity to receive Jesus before they are judged for rejecting Him. To reject Jesus’ messengers is to reject Jesus.

10:1 “Now after this…” refers back to 9:51 and Jesus’ initial encounters on His way to Jerusalem (9:57-62). Whereas in chapter 9, Jesus sent the twelve out, on this occasion He is sending out seventy other disciples. This indicates there were a number of disciples following Jesus who were not a part of the twelve disciples. Note, too, that there’s a strategy involved. God’s love is often expressed through a clear plan of approach.

10:2 “The harvest is plentiful…” There are many people waiting to hear about God’s love and who will respond to Jesus’ message of love. They have already been prepared by the Holy Spirit to recognize true love when they see and hear it. Therefore, the prayer here is not that people will be open to the gospel, but that God will raise up many who are willing and able to deliver the love message to those waiting to receive it.

10:3-9 Wolves are representative of those who are under the influence of Satan. Satan will do
receive you, eat what is set before you;
9 and heal those in it who are sick, and say
to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come
near to you.’
10 “But whatever city you enter and they
do not receive you, go out into its streets and
say,
11 ‘Even the dust of your city which clings
to our feet we wipe off in protest against
you; yet be sure of this, that the kingdom of
God has come near.’
12 “I say to you, it will be more tolerable in
that day for Sodom than for that city.

13 “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you,
Bethsaida! For if the miracles had been
performed in Tyre and Sidon which
occurred in you, they would have repented
long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.
14 “But it will be more tolerable for Tyre
and Sidon in the judgment than for you.
15 “And you, Capernaum, will not be
exalted to heaven will you? You will be
brought down to Hades!

10:10-12 “…they do not receive you…” meaning
they do not receive the salutation, “Peace be to this
house.” Those who reject the salutation will most
likely reject God’s message of love. “…dust…wipe
off…” is a Jewish idiom symbolizing taking away no
part of them with you and taking no responsibility for
their failure to respond to your peace. Sodom, of
course, came under God’s judgment, not just for their
sin of sodomy, but for their sin of rejecting those who
bring peace.

10:13-15 The term “woe” is a pronouncement of
judgment, as well as a cry of painful grieving. This
pronouncement by Jesus does not indicate an absence
of love on God’s part; in fact, the term carries with it
an implication of great emotional pain on God’s part;
He knows the future, and therefore knows the
consequences for failing to respond to Jesus.
Judgment is coming, not because God is rejecting
them; it is they who are rejecting God. Jesus
performed many miracles in Bethsaida, Capernaum
and Chorazin (a city northwest of Capernaum), yet
the people did not respond to Jesus or His message.
In other words, they may have been awed by the
miracles, but they did not repent. Therefore, they
remain under judgment, a condition that they have
brought upon themselves. To emphasize the gravity
of their rejection, these Jewish towns are compared to
the Gentile coastal towns of Tyre and Sidon. In the
Old Testament, Tyre and Sidon represented the
epitome of pagan worship and idolatry. The famous
wicked Old Testament queen Jezebel was a Sidonian
priestess, and these towns represented the exact
opposite of worshipping the One True God and
experiencing or expressing His love. Jesus is saying
that they, like Nineveh in Jonah’s day, would have
repented, and therefore been open to Jesus and His
word. Capernaum, perhaps, is under greater judgment
because they did not repent even after seeing demons
cast out.

The most important point to remember here is
that without repentance, God’s message of truth and
love can be neither experienced nor expressed.
Relying on one’s religion as protection against...
“The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.”

17 The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.”
18 And He said to them, “I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning.
19 Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing will injure you.
20 “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven.”

At that time, He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit, and said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have judgment does not excuse one from the need to repent.

10:16 For the most part, this lesson in logic is as true today as it was then. However, the reader should remember that the message of Jesus’ disciples also came with the power of healing and casting out demons. Yet what these verses clearly point out is that even miracles of healing and casting out demons may not be enough to cause someone to repent and receive Jesus. Therefore, miracles in themselves are not necessary to share the love of God through Jesus Christ. If someone is going to reject God’s love, they will reject His love whether miracles are performed or not. Therefore, miracles, healing and the casting out of demons should never be relied upon, or even sought after, in order to share the gospel.

10:17-20 The excitement expressed by the seventy disciples upon seeing that demons are subject even to them is perhaps an expression of immaturity on their part. Rather than being excited that demons were subject to them, they should have been more excited about the people who were set free from the demons; that their lives had been restored to wholeness. It is not unusual that new converts are more excited about the process than about the person for whom the process brings new life. However, out of love for His disciples, Jesus shares their enthusiasm. Serpents and scorpions, of course, are symbolic of demons. “…And nothing will injure you” does not mean “You will never be injured.” It means that when doing the Lord’s work, demons themselves cannot result in eternal injury. (Attack yes, but not permanent separation from God.) Also, there are risks involved in rejoicing that demons are subject to you, and that risk is pride. Therefore, the disciples should rejoice more that they were specifically chosen by God to participate in bringing the kingdom of God to a lost world.

The phrase “that your names are recorded in heaven” refers specifically to citizenship. The names of citizens of a town were “recorded” (Gk. eggrapho) in a town register. The purpose of this practice was to keep track of who was descended from whom, and who owned what piece of land. Jesus is informing the disciples that their true rejoicing should be based on the fact that they are citizens of heaven. This phrase is not dissimilar to Revelation 21:27: “…only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life” (shall be in heaven).

10:21-22 Notice that Jesus rejoices with the disciples. This is a sign of love; that is, that one can rejoice because of another’s joy. The immediate response to rejoicing in seeing God’s hand at work is
hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight.

22 “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.”

23 Turning to His disciples, He said privately, “Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see,

24 for I say to you, that many prophets and kings wished to see the things which you see, and did not see them, and to hear the things which you hear, and did not hear them.”

25 And a lawyer stood up and put Him to the test, saying, “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

26 And He said to him, “What is written in to praise Him.

Jesus’ words “from the wise and intelligent” cannot be well understood outside the context. The context is “these things.” These things are spiritual in nature and not earthly, empirical or scientific. Wise and intelligent people—by the world’s standard—are wise and intelligent concerning the things of the world. But receiving, understanding and appreciating spiritual things can only be the result of revelation, received by faith and manifested through love. It is not the wise and intelligent according to the world that will hear and receive God’s love revelation, but those who are like infants in the eyes of the world; that is, those who live by faith and not by sight, an attribute shunned and ridiculed by the world. Therefore, spiritual truths remain hidden from the eyes of the wise and intelligent of this world. Why? Because the wise and intelligent of this world will scoff at faith and deny the need for a God of love. The wise and intelligent of this world presume they have no need for faith or love. Those of the world cannot grasp the principles of the kingdom of God because they are blinded by the god of this world, Satan, and by their own pride in the flesh. This is why the apostle John writes, “Do not love the world nor the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1 John 2:15-16). And the apostle Paul writes, “…We speak God’s wisdom in a mystery…the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory…” (1 Cor. 2:7-8).

Note, too, that the word “reveal” is used twice in these two verses. God proactively hides spiritual truth from those who refused to repent, and proactively reveals spiritual truth to those who do.

10:23-24 Here, Jesus puts the disciples’ recent experiences in perspective to the past. For this, the disciples should be extremely grateful and feel especially blessed. These verses provide great hope for those who long for the return of Christ on earth. Those things we long to see with Christ’s return (e.g., swords turned into plowshares) will be seen and experienced by others whom the Father chooses, and we rejoice with their future joy.

10:25-37 Regarding the revelation of God’s love, verses 25-37 comprise one of the most important teachings in Scripture: the question raised by the scribe (lawyer), followed by the parable of the good Samaritan. Let’s first address the inquiry by the
the Law? How does it read to you?

27 And he answered, “YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.”

28 And He said to him, “You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE.”

29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

30 Jesus replied and said, “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went away leaving him

scribe concerning the great commandment.

10:25-29 What kind of a test the scribe was putting to Jesus is not clearly stated, but it is possible that the test is related to the second part of his answer, as we will see. Jesus answers the scribe’s question by asking one of His own in order to find out what the scribe is really asking. The scribe responds by quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5: “You shall love the Lord your God...” (When Deut. 6:4 is added, it is called the shema, which means “hear.”) However, Deut. 6:5 ends with “all your mind.” The second part—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”—comes from Lev. 19:18, a somewhat obscure instruction tucked in among a series of sundry laws directed at how the Israelites are to treat one another, including foreigners. Adding Lev. 19:18 to the shema was not the common teaching among rabbis. The famous rabbi Hillel was the closest to paraphrasing this teaching, but his teaching involved an interpretation of Scripture, not Scripture itself. Therefore, it is quite possible that it was Jesus Himself who initiated tacking on loving one’s neighbor as oneself to the dogmatically accepted shema, and the scribe, as did the rich young ruler in Matthew 19, is simply quoting back to Jesus what he had heard from Him. Therefore, it is this last part—loving one’s neighbor as oneself—about which the scribe is testing Jesus. In other words, the scribe is actually questioning Jesus for including Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” If that verse is to be added to the shema and included as a part of inheriting eternal life, how exactly does one do that? Loving God with all your heart is simple to figure out—obey the Ten Commandments, obey laws concerning sacrifice, the Sabbath, rituals, dietary restrictions and keeping away from those things deemed unclean. But loving your neighbor as yourself? That’s wide open to interpretation.

So, now that the scribe has confirmed Jesus has included loving one’s neighbor as a part of the formula, he tests Him by raising a very difficult question, one that certainly began raising debate among the rabbis: who, exactly, is my neighbor? In other words, “Get Jesus Himself to tell who we should consider is our neighbor.”

(After the scribe’s answer, Jesus adds, “Do this and you will live,” a quote from Lev. 18:5.)

What follows is not what the rabbis and scribes wanted to hear. It is the parable of the good Samaritan.

10:30-37 The parable of the good Samaritan is a familiar story that many Christians can recount. However, the key question—“Which one of these three proved to be a neighbor...”—is often answered incorrectly. Many people believe the parable is
half dead.

31 “And by chance a priest was going
down on that road, and when he saw him, he
passed by on the other side.

32 “Likewise a Levite also, when he came
to the place and saw him, passed by on the
other side.

33 But a Samaritan, who was on a journey,
came upon him; and when he saw him, he
felt compassion,

34 and came to him and bandaged up his
wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and
he put him on his own beast, and brought
him to an inn and took care of him.

35 “On the next day he took out two denarii
and gave them to the innkeeper and said,
‘Take care of him; and whatever more you
spend, when I return I will repay you.’

36 “Which of these three do you think
proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell
into the robbers’ hands?

37 And he said, “The one who showed
mercy toward him,” Then Jesus said to him,
“Go and do the same.”

38 Now as they were traveling along, He
entered a village, and a woman named
Martha welcomed Him into her home.

39 She had a sister called Mary, who was
seated at the Lord’s feet, listening to His
word.

40 But Martha was distracted with all her
preparations; and she came up to Him and
said, “Lord, do You not care that my sister
has left me to do all the serving alone? Then
tell her to help me.”

41 But the Lord answered and said to her,
“Martha, Martha, you are worried and
teaching that the victim is the neighbor, and therefore
the parable is about showing mercy to those who fallvictim to misfortune. However, that conclusion is not
only incorrect, but it misses the point of the original
question, “Who is my neighbor?”

The neighbor is “The one who showed mercy….” This answer changes everything. In the
parable, the Samaritan, despised by Jews, is the
neighbor, and the clear teaching is that the scribe is to
love even a Samaritan if he shows mercy. So, the
requisite for loving one’s neighbor as oneself is not
based on race or religion, but upon the person’s
willingness to demonstrate mercy to others. The
parable does not teach that Christians are to love
everyone as themselves—although love itself is to be
shown to all people. The issue of one of intensity.
Love everyone—as the Samaritan did—but love the
one who shows mercy as intensely as one loves
oneself.

“Go and do the same” continues the scriptural
instruction, “Do this and you will live.” Getting the
answer right about the parable of the good Samaritan
is not enough. Now one must live out the answer
with action and good works. The scribe may have
realized suddenly that loving one’s neighbor as
oneself is much more difficult than simply following
a set of laws and rules, especially if the neighbor is
someone you’ve always been taught to hate.

The ultimate lesson here goes even beyond two
separate commandments. At first glance, one could
conclude that Christians are (1) to love God, and (2)
to love your neighbor. But Jesus’ teaching here opens
up a whole new dimension concerning loving God.
The principle should not be “Love God and love your
neighbor,” but “Love God by loving your neighbor.”
This new teaching on loving God will not become
evident until the writings of Paul and James, the
Lord’s brother; specifically, Rom. 13:8-10; Gal.
5:13-14; James 2:8.

10:38-42 We know from the Gospel of John that the
village is Bethany, the home of Lazarus, just outside
Jerusalem. The contrast between Martha and Mary,
and Jesus’ words to Martha, is a lesson on busy-ness,
as well as a lesson about priorities. The lesson for
Christians in the church is clear: do not let activity
interrupt one’s time with Jesus. Whether in the
activities of the church itself or in the privacy of
one’s home, busy-ness is an enemy to spending
intimate time with Jesus and His word, which should
be every believer’s top priority. Quite simply,
Martha’s busy-ness, though well intentioned, was
keeping her from the greatest opportunity one could
have—sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening to His
words.

Jesus’ answer to Martha addresses her fretting
bothered about so many things;
42 but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her."
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 10, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?

2. Identify the strategy that Jesus used to prepare the people ahead of His journey to Jerusalem. Are you able to come up with a specific plan of action? It may be a short plan, or it may be a prolonged plan that charts out your future intentions of how to serve Jesus, such as going into ministry, becoming a missionary, or raising godly children, or being a witness in the workplace. What is your plan? (Perhaps you might want to pray about this.)

3. Concerning the villages that had witnessed Jesus’ miracles, reconcile Jesus’ judgments with His love. Are God’s love and God’s judgments incompatible? How would you explain that to a friend who says, “How can a loving God also be a God of judgment and wrath? And here is an even more important question: is God able to love you and discipline you at the same time? (You might want to refer to Hebrews 12.)

4. Read verse 20 again. Is your name recorded in heaven? On what basis do you say “Yes”? 

5. Recount the incident when the scribe approaches Jesus with the question of how to inherit eternal life. If someone came up to you and asked you, “How can I inherit (receive, find, get) eternal life, how would you answer? Would you hand that individual a tract? Would you attempt to have them recite a “Believer’s Prayer,” or something of that nature? What is the real answer to that question, according to Jesus’ teaching in this Scripture? (The answer may surprise you and not what you’ve always been taught.)

6. Recount the parable of the good Samaritan. Have you identified the neighbor? How is this answer going to affect your behavior, and how is this answer going to affect those to whom you show love? Is there a difference of intensity towards those to whom you will show love? (Tough question.)

7. Is “busy-ness” interfering with your time with Jesus? If it is, what do you plan on doing about it?
10:1-12 – Jesus sends out seventy disciples; their message will consist of good news or ________________

10:13-16 – Jesus, in His love even for those who are rejecting Him and His message, offers ________________

10:17-20 – The seventy return with good news and with great joy; Jesus warns them about ________________

10:21-24 – Jesus instructs the disciples why they should ________________

10:25-37 – The parable of the ________________

10:38-42 – Dinner at Lazarus’s house; the squabble between ________________________________
Luke 10

10:1-12 – Jesus sends out seventy disciples; their message will consist of good news or judgment

- The discipler will want to explore the disciple’s understanding of this event. Ensure that the disciple understands how the seventy are to distinguish between those who are ready to receive the good news, and those who are not.
- Ask the disciple if he or she can remember how Jesus tells His disciples to pray. Once the disciple has remembered what the seventy are to pray for, teach the disciple how to pray for that very thing, and then lead the disciple in prayer.
- Ask the disciple why Jesus instructs the seventy to “Carry no money belt, no bag, no shoes, and greet no one on the way.” (Hint: to learn complete dependency on God for meeting all their needs.)
- Have the disciple describe what “the harvest” is, and how that applies to the present day. How is the disciple to determine who is ready to receive God’s message of love, and who is most likely to reject it?

10:13-16 – Jesus, in His love even for those who are rejecting Him and His message, offers preventative warnings

- The disciple may be unfamiliar with these towns, especially Tyre and Sidon. The discipler may have to give some background concerning their notorious histories. The story of Jezebel starts in 1 Kings 16:31 and doesn’t conclude until 2 Kings 9:37. Tyre is also listed for destruction in Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel, chapters 26-29.
- Make sure that the disciple understands why God judges. Help the disciple understand that just because those who reject Jesus are destined for judgment, that does not mean God hasn’t loved them.

10:17-20 – The seventy return with good news and with great joy; Jesus warns them about pride

- Explain to the disciple the meaning of “serpents and scorpions.” Ask the disciple, “Why did Jesus say, ‘I was watching Satan fall from heaven like lightning’?” (Hint: Jesus is informing His disciples that Satan himself was losing his grip on those who were being set free from his control.)
- The disciple may need some help in understanding Jesus’ statement, “…and nothing will injure you.” (Hint: it means those doing God’s work will never experience eternal spiritual injury.)
- Ensure that the disciple understands the dangers of pride when doing God’s work. The best way to emphasize this point is to inform the disciple why Satan fell from heaven—it was because of pride—and why Eve stumbled in the garden of Eden—it was pride to “become like God.”
- Inquire of the disciple how a minister, missionary or lay worker can become a victim of pride. Then have the disciple describe what pride is, and whether or not he or she has ever exhibited it.

10:21-24 – Jesus instructs the disciples why they should rejoice

- Including verse 20, have the disciple find at least three things Jesus informs His disciples that they can rejoice about. (Hint: (1) their names are recorded in heaven [20]; (2) God has revealed to them amazing things through Jesus [“these things” in verse 21]; (3) they are more blessed than even the OT prophets because of what they have witnessed and experienced [24].)
- Have the disciple read verse 21 and ask if he or she thinks followers of Jesus are not “wise and intelligent.” Ask, “What do you think Jesus meant by that statement?”
- See if the disciple can explain what Jesus means when He prays verses 21-22.
10:25-37 – The parable of the **good Samaritan**

- Much time may be spent discussing the parable of the good Samaritan. Make sure the disciple understands the context in which the scribe (lawyer) asks the question, “And who is my neighbor?”
- The discipler may want to have the disciple look up Deuteronomy 6:4-5 so that the term shema can be explained. (If the disciple wants to know why there is slightly different wording between the Old and New Testament in the first and foremost commandment, it is because there were slight differences in the Greek translation [Septuagint] of the Old Testament Hebrew.)
- Make sure the disciple understands how a good Jew would interpret the first and foremost commandment; that is, in how one would actually show love for God.
- Ask the disciple if he or she knows why Jesus added the second commandment, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”
- The discipler may need to explain what a Samaritan was and why Samaritans were so hated and discredited by the Jews, especially Jews living in Judea and Jerusalem.
- Getting into the parable itself, have the disciple retell the story. Then ask the question, “Who did the scribe realize was the neighbor?” (It was the Samaritan, not the victim on the road, as is often believed.) Given that answer, what tough issue did the scribe have to face? (That he was to love the Samaritan as himself.) Why would that be a difficult thing for the scribe to do?
- See if the disciple can come up with a similar story involving some modern-day issues. For example, make up a story (parable) in which the part of the Samaritan is played by a Muslim, or a man of another race, or someone with AIDS, or even a homosexual. How would the Christian have to respond if he or she were playing the role of the scribe?
- Notes the discipler may want to add to this lesson on the love commandments and the good Samaritan:

10:38-42 – Dinner at Lazarus’s house; the squabble between **Martha and Mary**

- The discipler may want to explain to the disciple who Martha and Mary were, especially in relation to Lazarus. This relationship will become extremely important during one of Jesus’ later parables in Luke, and in John’s gospel when he records Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead.
- Have the disciple explain the difference between what Martha was involved in and what Mary was involved in. Were either of the two women wrong in what they were doing? Ask the disciple if they know any family members who might fit into these two categories.
- What did Jesus mean when He told Martha, “…only one thing is necessary”? (Hint: just one dish is enough...a banquet is not required. In other words, a bowl of fruit would be great; a seven-course dinner isn’t necessary!)
CHAPTER 11

Overview of Luke 11
Chapter 11 continues to follow Jesus on His journey to Jerusalem. We find in this chapter Luke’s summary of what is termed “The Lord’s Prayer.” He then follows this with a lesson about prayer itself, and what it takes to have prayers answered. The chapter then turns to an incident in which Jesus heals a demonized man who is mute, and the incredulous responses of the religious leaders to Jesus’ act of love. In this teaching, there is a lesson on spiritual warfare and the nature of demons themselves. This is followed by a teaching on the Jewish leaders’ need for a “sign” that Jesus is in fact the Messiah. Lastly, Luke records an event in which Jesus is invited to a Pharisee’s home for a meal. During the meal, Jesus has many uncomfortable things to say to the Pharisees and scribes who have attended the dinner. His words are not well received by His hosts.

What to look for in Luke 11
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Find in “The Lord’s Prayer” the part that contains the most detail.
3. Look for Jesus’ larger instruction on how to pray, and locate the overriding principle.
4. Read about the mute who was healed of a demon. Observe the response of the witnesses.
5. Look for the key word “sign.” Differentiate the sign that Jesus will give the Jewish leaders from the signs they are expecting to see.
6. Carefully observe Jesus’ teaching on “light” inside the person, and compare that with the concept of “clean” and “unclean.”
7. Determine why the scribes and Pharisees were so upset with Jesus’ condemnation of them and their religious system.

1 It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.”

2 And He said to them, “When you pray, say: ‘Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.

3 ‘Give us each day our daily bread.

4 ‘And forgive us our sins, For we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation.’ ”

11:1-4 Prayer is an important theme in Luke’s gospel, as he refers to it many times. Just as loving relationships deepen by spending time together, so does the relationship deepen between the believer and God when time is spent in prayer.

The disciple’s request for Jesus to teach them to pray is a bit odd. They were devoted Jews…did they not already know how to pray, and did they not have at their fingertips a vast arsenal of Jewish prayers and psalms to draw from? This suggest that their request doesn’t appear to be on the order of how to pray as much as it focuses on what to pray for to ensure their prayers are as effective as Jesus’. What is so unique about “The Lord’s Prayer” is its simplicity. The prayer is not immersed in religious, flowery language, and certainly not erudite and lofty. Instead, it is given in simple language that covers just about everything important in heaven and on earth.

Many commentators prefer to call “The Lord’s Prayer” “The Disciples’ Prayer” (or “The Disciple’s Prayer”). All observations are correct.

A longer version of this prayer can be found in Matthew 6:9-13.
11:2b  “Father….” The only way Jesus ever addressed God was as His father. The significance here is not only that Jesus is assuming the position of the Son of God, but He is clarifying the true nature of their relationship. The lesson here is that prayer with the Father is not just a matter of religious routine, but prayer is entering into an intimate relationship with God Himself. And, Jesus is teaching His disciples that they are to address the Holy God as their father as well, emphasizing that their prayers are not to be motivated by religious routine and liturgy, but are to be motivated by a desire to spend time with God in a personal relationship. The basis of this relationship is, of course, love.

The word “hallowed” is an old English word meaning to be considered holy and sacred. “Name” does not just mean “name” in the sense of title, but “name” includes God’s character, attributes, essence and being. Note that instead of addressing God as “O holy God…,” Jesus emphasizes God’s loving relationship by beginning with “Father.” He then includes, with the word “hallowed,” God’s essential holiness and transcendence. The importance of this address to God cannot be overemphasized; Jesus is teaching His disciples that they, too, can have an intimate, personal and loving relationship with the Almighty God who is holy and transcendent.

11:4a  It is extremely important to note that the longest portion of this prayer involves relationships. And not just casual relationships; these relationships focus on those who have offended us, just as we often offend God. The Greek word for “forgive” means “to let go.” The plea is for God to “let go” of our indebtedness to Him. The assumption is that believers in turn are continually letting go of the offense others have committed against them. Matthew 18:21-35 will emphasize this point in an extremely graphic way.

Note, too, that there is no instruction to offer sacrifices at the temple in order to have sins forgiven, nor is there an instruction to go through a mediator or priest. We simply ask. However, just as God does not require a sacrifice from those asking for forgiveness, neither are we to ask for a sacrifice from those who have sinned against us. The lesson here is clear: if we are willing to “let go” of the sins of those who sin against us, we, then, become the sacrifice.

Lastly, note the word “forgive.” It is in the present tense meaning “are forgiving” and “are continually forgiving.” The lesson is clear: we are to be continually forgiving of all others who sin against us.

The main point in verse 11 is this: because God has forgiven us of our sins simply because we asked, we then must also engage in the ongoing process of forgiving those who sin against us.
Then He said to them, “Suppose one of you has a friend, and goes to him at midnight and says to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves;
6 for a friend of mine has come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him’;
7 and from inside he answers and says, ‘Do not bother me; the door has already been shut and my children and I are in bed; I cannot get up and give you anything.’
8 “I tell you, even though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will get up and give him as much as he needs.

9 “So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.
10 “For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened.
11 “Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he?

The next teaching by Jesus is to help the disciples understand the nature of love, specifically in the arena of prayer. Here, God is presented as someone with an abundant supply of resources (in the parable, “Friend”). The friend in this mini-parable is not obligated to give anything to the one asking. There are plenty of good reasons for him to ignore the request made of him. So the lesson here is one of love expressed through fervor and persistence. Note, then, that the one asking is not asking for himself, but for the sake of another. This story, therefore, teaches about caring for others through prayer. Praying for others is often referred to as “intercessory prayer.”

For this reason, prayers of any kind—whether they be worship, thanksgiving, confession, or even intercession—should never be considered a “spiritual discipline.” The motive for all prayer should be love—love for God, love for His church, or love for the one for whom prayer is being given. The fervor behind all prayer should be based on love for others, not an obedience, duty, routine, and especially not a “discipline” to become more spiritual or holy!

There is another small detail in this teaching that is noteworthy. Not only is the man knocking at the door asking for his friend who is visiting, but he is asking for “loaves.” In the New Testament, bread is always a symbol of the word of God. So this story goes even deeper. The message here is that God will hear us and answer our persistent prayers especially when we ask that He give to others the word of God.

Can you see the love message behind this little parable? The one asking for his friend in need is willing to sacrifice himself by going out in the middle of the night and remaining at the provider’s door until the request is answered. That the one asking is engaging in such a sacrifice of time and effort is the true mark of love. This story is not only a comment on prayer; it is an illustration on the need for persevering love.

Therefore, the question might be asked, “What was Jesus praying about in verse one?” Most likely, Jesus was praying on behalf of His disciples, whom He loves.
12 “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?
13 “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?”

14 And He was casting out a demon, and it was mute; when the demon had gone out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed.
15 But some of them said, “He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.”
16 Others, to test Him, were demanding of Him a sign from heaven.
17 But He knew their thoughts and said to them, “Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.
18 “If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand? For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.
19 “And if I by Beelzebul cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? So they will be your judges.
20 “But if I cast out demons by the finger of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.
21 “When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own house, his possessions are

There are two caveats here that need to be addressed, however. First, do these verses teach that God will always give us everything we ask for, even if it’s persistent and on behalf of others, such as praying for those who are sick or dying? Certainly not, no matter how much faith we may have that the outcome will be in our favor. Does every father give to his child everything the child asks for, even if it’s for the sake of another? That the father may say no gives the child an opportunity to show love for the father by trusting the wisdom and decisions (will) of the father.

Second, the object of the prayer has changed. The object of the sentence has changed from bread (basic needs) to the Holy Spirit, and this is wonderful. Jesus is taking His disciples to a whole other level. The teaching is clear: the Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. That is the will of the Father, that His children have the Holy Spirit.

That’s one prayer that will always be answered. Giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask is a supreme act of love on the part of the Father.

11:14 Luke abruptly changes the subject from prayer to Jesus casting out a demon. However, there is a direct relationship between the previous verses and this section. Do you see it? In verses 11 and 12, Jesus uses the illustration of a “snake” and a “scorpion.” These two creatures are biblical types of demons. Thus the previous lesson leads right into the next. Also, Luke chooses this miracle because it involves enabling a mute man to speak. One must be able to speak in order to pray out loud.

11:15-23 There are two questions raised by the crowd, but Jesus chooses to address only one of them, the most important of the two. “Beelzebul” is the Greek form of a Philistine god named “Baalzebub” which literally means “lord of the flies.” The Jews were very keen to the existence of Satan, and exorcists were common among Jewish priests; they have already been referred to in 9:49, thus Jesus’ statement in verse 19 here. The name “Baalzebul” means “master of the house,” and the Jews considered Beelzebul the prince of demons who took direct orders from Satan. Here again, Jesus resorts of simple logic. Why in the world would Beelzebul want to send his own demons out of the man? It makes no sense. The fact that it made no sense shows how resistant the Jewish leadership was to accept the fact that Jesus was who He said He was. The fact that He casts out demons is irrefutable to them. So, in their desperation to deny...
undisturbed.
22 “But when someone stronger than he attacks him and overpowers him, he takes away from him all his armor on which he had relied and distributes his plunder.
23 “He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me, scatters.

24 “When the unclean spirit goes out of a man, it passes through waterless places seeking rest, and not finding any, it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’
25 “And when it comes, it finds it swept and put in order.
26 “Then it goes and takes along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they go in and live there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first.”

27 While Jesus was saying these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, “Blessed is the womb that bore You and the breasts at which You nursed.”
28 But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

22 Verses 21 and 22 are demonstrating that Jesus is stronger than Satan. He, Jesus, takes Satan’s possessions away (the man who was exorcised). The power of Jesus is infinitely greater than Satan’s power, which will be well described by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

Verse 23 is interesting because it is the reverse of what Jesus taught earlier in 9:50: “…he who is not against you is for you.” Both are true. Whereas in 9:50 Jesus was referring to a Jewish priest casting out demons in His name, here He is referring to the Jewish priests who are refusing to accept Him as their Messiah. The word “scatters” in the Greek is skorpizo and is a form of the word skorpios, meaning “scorpion.” The point Jesus’ is making is clear: Satan is not in the business of gathering, but of dividing and scattering people.

There are two lessons on love here. First, Jesus did not cast the demon out of the man because He was trying to make a point about Satan. He cast the demon out of the man because of His love and compassion. That point must not be overlooked in understanding this event. Second, love brings people together, but Satan is bent on breaking down relationships, thus, scattering.

11:24-26 Jesus, now turning to His disciples, is going to teach them a lesson on discipleship as it relates to spiritual warfare, just as He gave them a lesson about spiritual warfare when He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration. Just because the disciples can cast out a demon does not mean that the person from whom the spirit is cast will remain demon free. Those involved in spiritual warfare counseling know this all too well. Therefore, this section of teaching is a lesson on discipleship. The disciples must not just cast out a demon and be on their way. In order for the demon to remain cast out, the person must know how to equip himself to remain demon free. It is the responsibility of the disciples to equip the recipient to remain demon free. Here is where the previous teaching of the Holy Spirit comes in (v. 13). A person indwelt by the Holy Spirit is well equipped to keep the demons out. Therefore, in terms of the church, the believer must receive the Holy Spirit and walk in the Spirit to remain demon free.

There are many lessons here that those who are knowledgeable in spiritual warfare are well aware. First, this spirit is called “unclean,” but some spirits are “more evil” than others. Second, even though a spirit has been cast out, a passive or nominal Christian lifestyle may result in other spirits returning. Third, spirits wander, looking for victims. Therefore, Paul’s teaching on equipping oneself in...
As the crowds were increasing, He began to say, “This generation is a wicked generation; it seeks for a sign, and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah.

“For just as Jonah became a sign to the Ninevites, so will the Son of Man be to this generation.

“The Queen of the South will rise up with the men of this generation at the judgment and condemn them, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.

“The men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation at the judgment and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The true followers of Jesus Christ do not question Him, but praise Him. There is a beautiful contrast here. The incident with the mute wrought criticism and antagonism from some, and praise and worship from others. The lesson here is that Jesus Himself and His teachings will separate people into two groups: those who are for Him, and those who are against Him.

Note, too, that just hearing the word of God is not enough. To reap the benefits of Jesus’ teaching, the word of God must be “observed”; that is, kept.

Now Jesus will address the other issue that was raised in verse 16, the issue of a sign. Verse 16 states that the motive behind those seeking a sign was “to test Him.” Those who desired to test Jesus had no real intention of believing in Him. Their desire to test was to discredit Him, not follow Him. This is a pathetic scene: Jesus has been performing miracles in their midst for some period of time. So what “sign” were the religious leaders seeking? Jesus’ answer is ironic and one that few, including the disciples, would comprehend.

At the time of Jesus, rabbis taught that the Messiah would be recognized by performing four miracles. Only the Messiah could (1) heal a Jewish leper, (2) cast out a mute demon, (3) heal a man born blind, and (4) raise someone from the dead after four days. Up to this point in Luke, two of the four required miracles had been performed. Jesus, knowing their hearts (v. 17), refuses to be manipulated by His detractors. Instead, He will offer them a sign that is not one of the four miracles; He will offer them the sign of Jonah, who performed no miracles at all. Just as the prophet Jonah was in the belly of the great fish “three days and three nights” (Jonah 1:17), so Jesus will be in the belly of death, His tomb, three days and three nights. And just as Jonah preached to the Ninevites who were Gentiles, so the followers of Jesus will take the good news of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

The “Queen of the South” refers to the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10) who came to see for herself if the stories of Solomon’s wisdom were true. She went to extreme efforts, and she was not disappointed. Her story will serve as a witness against those who see Jesus’ miracles and teachings, but still do not believe or accept Him as Messiah.

The “men of Nineveh” are those who repented at the preaching of Jonah. What is at issue here is not whether Jesus can prove that He is the Messiah. The greater issue is the hearts of men.

There is one other issue that needs to be addressed. If the hearts of those observing and testing Jesus were right and well-intentioned, then they...
33 “No one, after lighting a lamp, puts it away in a cellar nor under a basket, but on the lampstand, so that those who enter may see the light.

34 “The eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness.

35 “Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness.

36 “If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it will be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays.”

37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisee asked Him to have lunch with him; and He went in, and reclined at the table.

38 When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that He had not first ceremonially washed before the meal.

39 But the Lord said to him, “Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness.

40 “You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?

41 “But give that which is within as charity, and then all things are clean for you.

would have greatly rejoiced for the man who was healed from a mute demon. After all, a demon had been cast out of the man and he could now speak! Instead, they completely ignored the man set free and focused rather on whether or not Jesus fit their theology concerning the Messiah. This is one way to determine whether or not a person’s heart is right: are they obsessed about theology, or are they concerned about their fellow man?

11:33-36 The teaching that follows the healing of the mute and the statement on signs, is a teaching on the heart. In this teaching, the eye represents the heart of a person. If a person’s heart is right, their life will be filled with light. If the person’s heart is not right, is perverted, selfish, deceived or evil, the “light” will not get in and that person will be filled with “darkness.”

In this teaching, the lamp is the presence of Jesus, the Messiah. The light is the love and compassion that was shown to the mute, and his subsequent healing. Those whose eyes are “clear” will clearly see the good that was done for the man, the love of God that was expressed through Jesus, and the new life that could be experienced by the man who was healed. That light fills those with clear eyes with revelation and the presence of God. However, for those whose eyes are “bad,” their lives are filled with spiritual darkness and they cannot “see” the presence of God in their midst.

Once again, there is a teaching on love. Those who love others have clear eyes. Those who love the law or things more than they love others have “bad” eyes and cannot see God’s love, the light.

11:37-41 This meal at the home of the Pharisee perfectly illustrates the teaching above. Jesus will make practical application by using ceremonial cleansing as an example of the “bad” eye.

The ceremonial washing referred to here fits into the category of the traditions of the elders; that is, it was not required by the Law of Moses, but something added on by Pharisaic tradition, going far beyond normal hand washing for hygiene purposes. The Pharisee is using a non-biblical standard to judge Jesus; he is using religious ceremony, rather than love and compassion, as the standard for his own righteousness. The Pharisees assumed that participating in external rites was synonymous with internal spiritual health. In this case, non-biblical ceremony is the equivalent of the “bad” eye, resulting in internal darkness. What makes for “light” on the inside is “charity,” not ceremony. The word “charity,” also translated as “alms” and “giving,” comes from the root word eleos meaning compassion, mercy. Alms were given for the poor out
42 “But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.
43 “Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the chief seats in the synagogues and the respectful greetings in the market places.
44 “Woe to you! For you are like concealed tombs, and the people who walk over them are unaware of it.”

45 One of the lawyers said to Him in reply, “Teacher, when You say this, You insult us too.”
46 But He said, “Woe to you lawyers as well! For you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear, while you yourselves will not even touch the burdens with one of your fingers.
47 “Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them.
48 “So you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs.
49 “For this reason also the wisdom of God said, ‘I will send to them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and some they will persecute,

of a show of compassion. Therefore, the meaning here is clear: if you are “clean” on the inside, it will result in compassion and mercy which comes from love, and it is love that makes one clean. This is a direct rebuke for the Pharisees’ failing to respond with joy for the healing of the mute.

11:42-44 The three woes to the Pharisees take the above teaching a step further. There is no mandate in Scripture as to the nature of herbs to be presented for sacrifice. Yet the Pharisees see regard for these extrabiblical details as a form of righteousness and become obsessed with spurious details. At the same time, they disregard true love issues, such as social justice and how they treat their neighbors.
Verse 43 cites another form of loving themselves more than others, in that they reserve the best seats in the house for themselves, based on their own prideful system of spiritual hierarchy. If they truly loved God, they would, as the apostle Paul writes in Philippians, “regard one another as more important than yourselves” (2:3).

The third woe in verse 44 is the most stinging rebuke of all; it makes the position of the Pharisee the very opposite of what the religious elite believed. In Jewish tradition, if someone were to walk on an unmarked grave, that person would become unclean, even if it were an innocent error. Jesus is rebuking His host for teaching a system that makes others, not more righteous, but unclean. The reason? Their religious system overrules the true biblical command found in Leviticus 19:18: “…you shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

11:45-52 A lawyer, or scribe, was a specialist in interpreting and copying Scripture. The Pharisees often sought their counsel in interpreting the Law of Moses. Whereas the Pharisee administered the law, the lawyers made and interpreted the law, as judges do in modern systems. As Jesus continues His condemnation, the scribes are no less guilty of leading the people astray.

There are three woes pronounced on the scribes as well. The first woe (v. 46) is directed toward them for misinterpreting the Scriptures and leading others to do the same. The trouble with making rules (there were over 2,000 non-biblical rules for keeping the Sabbath) is that the rule maker often makes rules that he can keep but others find difficult, and then bases that rule on God’s word. It is the worst kind of deception because it uses God’s word as its justification to keep people oppressed. Many of the Sabbath laws remain in effect in Judaism today.

The second woe (verses 47-51) is directed toward the hypocrisy of the scribes. They direct the building of monuments to prophets, while at the same
50 so that the blood of all the prophets, shed since the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation,
51 from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation.’
52 “Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you hindered those who were entering.”

53 When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects,
54 plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 11, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action, changed behavior, or the restoration of relationships?

2. What lesson have you learned about forgiveness from the Lord’s Prayer? Is there anyone in your life whom you have failed to forgive, against whom you continue to carry resentment, someone for whom you continue to be angry at? What do you plan on doing about that, as instructed in the prayer Jesus tells us to pray?

3. Define the principle about prayer that Jesus gives after the Lord’s Prayer (verses 5-13). How’s your prayer life? Is it as fervent and persevering as the parable recounts? If not, what do you plan on doing about it?

4. Recall the controversy over the healing of the man made mute by a demon. What were the two issues raised by Jesus’ opponents? What was Jesus’ response to both those objections? Have you determined what is the “sign” that Jesus will give?

5. Explain the teaching of the lamp placed on a lampstand. Who is the lamp? What is the difference between the “clear” eye and the “bad” eye, and what does each stand for? Ask yourself this question: “Do I have a clear eye or a bad eye?” Ask God to reveal to you what you need to discover about this.

6. When Jesus was invited to a Pharisee’s home for a meal, do you think He was being impolite to say such harsh words against His hosts? What was it that so upset the scribes and the Pharisees? Why did they assume that they were righteous?

7. Explore the statement of the commentator that it is easier to keep a set of rules and laws than to offer sacrificial love to others. Do you agree with this statement? Now look inside yourself and see if there is any part of your life that relies more on a religious system than the act of sacrificially loving others and considering others more important than yourself.

5-8: A continuation of Jesus’ lesson on prayer: the theme is ______________________________

9-13: A continuation of Jesus’ lesson on prayer: the theme is _____________________________

14-23: Jesus casts a demon out of a mute: ____________________________________________

   The irony of verse 16: “Others, to test Him, were demanding…______________”

   The four signs of the Messiah (miracles the Jews believed that the Messiah would perform):
   1. Heal a man __________________
   2. Heal a________________________
   3. Heal a ________________________
   4. Raise a person who had been dead ______________________

24-26: A lesson on __________________________________________

27-28: The secret for true blessings: “…those who hear the word of God and _____________”

29-32: The wickedness of the generation for seeking a sign: only the sign of ________________

33-36: Jesus teaches a lesson on ____________________________________

37-41: The true definition of what it means to be________________________

42-54: Woe to the Pharisees and the lawyers (scribes) for their____________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 11

- Have the disciple compare Luke’s version of “The Lord’s Prayer” with Matthew’s. Have the disciple note the differences. If the disciple wants to know why the two are not exactly the same, the answer is probably that Luke chose to simplify.
- Have the disciple pick out the parts of the prayer that seem most relevant. Ensure that the disciple understands the significance of Jesus starting the prayer with “Father….” This point cannot be overemphasized, especially for those disciples who did not have godly models or good memories of their earthly father. The discipler should be prepared to spend extra time on this subject, as it may open the door for increased listening.

5-8: A continuation of Jesus’ lesson on prayer: the theme is persistence
- Ensure that the disciple understands the meaning of “persistence.” Have the disciple compare this parable with 1 Thessalonians 5:17. The meaning in Paul’s instruction isn’t to pray 24/7, but to never give up.
- The disciple will need to know the significance of the man asking for “loaves,” which is referring to the word of God.

9-13: A continuation of Jesus’ lesson on prayer: the theme is the Father’s provision
- The disciple will need to understand that verses 9-10 are not a promise that everything we ask for will be given. Our prayers must take into account God’s will, God’s wisdom, God’s method of provision, and God’s timing. The best way to illustrate this is a child asking the father for something wanted.
- Ensure that the disciple understands the significance of the symbols of “fish…snake…egg…scorpion.”

14-23: Jesus casts a demon out of a mute: one of the signs of the Messiah
- There may be a need to explain the Jewish hope of a Messiah who would deliver the Jews from Roman imperialism and oppression. This hope can be found all throughout the Old Testament.
- Explain, too, that these signs were formulated by the rabbis and are not specifically found in the Old Testament. Why these signs in particular were chosen involves a lot of Jewish literature that is not relevant to the subject at hand.

The irony of verse 16: “Others, to test Him, were demanding…a sign”
- This verse can generate quite a bit of discussion on the subjects of testing and “sign from heaven.” Looking for a sign instead of believing by faith can become a trap for Christians. For the Christian, the only sign needed is the word of God, which the disciple already has been given.
- Ask the disciple why it is ironic that those observing Jesus were asking for a sign. (The irony is that He was giving the crowd and Jewish leaders signs all the time! When would they ever be satisfied?)

The four signs of the Messiah (miracles the Jews believed that the Messiah would perform):

1. Heal a man born blind
2. Heal a Jewish leper
3. Heal a mute demon
4. Raise a person who had been dead four days

- Not much discussion is required to understand these miracles. The discipler might want to inform the disciple that all four miracles can be found in the gospels. (Three of them are in Luke.)
- The question might be put to the disciple as to why the people and religious leaders, after having witnessed all these signs, still did not believe? What does that tell the disciple about human nature and the power of sin? Have the disciple look back at Luke 10:10-12. It will then become clear why Jesus instructed the disciples as He did.
24-26: A lesson on spiritual warfare

- The disciple may not be aware of the term “spiritual warfare.” This concept may require some explaining on the part of the discipler.
- Avoid the tendency to become distracted on the mechanics of how demonic spirits work in the lives of non-Christians, or even Christians, for that matter. The point that should be emphasized is that it is up to the disciple, not an outside agency (e.g., the discipler), to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. The primary lesson here should be discipleship, not the ins-and-outs of spiritual warfare.
- In regards to how someone is to protect themselves against demonic spirits, the answer is in Ephesians, 6:10-20.

27-28: The secret for true blessings: “…those who hear the word of God and observe it.”

- Refer the disciple to James 1:23. The true disciple does not just believe the words of Christ, but actually observes them and abides by them. Observing the words of Christ should result in behavioral and relationship changes.
- This is a great place to work on application. Ask the disciple what it means to “hear the word of God and observe it”? How does the disciple plan on carrying out that teaching?

29-32: The wickedness of the generation for seeking a sign: only the sign of Jonah

- Although unlikely, the disciple may need to be taught about the Old Testament prophet Jonah. The key to understanding that Jesus used Jonah as a “sign” is the fact that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, and Jesus spent three days and three nights in the tomb before the resurrection. Whereas the rabbis believed the record concerning Jonah, they should have believed the fact of the resurrection and realized that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.
- It will be important, too, that the disciple understands the significance of Jesus’ reference to the Ninevites. This will be important in understanding the Book of Acts when the Gentiles start coming into the church.
- Who the “Queen of the South” is will require explaining.

33-36: Jesus teaches a lesson on spiritual darkness

- This section of Jesus’ teaching may require some explaining on the part of the discipler. The simple way to explain these verses is a person who has good vision and needs no eyeglasses (“clear”) versus someone using very dark sunglasses through which the brightness of the light is filtered out; thus, less clear and “full of darkness.” A blindfold can also be used as an illustration, as well as walking into a darkened room after being outdoors in full sunlight.
- The discipler will want to have the disciple make application concerning this teaching by Jesus. Suggest examples such as watching a beautiful sunset versus watching pornography, or seeing the value of another person versus lusting after them. Relate this to the concept of loving others.

37-41: The true definition of what it means to be “clean”

- This next section ties in directly to what Jesus teaches in the verses immediately preceding. Make sure the disciple understands that the hearts of the Pharisees were full of darkness, even though they thought they were clean on the inside because they were performing ceremonial rituals.
- Ask the disciple why Jesus refers to “charity” in verse 41. (The word “charity” may need some explaining.) Make sure the disciple understands what is at stake here. External routines (attending church, tithing, leading worship, serving on a deacon or elder board) does not make one clean. It’s what is in the heart that makes one clean, and this always rests on the concept of “charity”; that is, caring and concern for others, and serving one another out of love. (Cf. Gal. 5:13)

42-54: Woe to the Pharisees and the lawyers (scribes) for their hypocrisy

- Have the disciple reiterate why the Pharisees and scribes were judged so harshly by Jesus.
- The illustration of Abel and Zechariah may need explaining.
- Make sure the disciple understands what Jesus is referring to when He says, “…you weigh men down with burdens hard to bear…” (v. 46). (Jesus is chastising them for all the extrabiblical rules and laws, called “the traditions of the elders.”)
Overview of Luke 12
Chapter 12, while continuing on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus makes numerous stops along the way to teach, as the crowds were growing ever larger. It’s possible that many in the crowd thought that Jesus was indeed the Messiah and would, with His power, overcome the Roman occupation and set up the kingdom of God in Israel. Many of the teachings Jesus gives in this chapter are also found in the Sermon on the Mount of Matthew’s gospel. There are warnings about greed and covetousness, as well as warnings about becoming lackadaisical in one’s spiritual life. Jesus also announces that His teachings and the allegiance of His followers will bring division within families. Finally, He admonishes the crowds for not comprehending the signs He is giving them concerning who He is…the long-awaited Messiah.

What to look for in Luke 12
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the similarities between the teachings found in chapter 12 and the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.
3. Look for what is called the “unpardonable sin.”
4. Look for “warnings of expectation”; that is, warnings about making assumptions about one’s life and making assumptions about the coming of the Son of Man.
5. Check out the warnings about “treasures” and where one’s true values are.
6. Take into account the statements Jesus makes about whether or not He will bring peace to the earth.
7. Observe the warnings about having a lazy spiritual attitude.

1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.
2 “But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known.
3 “Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms will be proclaimed upon the housetops.

12:1-3 “Under these circumstances” refers back to Jesus’ interaction with the Pharisees and scribes at the end of the previous chapter. Jesus focuses on the Pharisees because they had the most interaction with the people.
   “…After so many thousands of people had gathered together…” brings to mind a mob scene. This kind of gathering was dangerous for the Jews, as the Romans might consider it a rebellious mob and therefore take aggressive action.
   Jesus speaks directly to His disciples and gives them a warning concerning the mindset of the Pharisees. The “leaven of the Pharisees” is a comment on their self-righteous attitude based on the law—it is puffed up. Even though the Pharisees “cover up” or excuse personal sin by making laws, rules and traditions that exclude them (e.g., divorce), their sins and hypocrisy will one day be exposed by God Himself. Therefore, their attitude is hypocritical because they assume they are righteous, act as if they are righteous, and put on a righteous show before people (e.g., loving the “chief seats”). From Jesus’ perspective, however, they are not at all righteous. Why? Because of the way they treat others. Their
4 “I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do.

5 “But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

6 “Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? Yet not one of them is forgotten before God.

7 “Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are more valuable than many sparrows.

demonstrations of righteousness are nullified by their behavior toward others, all in the name of the Law of Moses.

The word “hypocrisy” comes from a Greek word meaning “play-acting.” It was the term used for actors on a stage. On the stage, they are one character, but off the stage, they are another—themselves—which is who they really are, their true selves. The Pharisees and scribes are like the actors; who they are in private is different from who they are in public, and their private lives are characterized by spiritual darkness.

Jesus’ teaching here, however, is not directed toward the Pharisees but toward the disciples (v. 3). The warning is clear: do not be like them. The implication is that the Pharisees show one side of behaviors to the people (outwardly righteous) but behind closed doors, in their secret meetings and councils (“in the dark”), they show another side—inwardly, they are unrighteous. The people may not be aware of the private side, but God knows, and He will judge the spiritual leaders for their unrighteous thoughts, conversations and deeds. Jesus warns His disciples not to be two-faced like the Pharisees and scribes. Just as God will someday reveal the secrets and words of the Pharisees, He will one day expose everyone’s actions and words, including the disciples’.

12:4-7 Verse 4 begins a series of teachings that parallel the body of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Many of the same sayings are presented here, yet others are unique to Luke, such as verses 4-6.

This is the first instance in Luke in which Jesus calls the disciples “My friends.” This is an incredible act of love on Jesus’ part toward His disciples, and it is not lost on them. This address made a particular impression on the apostle John who later wrote about it in his gospel (15:15). The lesson that Jesus is giving His disciples is to not fear the Pharisees. The Pharisees had the religious authority to pronounce judgments of blasphemy upon individuals who they felt were in violation of the Law of Moses, thus presumably precluding Abrahamic blessings resulting in expulsion from the temple and synagogue. No doubt the disciples were wondering about the consequences of their association with Jesus from the Pharisees’ point of view. Jesus puts their fears to rest by refocusing their attention on the One who holds the power of eternal destiny. In the big picture, death is not the issue; eternity is the issue, and the Pharisees have no power over eternal destination.

The reference to sparrows is loaded with meaning. First of all, sparrows were cheap and represented the very lowest of sacrificial offerings.
8 “And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God;
9 but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.
10 “And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him.
11 “When they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not worry about how or what you are to speak in your defense, or what you are to say;
12 for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

They were sold to worshippers at the temple for the equivalents of two cents. They were what very poor people offered. Yet, God is completely accepting of those offerings. Jesus is actually telling His disciples that they are like sparrows, not worth much in the world, yet completely accepted by God. From the world’s point of view, as well as the Pharisees’, the disciples are not worth very much, yet their sacrifices will not be forgotten by God. In fact, their sacrifices will be worth far more to God than the sparrows.

(There is actually a humorous note here. Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, states that two sparrows could be purchased for one cent. Here, Luke states that you could buy five sparrows for two cents. Such a deal!)

12:8-12 This next teaching is an expansion of the fear the disciples’ might be experiencing in terms of the religious leaders. A day will come when the disciples will be tested regarding their association with Jesus. In fact, Jesus is preparing His disciples for that time in the future when He will no longer be present. He is preparing them for the church.

Here, Jesus refers to Himself as “the Son of Man.” This is not the first occasion He has referred to Himself in that manner (chapters 7 & 9). Taking the title “Son of Man” was a direct reference to Daniel 7:13-14 and had Messianic overtones. The title “Son of Man” emphasizes the fact that Jesus was human, yet clothed with deity. At this point, Jesus has not called Himself the Son of God, but His acts speak volumes toward His identity. Jesus is therefore asserting His authority over the disciples’ eternal destiny. A true disciple will never deny Jesus.

Verse 10 has perhaps caused more unjustified fear in Christians than any other verse in Scripture. It need not be so. Jesus’ teaching is this: it is one thing to have difficulty accepting Jesus as the Messiah, but it is quite another to attribute to Satan the works of the Holy Spirit. This, of course, actually happened in the previous chapter, where Jesus’ messianic miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit were attributed to Beelzebul, the prince of demons. What verse 10 means is that if someone rejects Jesus in spite of clear evidence by the Holy Spirit, there is simply nothing God can do to save that person; they will never believe and be saved. Therefore, this verse has no application to Christians who accept Jesus and attribute His miracles to the power of the Holy Spirit. True Christians, therefore, cannot commit the so-called “unpardonable sin.” (Note: the term “unpardonable sin” (or “unforgiveable sin”) is not found in Scripture; it is a theological term developed some while ago to summarize the intent of verse 10.) But Jesus’ statement in verse 10 actually goes a step further and looks ahead to the future. Many will
13 Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.”

14 But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

15 Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

16 And He told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man was very productive.

17 “And he began reasoning to himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?’

18 “Then he said, ‘This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods.

19 ‘And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be
merry.” ’

20 “But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?’

21 “So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

22 And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on.

23 “For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.

24 “Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; they have no storeroom nor barn, and yet God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds!

25 “And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life’s span?

26 “If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why do you worry about other matters?

27 “Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these.

28 “But if God so clothes the grass in the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more will He clothe you? You men of little faith!

29 “And do not seek what you will eat and what you will drink, and do not keep worrying.

Verse 16-21 provide an illustration in the form of a parable. This tragic story concerns someone who relies on material possessions to make him happy. What should the man have done with his abundance? Instead of storing up more for himself, he should have looked around him and determined if there were those in need; i.e., the poor. This would have been how he could have expressed love. It was God’s love for the man that allowed him to have an abundance. It should have been love for others that motivated him to share his abundance. The man only needed enough; he chose to have more and more, and he chose poorly. On the night his soul was required of him, it was too late.

Therefore, the lesson here is that greed represents a severe lack of love because greed is always exercised at the expense of others. Being “rich toward God” simply means giving to others as God had given to him.

12:22-32 The next section of teaching focuses on two basic needs: food and clothing. Some might consider the man in the parable above a prudent saver for a rainy day. But Jesus counters that argument by saying that saving enough for a rainy day can easily become storing up for a hurricane! When does one ever know when he has enough? Jesus answers that question by zeroing in on the motive behind storing up beyond what is needful: worry. Essentially Jesus is saying, “Stop worrying about it!” The lesson is clear: God knows full well what His children need and therefore will provide the needful things, such as basic food and clothing.

Now, to be realistic, how much is really needful as opposed to what is wanted? This is a difficult question to answer on a practical basis, as needs vary with circumstances. Nevertheless, what Jesus is teaching is clear and plain: God will provide for needs. Our task as followers of Jesus is to determine what is a need from what is a want. Yet, Jesus helps us with that decision. What is needful is food, clothing, and the apostle Paul will later add, shelter (“covering”; 1 Tim. 6:8).

Lastly, Jesus focuses in on the emotion behind worry: it is fear. Therefore He says, “Do not be afraid…..” Again, Jesus is preparing His disciples for the time when they will be on their own. They will be persecuted, beaten, thrown in prison, and even killed. Most will lose all of their possessions. They are not to worry—God is in control.

The point of Jesus’ teaching in this section is that
30 “For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things.

31 “But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

32 “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

33 “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailling treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.

34 “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The world lives in a state of fear and worry about basic needs, and often worry about things they have no control over. This worry and fear inevitably results in greed; that is, wanting and possessing more than one needs. Jesus’ followers are not to be like that. Disciples of Jesus can to live without fear because they have a heavenly Father they can trust.

(The reader may want to refer to the “Answer Outline” section for these verses found at the end of the chapter. This section raises some contingency questions that inevitably arise as to whether or not Jesus’ words are black-and-white promises about provision that are true in every circumstance.)

12:33-34 The word the NASB translates as “charity” is a very specialized word. It is not the same as a tithe. Specifically, it refers to merciful giving to the poor or needy, or to those who have experienced temporary misfortune. The giving may be money or things, or any helpful acts toward the poor based on compassion. The Greek word (eleemosune) is used only 11 times in the New Testament, and always has that context (e.g., Matt. 6:4). The NASB most frequently translates the word as “alms.” The OT basis for this kind of giving is Lev. 19:9-10, and Deut. 15:11 states, “For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.’” (This compassionate giving is vividly illustrated in the Book of Ruth when Naomi and Ruth are allowed to glean Boaz’s fields.) “Charity” and “alms” is the only kind of giving recognized in the New Testament outside the gospels; tithing as such is never commanded.

There is no getting around the instruction by Jesus to “Sell your possessions and give to charity....” Quite simply put, followers of Jesus should hold loosely onto things that do not fall into the category of basic needs. That may be a hard pill to swallow in capitalistic America, but to rationalize away any other interpretation is not in keeping with good biblical hermeneutics (the interpretation of Scripture). Whereas every reader may agree with the instruction, it is up to each individual to determine what is a possession that fits into the category of need, and what is a possession that is merely a want. As alluded to earlier, this is a difficult determination for those who live in an affluent society. For those with many possessions, the practical solution is quite simple: be a very, very, very generous giver to the things of the kingdom of God and to those who are in need. Simply said, the more one gives, the more others are blessed, and the more others are blessed by your giving, the more you are “rich toward God.”

Unfortunately, there is a caveat to Jesus’
35 “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps lit.
36 “Be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks.
37 “Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them.
38 “Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves.
39 “But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into.
40 “You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

The subject turns here to the second coming of Christ; that is, Jesus’ return. The key word in this passage is “readiness.”

The theme of readiness is actually not a complete change in subject. The parable of the rich man (12:16-21) was a parable about readiness, for one rarely knows when he or she will stand before God and give an account of their deeds. The time wasted worrying about basic needs or protecting oneself for fear of loss often takes away from focusing on eternal matters and matters that are of concern to God (12:22-32). It is imminently more important that one be concerned about eternal needs than earthly needs, and live a life that is consistent with that concern.

The command to rid oneself of possessions (12:33-34) is a warning to not let possessions or the pursuit of possessions interfere with becoming the kind of disciple who is always ready to meet the Master when He returns.

Being ready implies consistently, persistently and presently living a lifestyle that is compatible with the kingdom of heaven. So, what is that lifestyle? Is it a lifestyle that sits around speculating on when the Son of Man will return? The answer is embedded throughout the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament—“Love your neighbor as yourself.” In other words, the lifestyle and readiness that Jesus is referring to is one in which His followers are living in a biblical love relationship with all others. That includes good works, living at peace with others, loving your enemies, forgiving all others, offering grace, having compassion for the poor and sick, taking care of those in need, and thousands of other examples throughout the Bible. All readiness revolves around loving one another and attending to
41 Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?”

42 And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time?

43 “Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

44 “Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

45 “But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk;

46 the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

47 “And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes,

48 but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

Therefore, the disciple is “ready” for Jesus’ return when he or she is living a lifestyle that is consistent with loving one another and loving one’s neighbor as oneself, and all the deeds, actions and behaviors that the command includes.

12:41-48 Peter’s question in verse 41 is a question any follower of Jesus should ask—“Are You talking about me? Does the command to ‘be ready’ apply to me?”

The motive behind Peter’s question as to readiness is obscure. It is obvious that Peter did not have Jesus’ second coming in mind, for he had yet to experience the resurrection and ascension. Most likely, based on other statements in the gospels, Peter believes the disciples are an exclusive group. He has no idea of the reference point of this parable, and therefore is speculating on a near future event when Jesus will reveal Himself as the Messiah and establish His kingdom on the earth. When that happens, Peter believes, Jesus’ disciples will be especially rewarded and placed in positions of prestige. Peter has yet to realize the fact of one Messiah, two comings.

Therefore, Peter’s question most likely arises from Jesus’ use of the word “slaves” in verse 37. The word translated “slave” is doulos in the Greek; that is, a bond-servant. The last thing on Peter’s mind is that the disciples would be referred to as bond-servants. That assumption will be erased at the Last Supper when Jesus washes the feet of the disciples.

Peter is unable to see the future church that God will raise up after Jesus’ ascension. So the meaning of the teaching is this: the “possessions” of the master is the church. The “sensible steward” refers to the apostles and prophets, and Peter in particular, who will establish the church and serve as its foundation (Eph. 2:20). The “rations” are the word of God; that is, the Scriptures.

Therefore, the apostles and the prophets are to prepare the church to be “ready” when the Son of Man comes in glory, and they are to do this by giving the church the word of God. After the resurrection, Jesus will teach the disciples the meaning of this parable.

Also, do not miss the irony of the word “possessions” in verse 44. The teaching here is that earthly possessions with no eternal value are replaced by heavenly possessions that are eternal.

Verses 46 & 47 provide the consequences for those who hear the word of God and do not adopt a lifestyle consistent with it; that is, a lifestyle that does not reflect readiness. They will be assigned “a place with the unbelievers.”

The apostle Paul reiterates the teaching in verse
49 “I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled!
50 “But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!
51 “Do you suppose that I came to grant peace on earth? I tell you, no, but rather division;
52 for from now on five members in one household will be divided, three against two and two against three.
53 “They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother-in-law.”

48 concerning “entrusting”: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2).

12:49-53 This next dramatic change in subject almost appears as an exasperation on the part of Jesus. In this verse, fire probably does not represent the Holy Spirit, but judgment. Fire destroys things, and in this case, ironically, the destruction will be relationships. The baptism refers to Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion.

This passage is one of those rare instances in the New Testament where, at first glance, love appears to be put on the back burner. Isn’t the destruction of relationships and the division among family members a very unloving consequence of following Jesus? Doesn’t this passage seem contradictory to Jesus’ teachings on love?

Actually, there are two important lessons on love in this section of Scripture. First, truth must always trump love. The truth about Jesus, who He is and what He brings, is the ultimate expression of love; the love of God for a lost world, the love of God to give His beloved Son as a sacrifice for mankind’s sin, and the love of Christ to be willing to suffer and die on behalf of sinners. There is no greater expression of love than the love that is experienced and expressed through Jesus Christ. And it is this love that the followers of Jesus desire to share with the world. Some will accept the love that is offered, others will reject it, and that rejection may include family members.

Second, therefore, families will be divided because of the unloving reactions of those who do not accept Jesus. In Jewish communities particularly, for a Jew to become a Christian often results in ostracism and persecution. Jesus is preparing his disciples for what will happen to many Jewish families when one of their members decides to become a follower of Jesus the Messiah.

Yet, the most loving thing a person can do is to share with others, including family, what Christ’s love has done for them, and offer through that love the truth about Jesus.

12:54-56 Here, Jesus is expressing His frustration over those who witness His power but deny His person. Notice, this admonition is to the crowds, not to the disciples. The contrast is vivid: the average person can tell when it’s about to rain, but cannot tell when the Messiah is in their midst. Such is the nature of spiritual truth. And in this case particularly, the people cannot see that it is not glory, peace and prosperity that is coming, but fire, division and judgment. The crowds have had plenty of warning.
analyze the appearance of the earth and the sky, but why do you not analyze this present time?

57 “And why do you not even on your own initiative judge what is right?
58 “For while you are going with your opponent to appear before the magistrate, on your way there make an effort to settle with him, so that he may not drag you before the judge, and the judge turn you over to the officer, and the officer throw you into prison.
59 “I say to you, you will not get out of there until you have paid the very last cent.”

through the ministry of John the Baptist. Therefore, they are without excuse.

12:57-59 The analogy here is that God is the judge and Jesus is the “opponent.” The crowds need to “settle” with the opponent (cf. v. 51) so as not to be found guilty before the ultimate magistrate, God.

A closing word about God’s judgment and God’s love would be appropriate here. God’s judgment comes only after His offer of love has been rejected. Judgment is the logical consequence of one’s choices, not a failure to love on God’s part.

An analogy would be one involving gravity. Gravity is a force…it just is. If a person is on a tall building standing on a ledge, God’s love says, “Don’t jump. Live!” But if that person jumps on his “own initiative,” God will continue to love him all the way down, but nevertheless, he will hit the ground at terminal velocity. There is not an absence of love on God’s part; there is a choice of rejecting God’s love on the jumper’s part.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 12, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in terms of acting upon it?

2. What do you think is the meaning behind Jesus’ statements in verses 1-3? Can you remember anything you did or said today that was “covered” up, “said in the dark,” or “whispered?”

3. Think about the things you fear the most: loss of financial security, popularity or esteem with others, being rejected, failing, even persecution? How do you tend to deal with those fears? Are those fears legitimate for the true follower of Jesus Christ? Where would you put yourself in the “be anxious for nothing” file?

4. Why was Jesus reluctant to settle the dispute for the man who was being treated unfairly by his brother about their inheritance? What does that tell you about Jesus’ concerns and the priorities He wants His followers to have? Have you ever been involved in a lawsuit? If so, who initiated the lawsuit and what was the issue? Did you handle it according to Jesus’ teaching? How about failure to receive a raise that was earned, or having to pay taxes?

5. How does the parable of the rich man with productive land relate to the above teaching? Who made the land productive, the man or God? What do you think the man should have done with his surplus?

6. How do you interpret and how do you apply to yourself Jesus’ instruction in verse 33?

7. There is a relationship between Jesus’ teaching on readiness (verses 35-48) and the parable about the rich landowner. Can you figure out what that relationship is? How would you measure your own state of readiness?
The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 12

12:1-12 – Jesus’ warning to His followers concerning the hypocrisy of the ________________

12:13-21 – Jesus’ warning about __________________________

12:22-34 – The secret to living successfully without ______________________________

12:35-48 – Jesus’ lesson on ______________________________

12:49-59 – The consequences for not being __________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 12

12:1-12 – Jesus’ warning to His followers concerning the hypocrisy of the spiritual leaders

- The teaching outline for this chapter provides many opportunities for open discussion and application. For example, some in the group—men, particularly—may not be aware of what leaven is and its importance in baking. This, as well as the term hypocrisy, may require explanation for the disciples to see the relevance.

- The warning Jesus gives here involves spiritual leaders. There may be many opportunities for discussion on the hypocrisy of present-day spiritual leaders, such as TV evangelists who are always asking for money when it is obvious they live affluent lifestyles, or pastors who teach such things as the Prosperity Gospel, or even spiritual leaders who teach one thing but do another. The discipler may need to have at his or her disposal some examples from the news.

- Verses 4-7 may prove fertile discussion for the subject of fearing God versus fearing man. These verses also serve as an opportunity for showing how much God cares for His people.

- Verses 8-12 provide opportunities for the discipler to bring up the subject of Christian persecution. All kinds of scenarios may be created here along the theme of “What would you do if…?”

- Take time to explain verse 10. Some disciples may have already heard the term “unpardonable sin.” This will require explanation from the commentary. Ensure that a true disciple cannot commit the unpardonable sin.

12:13-21 – Jesus’ warning about greed

- This section of Jesus’ teaching will certainly open the door for lively discussion. For example, ask, “What is the difference between a need and a want?” The discipler may want to pose some practical illustrations, such as the type of car one chooses to drive, or the size of one’s house, or the way one spends his or her discretionary funds. In the discussion, do not fail to raise the issue of the poor, the needy, and those who are experiencing temporary hardship. This is always a good question to ask: “How easy is it for you to loan money to someone?”

- Create discussion on the man who is upset because his brother won’t give him what is legally his; that is, his inheritance. Why does Jesus call out the man for his greed, when what he sought after was legitimately his?

- The main point of this section focuses on the subject of greed. No one ever believes he or she participates in greed; that’s something other people do. The discipler may need to be careful regarding specifics here. It would be better to let the disciples themselves discern what is greed. In America, the typical Christian will probably think in terms of the greed associated with Wall Street, politicians, or banks. However, the discipler will want to carefully explain that greed can occur at any level of society, and greed basically means seeking after or acquiring more than one needs. The discipler will want to emphasize the phrase “…every form of greed.”

- Ask the discipler to repeat back the parable Jesus gives in His explanation of greed. Bring up the “Saving for a rainy day” scenario. Is there anything wrong with that?

- The discipler will certainly want to bring the entire discussion back to the subject of love. How is the disciple to respond to those in need, and what has that to do with greed, particularly in the decisions over what is a want and what is a need.
12:22-34 – The secret to living successfully without worry or fear

- Have the disciple or disciples give a definition of worry. Ask, “Why does the disciple of Jesus Christ never need to worry about basic needs, or live in fear?” “What differentiates the disciple of Christ from a person of the world?”

- Ask, “Why would fear and worry cause someone to move out of being satisfied with basic needs, and move into a lifestyle characterized by greed?”

- Inevitably, someone in the group will raise the question about those Christians who have starved to death during times of war, or those who have lost everything. (Examples would include Christians sent to Nazi detention camps during WWII, or Syrian Christian refugees scattered by ISIS.) So, what’s the answer? The best explanation is that Jesus’ statements are emphasizing the need for His followers to live with a mentality free of worry and fear. That’s the way the world lives. However, these statements apply to everyday affairs, not times of crisis. They are at best probabilities, not black-and-white promises that always hold true under all circumstances. The emphasis of Jesus’ teaching here must not fall on the promise that God will always provide all needs under all circumstances. The issue here is (1) trusting God in spite of the external circumstances, (2) seeking the kingdom of God first, and (3) not letting one’s life be ruled by worry and fear. God may have an overriding purpose or plan that superimposes itself over any given situation, and martyrdom is one of those circumstances.

- Verses 33 and 34 will also present an opportunity for lively discussion. The phrase “Sell your possessions” will be a stumbling block for some disciples. Emphasize that Jesus is telling His disciples to get rid of anything that may be holding them back from investing fully in the kingdom of God. The disciple will want to do some research on this. There are plenty of examples where men and women have given up all their possessions to enter the mission field or dedicate themselves to the Lord’s work. Those individuals will always say, “It is the best thing I’ve ever done.”

12:35-48 – Jesus’ lesson on readiness

- The simple question for the disciple here is, “What does it mean to be ready?” followed by, “How are you preparing yourself to be ready?”

- Make sure that the disciple is steered away from the “doomsday prepper” scenario, and to the direction of living a lifestyle consistent with loving one’s neighbor as oneself. This discussion may also lead to the subject of overcoming sinful habits in one’s life.

- Also ensure that the certainty of Jesus’ return is not something to live in fear of, but is the great hope all Christians should be waiting for.

- Make sure the disciple picks up on the word “possessions” in verse 44. The teaching here is that earthly possessions with no eternal value are replaced by heavenly possessions that have no expiration date. (A nice cross-reference verse is Ephesians 1:3.)

12:49-59 – The consequences for not being ready

- Ensure that the disciple understands that this section of Scripture is referring to what is called the “church age.” That is, the time between Christ’s ascension and His second coming. Jesus’ disciples were expecting Him to bring peace to the earth. Instead, there will be great distress for His followers. Jesus is warning His disciples (and us!) that this will be a time of opposition and persecution. This does not mean that God has lost control. It means that these times of distress are all a part of God’s plan.

- This section of chapter 12 should be tied in with the theme of “readiness.”
Overview of Luke 13
In chapter 13, we will see the 6th & 7th time Jesus uses the word “repent” or words related to repent (“repentance,” “repentant”). The call for repentance will be found another seven times in Luke’s gospel. Obviously, the call for repentance was not unimportant to Jesus and not lost on Luke. The call for true repentance will go unheeded by an official in the synagogue where Jesus heals a woman who has been burdened with an 18-year affliction. Jesus will also continue teaching on the nature of the kingdom of God and how one enters in. He will issue serious warnings about who will be saved in the end times. Lastly, Jesus will be warned about Herod’s intent on killing Him. This will result in a lament over the capital of Israel, Jerusalem.

What to look for in Luke 13
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Find the two times Jesus uses the word “repent.”
3. Look for another conflict Jesus raises by healing a woman on the Sabbath.
4. Note Jesus’ teaching on who will and who will not enter the kingdom of God.
5. Ask what the Pharisees’ motive was for warning Jesus that King Herod’s intended to kill Him.
6. Look for Jesus’ teaching on the mustard seed and the leaven, and ask how this applies to the kingdom of God.
7. Look for the relationship between Jesus’ call for repentance and His teaching about who will enter the kingdom of God.

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices.
2 And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate?
3 “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.
4 “Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem?
5 “I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.”

13:1-3 “Now on the same occasion” refers back to the events and teachings that occur in chapter 12. Little is known about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with sacrifices, as it is nowhere else mentioned in Scripture. Some believe these Galileans were part of the Zealots, fanatical Jews who resorted to violence to disrupt Roman occupation. Pilate, the Roman governor assigned to Judea (3:1), was a cruel man when it came to teaching the Jews a lesson, and apparently had his own priests add the Jews’ blood during their pagan sacrifices. This would have been particularly abhorrent to the Jews, therefore causing them to hate the Romans even more.

Likewise, nothing is known about the tower of Siloam incident. It was obviously a construction site accident near the pool of Siloam.

The point Jesus is teaching here, however, has nothing to do either with Pilate or with the construction workers. Common Jewish belief at the time was that God exacted judgment on those who had sinned badly, and therefore the Galileans and the construction workers must obviously have sinned badly to experience such terrible deaths. Jesus teaches against that doctrine however. The call to repent is for all men and women; all are under judgment for sin, and those who proposed the
6 And He began telling this parable: “A man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and did not find any.
7 “And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’
8 “And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer;
9 and if it bears fruit next year, fine; but if not, cut it down.’ ”

13:6-9 The subject of this parable is a fig tree. The fig tree in Scripture is often symbolic of the nation of Israel, and represents peace and prosperity. This parable is directly related to the preceding, warning about the need for repentance. The reference to fruit harkens back to John’s preaching in chapter 3: “Therefore, bear fruits in keeping with repentance…” (v. 8). The clear teaching of this parable is that “for three years”—the three years of Jesus’ ministry—God will be looking for fruit in Israel as a result of His ministry. He will find little. There will be yet another year of grace—represented by the early church—for Israel to accept Jesus as their Messiah (the “fertilizer” being the presence of the Holy Spirit). After that, judgment will come if there is no fruit. (The grammatical construction in the Greek implies there will, indeed, be no fruit.) This judgment question cannot assume they are any less sinners than those who experienced horrible deaths. It is a warning for them, as they themselves may suffer death when Jerusalem is destroyed by the Romans in AD 70.

It is the nature of the flesh to elevate oneself above others spiritually. Christians are as guilty of this as any other religion. We look for some reason to consider others greater sinners than ourselves. We judge them on the basis of church attendance, knowledge of the Bible, whether or not they smoke or drink, or even what Bible version they use. Contrary to what some Christians believe, homosexuality is no worse than adultery, and greed no less a sin than pornography when it comes to the kingdom of God. In an earthly system of justice, some crimes are deemed worse than others (e.g., murder vs. theft). But in the kingdom of God, sin of any kind is a blanket of darkness that casts a shadow over all mankind. As Paul writes in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Whereas mankind may exact heavier judgments for certain types of crimes, when it comes to God’s holiness, everyone is in the same boat—all have sinned and therefore stand in judgment. All mankind, regardless of whether they are great sinners or lesser sinners, stand in need of a Redeemer, and that Redeemer—the only One who settles the issue of sin—is Jesus Christ.

The tendency for Christians to create hierarchies of spirituality is ultimately a failure to love one another, for it is far easier to judge others who are not like us than to love them. In God’s kingdom, the greater the sinner, the greater the love that is needed. It is those who feel they are the spiritual elite who neither understand the true nature of God’s love nor offer love to others, especially to those they consider undeserving and involved in “greater sin.”
10 And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.
11 And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all.
12 When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.”
13 And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God.
14 But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.”
15 But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him?
16 “And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?”
17 As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him.

happens in AD 70 when the Romans destroy Jerusalem and Herod’s temple.

So, what is the fruit that God will be looking for? First and foremost, the fruit is the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah in spite of His crucifixion; that all of Israel’s leaders will recognize Jesus as Messiah by virtue of His resurrection and, as Zechariah wrote, “…they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn…” (Zech. 12:10).

The other fruit that Jesus is referring to in this passage is the acceptance of the new covenant; that is, the covenant ruled by grace and not by the law, and characterized, not by sacrifices, rituals and feasts, but by relationships based on the new commandment, “Love one another” (John 15:12).

13:10-17 A little clarification is needed regarding the woman in this parable. It is unlikely the spirit actually bent the woman double (although this is not completely out of the realm of possibility; we know nothing of the woman’s background.) It is more probable that the spirit caused the sickness which caused the woman to be bent double. Severe deformities of the spine in elderly women is usually the result of what is called osteoporosis; that is, a loss of calcium in the spine associated with decreased amounts of estrogen as a result of menopause. (However, this “bent double” condition can also be seen in other diagnoses such as idiopathic kyphoscoliosis, tuberculosis or infection.) This poor woman, whose age is not mentioned, had apparently become progressively “bent double” over a period of 18 years. Because of this, it is likely she was older, and her deformity was the result of osteoporosis.

Notice, too, that Jesus “called her over” to Him. There is no indication that He cast out a demon, as the word “demon” is not used here. We can assume, however, that the spirit was not a benevolent one. The woman is “freed” from the sickness which caused her to be doubled over, and therefore freed from the power of the spirit that caused the sickness.

The primary concern of this incident, however, is the calloused response of the synagogue official. He cares more about the law than he does the woman! Note that the synagogue official refers to the fourth commandment regarding the Sabbath. The first part of his statement captures the essence of the commandment. It is the second part—“….so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day”—that is not found in the fourth commandment or anywhere in the Torah. It comes instead from “the traditions of the elders” regarding what a Jew could or could not do on the Sabbath.

How did the Jewish leaders get to the point that they began caring more about the Sabbath laws than they did about people? The 4th commandment refers
18 So He was saying, “What is the kingdom of God like, and to what shall I compare it?
19 “It is like a mustard seed, which a man took and threw into his own garden; and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air nested in its branches.”
And again He said, “To what shall I compare the kingdom of God?
21 “It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three pecks of flour until it was all leavened.”

And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.

And someone said to Him, “Lord, are there just a few who are being saved?” And He said to them,

“Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able.

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, ‘Lord, open up to us!’ then He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know where you are from.’

Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets’;

and He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers.’

In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves being people were sensing perhaps a freeing from the binding laws being held over them by the officials.

The mustard seed was often ground into a paste and used for medicinal purposes. Perhaps the “sickness” issue above reminded Luke of Jesus’ teaching about the kingdom of God. The mustard plant can grow up to 15 feet tall (3 meters) and become large enough for a bird to light on. Such, then, is the freedom that comes from being freed from bondage to the law.

The second simile reinforces the first. It’s all about something quite small turning into something quite big. A small teaching on the Sabbath can produce great fruit. Leaven (yeast), which more often than not in Scripture is a type of sin, here is used in a positive way by Jesus, lest everyone think all leaven is bad.

The gospel can start out as something small in a person’s life, only to become the dominating “plant” in one’s life. Such is the result of someone who is freed from the law and introduced to the kingdom of grace and love. Grace is freeing, and once one is freed from the law, love becomes the dominant force for producing fruit in one’s life.

“…Proceeding on His way to Jerusalem” does not mean this is the final trip. Jesus actually made a number of journeys to Jerusalem from the surrounding areas. Luke is placing the emphasis on Jesus’ intent, not His actual itinerary. Regardless, Jesus never stops teaching.

The question in verse 23, “Lord, are there just a few being saved?” seems to come out of nowhere. Why did someone suddenly ask that question? Some commentators postulate that the crowds were actually dwindling somewhat, and the question is one of puzzlement over numbers. A better solution, however, is that personal doubts were being raised as a result of Jesus’ teaching (v. 22). In this case, Luke has placed the question before the teaching, as a literary method of stating what Jesus was teaching. In reality, the question may actually have come after, or as a result of the teaching, and Luke has used the question to explain what Jesus was teaching on His journey to Jerusalem.

The other odd thing about the question is the use of the word “saved.” This is the sixth time in Luke’s gospel where he uses the Greek word sozo (saved), but the first that seems to refer to salvation for eternal life (with the exception of Jesus’ own words in 9:54). Jesus uses two metaphors. The first, “narrow door,” indicates the way to salvation; the second (house) indicates the destination, that is, the kingdom of God. The word “strive” means to make it one’s earnest goal, and the “narrow door” implies there are many
thrown out.
29 “And they will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God.
30 “And behold, some are last who will be first and some are first who will be last.”

31 Just at that time some Pharisees approached, saying to Him, “Go away, leave here, for Herod wants to kill You.”
32 And He said to them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I reach My goal.’
33 “Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.
34 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, just as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not have it!

13:31-35 The motive of the Pharisees is probably not a desire to protect Jesus, but to keep Jesus from fulfilling His mission toward Jerusalem. (Compare the words “at the same time” with verse 22). One must consider the possibility that Satan is behind their words. Their warning, in fact, is probably contrived, as nowhere else in the gospels is it stated that Herod had plans to kill Jesus.

Jesus’ use of the word “fox” is a Hebraism for someone who is sly and cunning, so Jesus is playing along with ploy of the Pharisees to let them know that He has no intention of changing His plans to travel to Jerusalem, whether there is a real threat or not.

“Today, tomorrow, and the third day” in verse 32 are not a timetable for His arrival, but an affirmation of His intent. The “third day,” of course, refers to His resurrection.

Verse 33 is a statement of irony, not historical fact. It is ironic that the city that is supposed to be the center of God’s presence is the very city where wider doors that take neither striving nor sacrifice. “…Seek to enter” refers to entering the kingdom of God. The rest of the parable focuses, not on those who strive, but on those who choose not to strive, and is specifically directed to all the Jews who eventually reject Jesus as the Messiah.

The message in this parable is this: Jews believe they will be saved simply because they are Jews; that is, children of Abraham. However, though expecting to enter into the kingdom of heaven because of their heritage, they will be denied by the “head of the house” which is God. The narrow door is Jesus Himself, and choosing to accept Him as Messiah will not be an easy task; there will be persecution, rejection and hardships along the way.

Verse 29 is a prophecy referring to the Gentiles who will be saved, simply because they will choose receive Jesus as the Messiah. And in verse 30, though the Jews consider Gentiles to be “last,” they will instead be “first” to enter the Kingdom of God.

The objection might be raised that God is not showing love and mercy to the Jews by keeping them out of the kingdom. But one must remember, truth always trumps love. The truth is that Jesus is the Messiah, the only begotten Son of the Father, who will die for the sins of all mankind. God has shown no greater love than to offer His son as a sacrifice for sin. And Jesus Himself has shown no greater love than to offer Himself willingly as the sacrifice, the suffering servant. So God is not withholding love from the Jews who reject Jesus—He is offering greater love to those who accept Him. The Jews can accept Jesus as Messiah at any time, and thus experience the full love of God. Instead, they have chosen not to.
35 “Behold, your house is left to you desolate; and I say to you, you will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!’ ”

God’s presence in the form of Jesus will be rejected. Those who brought the truth of God to Jewish spiritual leadership (e.g., Jeremiah, Isaiah) were in fact killed by those very same leaders.

Verses 34 & 35 provide intimate insight into the love of Jesus for His people. There is wailing, weeping and grieving undergirding the words, “O Jerusalem…” as David wept over his son Absalom. There is great compassion here, for Jesus knows well the fate of His people and the tragedy that is coming. There is anguish underlying the fact that He will be rejected, that they “would not have it.” It is a desperate cry of exasperation and frustration, as well as indignation. Jesus’ heart is broken over His people.

There is a wonderful personal application that can be gleaned from Jesus’ mourning over Jerusalem. Many sincere Christians mourn for family members or friends who reject Jesus Christ. This can often bring tears during intercessory prayer for loved ones. Although mourning for lost loved ones is agonizing, there is a glimmer of blessing in that God is allowing His children to suffer the same frustration and mourning He does over the lost. When the Christian mourns over lost loved ones—or any lost person for that matter—he or she is sharing God’s mourning over the lost, and in this case, Jesus’ mourning over Jerusalem.

“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” refers not only to Jesus’ triumphal entry on Palm Sunday, but to Jesus’ second coming when “every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess…that Jesus is Lord.” It will be a fulfillment of Zechariah 12:10.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 13, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?

2. What is repentance and what does it mean? What are the consequences for failing to repent? Is there anything—anything—of which you need to repent? And, does repentance mean only to confess something, or does it mean to actually do something about it?

3. Reread the paragraph about Jesus healing the woman bent double. What should the reaction of the synagogue official have been?

4. In that same healing, ask yourself why was the crowd rejoicing so much? Was it just because of what Jesus did in the form of healing, or was it possibly something Jesus said that caught the crowd’s attention?

5. How can you participate in turning a mustard seed into a great bush? How can you become leaven in your home, your school, your workplace, or your church?

6. In verse 24, Jesus teaches, “Strive to enter through the narrow door…. ” What does that mean to you? What does the “narrow door” represent in your life? How might the concept of the narrow door relate to your relationships, and in particular your willingness to “love one another” and to “love your neighbor as yourself”?

7. Reread verse 34. Over whom have you wept lately?
13:1-9 – Jesus is asked a question about the nature of sin; He responds that His listeners need to ________________

13:10-17 – Jesus heals a woman bent double for 18 years; she is set free on ________________________________

13:18-21 – Two similes regarding the nature of the kingdom of God; the mustard seed and the ____________________________

13:22-30 – Jesus teaches about the way to the kingdom of God; it is ________________________________

13:31-35 – The Pharisees try to convince Jesus not to continue His journey; Jesus mourns for ________________________________
13:1-9 – Jesus is asked a question about the nature of sin; He responds that His listeners need to repent

- The disciple will need to be informed that, from an historical point of view, nothing is known about the two events mentioned in these verses, so there is nothing to refer them to.
- The disciple will also need to know that, according to Jewish theology, God punishes sinners on earth for their sins, and the greater the sin, the greater the punishment or misfortune they received. The key words for understanding this concept is “worse culprits” in verse 4.
- In reality, there is much discussion that can be had over these verses. Many Christians ask about—or assume—the same belief; some sins are worse than others, and therefore garner heavier punishments. For example, is homosexuality worse than adultery, or greed worse than pornography? (cf. Col. 3:5.) The Bible teaches that “…all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).
- Ensure that the disciple understands that sin of any kind separates one from God, and therefore repentance is the first step in restoration, no matter whether someone considers it a “small sin” or “great sin.”
- A good discipler can build a case for repentance by helping the disciple see the theme of repentance throughout the gospel.
- Make sure that the disciple understands that knowing the concept of repentance is not the same as actually repenting. Ask the disciple if he or she has repented of any sins lately. In reality, repentance should be a part of daily prayers.

13:10-17 – Jesus heals a woman bent double for 18 years; she is set free on the Sabbath

- The disciple may have difficulty understanding why the synagogue official had such a difficult time with Jesus healing the woman on the Sabbath. (Refer to the commentary for the laws about healing on the Sabbath.) Make sure the disciple understands that there are no restrictions to healing on the Sabbath in the Torah itself. Those laws were established later under the body of work called “the traditions of the elders.”
- The discipler will want to avoid any distracting discussion on what caused this woman to be “bent double.”
- Make sure that the disciple understands the point Jesus is making about the hypocrisy of the Jewish leadership concerning what one could or could not do on the Sabbath (e.g., disabled woman vs. ox).
- To bring application to this incident, ask the disciple if he or she feels guilty about not attending church on Sunday when they choose instead to help someone or perform a good deed. Ask if they have ever heard a preacher make people feel guilty about not attending church on Sunday. (This is not to say that Christians shouldn’t make every effort to attend worship services, especially in America where we still have the freedom to worship openly. Missing Sunday worship to do a good deed is one thing…laziness is another.)
- Ensure that the disciple sees the relationship between the concept of Sabbath “rest” and the woman being “freed” from her sickness.

13:18-21 – Two similes regarding the nature of the kingdom of God; the mustard seed and the leaven

- See if the disciple can verbalize the two illustrations about what the kingdom of God is like. In terms of application, these illustrations can refer to the kingdom of God on earth, and they can refer to the kingdom of God in one’s life.
- See if the disciple can find the relationship between these illustrations and the incident in the synagogue when Jesus healed the woman bent double.
13:22-30 – Jesus teaches about the way to the kingdom of God; it is narrow and difficult

- This teaching by Jesus may be difficult for some disciples to understand. They may take the position that the “head of the house”—God—is being “insensitive” and uncaring toward those who “seek to enter.” Remind the disciple that the theme here is twofold: first, it is the context of the kingdom of God (v. 28); second, it is in response to one of the disciples asking, “…are there just a few who are being saved?” The key to understanding his teaching is verse 24: “Strive to enter through the narrow door.” The teaching is that many Jews will want to enter the kingdom of God, but few are willing to accept God’s condition that there is now but one way, and that is repenting of sins and accepting Jesus as their Messiah.
- See if the disciple can understand the meaning of verse 29. (It refers to the Gentiles entering the kingdom of God by receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior.)
- See if the disciple can understand the meaning of verse 30. The Jews have always considered themselves as “first” in God’s eyes, and the Gentiles as “last.” In the future, the tree of the mustard seed will be filled mostly with Gentiles. Thus, the last will be first to receive Christ, and the first, last to receive Him.
- In terms of application, ask the disciple if he or she has ever heard anyone say, “I believe there are many ways to God. Christianity is just one of them.” Or, “All religions lead to God.” Or, “Christians are too narrow minded. They believe that there is only one way to God.” Or, “How could a loving God possibly send anyone to hell?” How would the disciple answer each of these assertions?
- Ask the disciple if he or she thinks being a Christian is going to be an easy journey. The discipler may want to refer the disciple to Christians who are being persecuted, imprisoned and put to death all over the world, simply because they follow Jesus Christ.

13:31-35 – The Pharisees try to convince Jesus not to continue His journey; Jesus mourns for Jerusalem

- The disciple may need some background information concerning the Old Testament prophets who were killed for teaching and preaching the truth (e.g., Isaiah & Jeremiah).
- See if the disciple can determine what Jesus means when He says in verse 32, “…and the third day I reach My goal.” (This statement obviously refers to His resurrection.)
- Ask the disciple why Jesus mourned over Jerusalem. What does this have to do with the concept of love?
- See if the disciple can understand verse 35. This verse is both a near and far prophecy. It refers first to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (chapter 19) and second, to Jesus’ second coming when the Jewish nation “will look on Me whom they have pierced” and repent.
Overview of Luke 14
In chapter 14, Jesus is invited to have dinner with a leader of the Pharisees. There, Jesus heals a man with “dropsy.” While the Pharisees continue using words to question Jesus about laws concerning the Sabbath, Jesus continues to counter the words of the Pharisees with acts of love and caring for the sick. In refuting the spiritual leaders, Jesus will ask a question similar to questions He has asked before concerning priorities and the value of a person’s life. To bring His point home, Jesus will give a parable about a man who wants to throw a banquet for his friends. This parable is not only an admonishment to the Pharisees, but it is full of prophecy about the future of the Jewish nation. Jesus will then tie together the events at dinner and the parable in a message concerning the cost of discipleship. It is a message worth acting on.

What to look for in Luke 14
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. You will read about Jesus’ fourth encounter with the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. (See 6:1-11 and 10:13-17 for the other three.)
3. Jesus will be invited to the home of a leader of the Pharisees. Some issues will be raised about the poor. Look for the comparisons Jesus makes between the poor and the Pharisees.
4. Look for what Jesus tells His disciples regarding the cost of following Him.
5. Jesus will make an astounding statement about how family members might hold a person back from following Him.
6. Look for the comparison Jesus makes concerning discipleship and salt.
7. Look for the centralizing theme that characterizes this chapter.

1 It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely.
2 And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy.
3 And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”
4 But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away.
5 And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?”
6 And they could make no reply to this.

14:1-6 Jesus continues His journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, He is constantly being tested about His teaching and healings, particularly in regard to Sabbath laws. Remember that in 13:31, the Pharisees were warning Jesus not to come to Jerusalem, lest He be captured and killed by Herod. Jesus’ response is to ignore their warnings, which weren’t really given on His behalf anyway, and continue on His mission.

This fact alone has a great lesson to it: once you know God’s path and plan for your life, don’t let others try to talk you out of it, regardless of their intentions, good or bad. As Jesus warned in 9:62, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” The point is this: to enjoy the full blessings of the kingdom of God, _stick to God’s plan for your life._

Now back to the text. Note that on this occasion, the Pharisee is a _leader_ of the Pharisees; that is, one who was considered more righteous and knowledgeable about the law, and therefore put in charge of other Pharisees. The leader is inviting Jesus over to see for himself what his subordinates have been reporting, and to judge for himself if Jesus is
breaking Sabbath law.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the Jews enforced many laws of what did or did not constitute “work” on the Sabbath, an interpretation of the fourth commandment. The interpretation went something like this: if someone is having an emergency, healing is lawful. If someone is not having an emergency, such as in a chronic condition, this does not constitute an emergency, and to heal would be considered work.

Amongst those gathered at the Pharisee’s house is a man with “dropsy.” Dropsy is an old term meaning a collection of water in the extremities. Today, dropsy would be defined more specifically, such as congestive heart failure, cellulitis, or any medical condition resulting in fluid accumulation in the lower extremities. Whether the man with dropsy was an observer or an invited guest is unclear. Nevertheless, Jesus picks him out of the crowd purposefully—He intends to teach a lesson to the leader of the Pharisees. Jesus introduces the lesson with a question He has asked many times: “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?”

The question is a rhetorical one; that is, it has an obvious answer to the leader of the Pharisees. According to the Pharisees, it would not be lawful to heal the man with dropsy because he is not having an emergency. He can wait until the next day to visit a physician. But there is a subtle indictment in Jesus’ question—according to whom is it lawful or unlawful? In chapter 6, verse 9, when Jesus heals the man with the withered right hand, He asks, “…Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath…?” (Italics mine.) In the chapter 6 incident, Jesus compares “lawful” with doing good versus doing harm. In this incident at the home of the Pharisee, He simply asks, “Is it lawful to heal…?” The emphasis, therefore, is on their Sabbath laws. The rationalization of the Pharisees and scribes was this: the man with dropsy is not having an emergency, and his life is not in imminent danger. Therefore, waiting another day to be healed won’t hurt him, as he has had this problem for a long time. On the other hand, pulling a man or ox out of a well does constitute an emergency, therefore, it was okay to perform “work” on the Sabbath. The point that Jesus is making is that the rational of the Pharisees cannot be supported by a stand-alone reading of the fourth commandment, and in fact cannot be supported anywhere else in the entire Torah. Their definition of what is lawful or unlawful has been created by man.

Notice the response of the Pharisees: “But they kept silent.” The Pharisees are silent because Jesus has put them in a position to condemn themselves and their Sabbath laws, regardless of their response. If they say “Yes, it is lawful on the Sabbath,” then they
And He began speaking a parable to the invited guests when He noticed how they had been picking out the places of honor at the table, saying to them,

8 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for someone more distinguished than you may have been invited by him,

9 and he who invited you both will come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in disgrace you proceed to occupy the last place.

10 “But when you are invited, go and recline at the last place, so that when the one who has invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will have honor in the sight of all who are at the table with you.

11 “For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself violate their own laws in front of their leader. If they say “No,” then they condemn themselves by showing they care more about their laws than the man with dropsy. For the Pharisees, it’s a lose-lose situation.

By healing the man with dropsy, Jesus has raised the issue that the Pharisees have completely overlooked in their zeal for Sabbath law—they have completely lost any sense of caring for others, and totally neglected any principle of biblical love. Their interpretations and definitions of “work” have eliminated the imperative to love by saying that loving their interpretation of God’s law is more important than loving one another. The intent of the fourth commandment was not for man to show love for God, but for God to show love for man by ensuring he doesn’t work himself to death, as was the case when the Israelites were in bondage in Egypt. The ultimate purpose of the fourth commandment is to bless man, not oppress him. The fourth commandment, taken in its essence, is the only commandment in which God instructs man to look after himself, to care for himself, and, in effect, to love himself.

The irony of this should not be lost on the reader. By creating and imposing Sabbath laws, the religious authorities in Israel exchanged one type of bondage for another—from bondage in Egypt to bondage to the Sabbath laws. And, in so doing, the Pharisees turned God’s love for man into man’s love for the law, negating the entire intent—and blessing—of the fourth commandment.

Dinner at the leader of the Pharisee’s house just gets better and better. Now Jesus is going to call out the Pharisees for their hunger for favoritism.

A Hebrew meal was taken, not at a table with chairs, but reclined on pillows, laying on their left side so as to handle food with the right (clean) hand. The “table” was an open semi-circle platform so that the servants could bring the food and drink up to the front, starting with the host and working down from there. Of course, the host placed himself at the center. Then, in order of importance or honor, the guests took positions closest to the host. In this instance, the Pharisees are not only playing musical cushions, but probably debating among themselves who should be positioned closest to the host, and in what order they should place themselves. To be facetious, this must have taken a lot of “work.”

Observing their jousting for position, Jesus teaches another lesson. On an obvious level, the lesson is one of common sense: better to be promoted in front of the crowd than demoted. But the deeper lesson, of course, is one of self-importance and humility. The apostle Paul will teach about this in Romans 12:10: “Be devoted to one another in
12 And He also went on to say to the one who had invited Him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, otherwise they may also invite you in return and that will be your repayment.

13 “But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind,
14 and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

The poor are those who lack basic needs. They stand in contrast to the Pharisees and particularly the leader of the Pharisees who have much.

The crippled is symbolic of those who cannot walk; that is, they depend on others to take care of them and carry them around.

The lame represent those who are physically able, but, because of their imperfections, are excluded from offering temple sacrifices. (Note 1: the difference between someone who is crippled and someone who is lame is in degree. In the original language, “crippled” essentially means “maimed” to the degree that the individual is unable to walk, or is bedridden. A “lame” person can walk, but with a limp. Note 2: In Mosaic law, Levites who were lame were excluded from offering sacrifices. By the time of Jesus, the Pharisees excluded anyone who had a disability.)

The blind, also excluded from offering temple sacrifices, are those who must be led around by others.

Allegorically, these four examples have spiritual counterparts. The poor are symbolic of those who are
“poor in spirit”; that is, they feel abandoned by God. The crippled represent those who are paralyzed by sin (cf. 5:17-26). The lame represent those whose spiritual “walk” is impaired, perhaps by Sabbath laws and by the traditions of the elders. The lame could also represent those who are outsiders, like tax collectors and prostitutes. The blind are symbolic of those who are spiritually blind, and perhaps even blinded by the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

Jesus’ instruction to the host here is not based solely on compassion; He is selecting those in society whom the religious leaders considered scorned and rejected by God because of some personal sin. In the eyes of the Pharisees, if a man or woman were poor, they were poor because they were getting what they deserved for some sin they had committed. If they were crippled, it is God Himself who had crippled them out of judgment. If they were lame, they were lame because they had offended God by not keeping such things as the Sabbath law, and God was punishing them. If they were blind, it was either because the blind person had sinned against God, or, if they were born blind, it was because their parents had sinned. Regardless of who is named or what affliction they suffered, the Pharisees taught that it was the result of sin and therefore they were under God’s judgment. Not only did they stand in judgment and suffer physical disabilities, but they were not allowed into the temple, and therefore were considered outcasts and unclean.

The contemporary lessons regarding favoritism here are too numerous to list, but here are a few. First, Christians should not direct their affections solely toward those who already have everything, who are esteemed or thought well of by the world, those who are famous or prestigious, or even those whom the evangelical world elevates as a “celebrity pastor.” The Christian is to direct his or her affection toward those who have nothing. Second, the follower of Jesus Christ should reach out to those whom no one else reaches out to. Third, the rewards in heaven are far greater than the rewards on earth for the one who takes Jesus’ words seriously. Fourth, when the disciple does something for others, he or she should do it without expecting anything in return. Fifth, following these principles puts one in the category of the righteous, which is based not on the law, but on loving one another, especially the poor. And last on this writer’s list: being righteous is not exclusively defined by keeping the Ten Commandments, but by keeping the “royal law,” as stated in James 2:8: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The Pharisees had it all wrong: righteousness is not defined by keeping the Sabbath laws or by keeping any other law. Righteousness is defined by loving your neighbor as yourself. Therefore, those who love
15 When one of those who were reclining at the table with Him heard this, he said to Him, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

16 But He said to him, “A man was giving a big dinner, and he invited many;

17 and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’

18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.’

19 “Another one said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused.’

20 “Another one said, ‘I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come.’

21 “And the slave came back and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’

22 “And the slave said, ‘Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’

23 “And the master said to the slave, ‘Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.

24 ‘For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste of my dinner.’ ”

According to the truth will experience “the resurrection of the righteous.”

And a last note of irony: Jesus would have fit into either reception: a reception for the rich, or a reception for the poor. If the reception is for the rich who are proud and love favoritism, such as the Pharisees, they can expect to be admonished. However, if the reception is for the poor, those who hold the reception can expect nothing but good news from the One who came to set men free and to offer heavenly riches beyond all imagination.

14:15-24 Jesus reinforces His teaching with a parable, prompted by an outburst of blessing by someone at the table, probably meant to quickly change the subject from Jesus’ admonishment of His host. The saying by the unknown guest was a common blessing meant for Jews only. The Jews saw themselves as the privileged chosen people of God who would one day sit at a banquet with the Messiah. Not only does the guest want to refocus the conversation, and perhaps protect his host from embarrassment, but his utterance is ironic, given the parable that follows.

The interpretation of the parable is this: through the prophets, God has lovingly warned His people to prepare for the coming Messiah, the “big dinner.” As was often the custom in Jewish celebrations, a pre-invitation was sent out to prepare people for the occasion (i.e., the prophets). Then, at the time of the event, the announcement was made that the time has come for the dinner (John the Baptist and the ministry of Jesus). But, like the pre-invited guests in the parable, the Jews are making all kinds of lame excuses why they won’t come to the party. For example, if the man had already bought the land, wouldn’t he have looked at it ahead of time? Same for the oxen buyer. Surely he didn’t buy them without testing them. For the married man, he’s using his wife as an excuse not to attend the dinner. The Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were doing the same thing to Jesus. They are making excuses like, “He heals on the Sabbath,” and “He must be casting out demons through Beelzebul,” and “He’s telling us we should keep paying taxes to Caesar.” The religious leaders fail to comprehend that the kingdom of God is sitting right there in their midst!

Not accepting their excuses, the master (God) tells the slave (Jesus) to go out “into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.” The streets and lanes of the city are the equivalent of skid row or a ghetto. Though the poor are always large in number (“The poor you have with you always”), they are not so many that others cannot also be invited. Therefore the master instructs the slave, “Go out into the highways
Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them,

“25 If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.

26 Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

27 For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?

28 Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who

and along the hedges...so that my house may be filled.” Highways and hedges are a euphemism for the Gentiles. Therefore, this parable is informing His audience that those Jews who do not respond to Jesus’ invitation to accept Him as Messiah will be left out of the banquet, and the “meal” will be offered to those who the Pharisees consider unrighteous, unclean, unworthy and undeserving. The last statement of Jesus in verse 24 is therefore a stunning rebuke to His audience.

There is a love message here that must not be overlooked. It was God’s show of love that He chose the Jews to be His people of promise. Through the Law and the Prophets, God’s love gave them hope for a coming Messiah. God’s love protected the seed line leading to the Messiah until He was born. All God asked in return is that His people love Him back by receiving the Messiah whom He sent. This isn’t happening. God’s love is being rejected by the very ones who believed they loved God more than others, and therefore deserved to “eat bread in the kingdom of God.” So God’s love is going to be taken to those who will appreciate it and receive it. God’s love will go to the poor, the blind, the lame and the cripple. God’s love will now be taken to the Gentiles as well. Of course, God has loved these all along, but His love for them was supposed to be demonstrated through God’s chosen people, the Jews, a task at which they have failed miserably. So now those who are the rejected will become those who are the accepted, and those who believe they are the accepted will become those who are rejected by God Himself. It is sad twist of irony for the Jews, and an eternal blessing for all those who have been told that they are beyond the love of God. How ironic are the words of the man, “Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Unfortunately, he will most likely not be one of them.

Verse 26 contains startling words to the Western mind. In the Hebrew context, to “hate” does not mean to be violently angry with or to bring harm to, as it does in English. Here, it means to reject in favor of another to the degree that, from the point of view of the one being rejected, the one doing the rejecting appears to be hating the one rejected. It involves a choice of where one is putting one’s affections, one’s greatest value, indeed, one’s greatest love. Jesus is therefore warning His disciples that in choosing Him as their Messiah, they will be seen as turning against Judaism, and even against their own loved ones. They will be seen as betraying the faith, as traitors to their own upbringing and families, and as infidels and outcasts. Jesus is telling His disciples that unless they are willing to go to that extreme, and be willing to follow Jesus at all costs, in spite of the
observe it begin to ridicule him,

30 saying, ‘This man began to build and
was not able to finish.’

31 “Or what king, when he sets out to meet
another king in battle, will not first sit down
and consider whether he is strong enough
with ten thousand men to encounter the one
coming against him with twenty thousand?

32 “Or else, while the other is still far
away, he sends a delegation and asks for
terms of peace.

33 “So then, none of you can be My
disciple who does not give up all his own
possessions.

threats and ostracism from their families, they are not
a true disciple of Jesus. If you think these are difficult
words to swallow, think of how Jesus’ Jewish
audience felt.

This difficult passage can be understood by the
opening words of the paragraph: “Now large crowds
were going along with Him…” The large crowds are
followers of Jesus, but they are not the same as the
disciples. Three times in this paragraph Jesus refers
to “My disciple.” Many followers of Jesus reap the
benefits of His kingdom yet do not have to pay a
price; that is, there will probably be little personal
sacrifice on their part. Jesus’ disciples, on the other
hand, must pay a great price. To be a true disciple of
Jesus Christ means giving up everything; that is, all
worldly possessions. (This is not just an
interpretation on the part of the writer. He is only
taking Jesus’ words in their simplest, literal
meaning.)

In verse 27, we see a repeat of Jesus’ words,
“…cannot be My disciple.” In this case, Jesus turns
the subject from familial rejection to out-and-out
persecution and suffering. Those who were
condemned to Roman crucifixion were compelled to
carry their own cross. Jesus’ statement for carrying
one’s own cross is a euphemism for letting go of the
world, for suffering and for death. That statement as
well would have been a tough pill to swallow. It is
probable that most of the followers who heard these
words did not take them seriously or literally.
Otherwise, most of the crowd would have dissipated.
Only those who stuck around to the end would realize
the true meaning of Jesus’ statements.

Verses 28 through 32 are exercises in logic
focusing on counting the cost of being a disciple of
Jesus. In summary, Jesus is saying, “If you want to be
My disciple, then you need to really give it some
thought. Being My disciple is not going to be easy,
but ridiculously difficult. You will gain nothing in
this world, neither riches nor fame nor honor, and you
will lose everything you worked so hard for. You
will not be accepted and loved by those you care
about, but instead you will be rejected, ostracized,
disowned, disinherited and mocked. And, to top it
off, you will most likely suffer, and the price may be
your life. So, sit down and think long and hard before
you decide you want to be My disciple and stay with
Me till the end.” And, to cap the thought off in verse
33, “Plan on losing everything you own, and what
you do have left over, you might as well give it away
because you won’t have any place to keep it.”

These are hard words for the Western mind, for
those who believe in capitalism and free enterprise,
who work hard for what we possess, and who believe
in the American dream. The question is, “How does
the American dream stack up against these words of
34 “Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned?

35 “It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Jesus?” That’s a question each Christian has to answer on his own.

Finally, there is the love message, which may be the most important of all. Jesus is actually asking a question about love: who do you love more, people or possessions? If you really care about the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, you will let nothing on earth hold you back from ministering to them in My name.

When Jesus left the presence of the Father to be born a man, He left everything. Consider these words of the apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians: “Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” (2:5-7). In other words, Jesus left all heavenly “possessions” to come to minister to a lost world. As God so loved the world, so, too, did Jesus. As Jesus and the Father so loved a lost world, so, too, should we, letting nothing on earth keep us from emptying ourselves of our possessions on behalf of those who need the kingdom of God in their hearts.

14:34-35 Verse 34 contains a rhetorical question because tasteless salt cannot be seasoned. That is, once it is polluted with other things, it becomes useless.

The relationship to the preceding verses cannot be missed: salt (the follower/disciple) becomes tasteless (polluted) with possessions.

The point Jesus is making is this: material possessions, money, property, security, and concern for such things hinders a person from becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ. What we discover, then, is that there is a difference between being a disciple of Jesus Christ, and being a follower of Jesus Christ. Many are the followers (the “crowd”), but few are the disciples. The true disciple sacrifices all for the sake of the kingdom. The follower sacrifices what is convenient. The disciple forsakes family and friends; the follower appeases family and friends. The disciple’s offering is his life; the follower’s offering is his tithe and his time. Few are called to be disciples; many are satisfied being followers. Today’s follower is typically a good evangelical who believes all the right things, tithes, prays, attends a Bible study, serves faithfully in a church, and buys presents for the poor at Christmas. But this is not Luke’s definition of a disciple. A true disciple gives up everything for the kingdom of God, and lives with the knowledge that he or she may lose their life as a result. They live with their cross strapped to their back.

The call to discipleship may include the decision
of whether or not to settle down and raise a family. The early church recognized this, and therefore many early Christians abstained from marriage for the sake of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(One must be careful here. There is no judgment as to one state or the other. The evangelist Philip who led the Ethiopian eunuch to the Lord, was married, settled down in Caesarea, and “had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses” [Acts 21:8-9].)

Chapter 14, however, is perhaps the most difficult chapter in Luke for the Western Christian to reconcile, including this writer. Jesus’ teaching here is absolutely contrary to taking advantage of a capitalist system and fulfilling the American dream. There are a few evangelicals, missionaries, priests and nuns who get it and sacrificially accept Jesus’ words. They have given up all their possessions and are, indeed, true disciples. Most Christians, however, are quite satisfied being followers. Although most of us would like to think of ourselves as disciples, in truth, we are mere followers. We would love to see ourselves labeled as disciples, but in reality we are unwilling to make the sacrifices of one “who gives up all his own possessions.” We find countless ways to rationalize our way around Jesus’ teachings regarding possessions and the pursuit of happiness, and deceive ourselves into believing we can have it both ways. We sacrifice some things, believing we have sacrificed much, when in truth we have sacrificed little and gained less.

This is perhaps why the apostle Paul wrote in First Corinthians 7:7, “Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am...”; that is, unmarried and free from the tether of family responsibilities. Later, he explains: “I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided” (7:32-34). (As noted above, Paul does not chastise those who are married as being undedicated to the Lord. However, he recommends that if they are single or should become single, they should remain in that state [7:9-17].) Unless the husband and wife are in complete agreement regarding possessions, Jesus’ teaching is difficult to follow, and virtually impossible once children arrive on the scene, for a godly wife will put her children first in her priorities. Once there is a family, possessions are necessary to survive and provide safety, health and security, and Paul understands this. Thus he writes, “Brethren, each one is to remain with God in that condition in which he was called” (7:24).

In terms of contemporary application for the American evangelical Christian, here are some guidelines that can be gleaned from Luke 14,
especially verse 33.

First, in regard to chapter 14, the reader who earnestly heeds Jesus’ teachings concerning possessions and the mandate to reach out to the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, should remain in his or her present state, but one that can be maintained according to “his own gift from God.” (See 1 Cor. 7:7, 9 for the contingencies.)

Second, he who takes Luke 14 to heart must find contentment only with that which is needful. (Paul has instructions on this in First Timothy 6:6-10.)

Third, it is virtually impossible to fulfill the mandate to reach out to the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind without sacrifice. Such sacrifices may involve finances, time, energy, quest for the American dream, and the pursuit of happiness. The American dream can be sought for a lifetime and lost in an instant. The pursuit of happiness is a pursuit that has no end. But that which is “repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” can never be lost and has no end.

Fourth, if one is not able to give “all his own possessions,” then he or she should give as much as they possibly can. They should give sacrificially. That often involves putting aside wants daily and pursuing only those things that are needs.

Lastly, one must be truthful with oneself and accept the fact that he or she is either a follower or a disciple. The follower should not deceive himself into believing he is a disciple when in fact he is a follower. The follower cannot become a true disciple unless he or she is willing to give up “all his own possessions.” And the disciple must not pride himself on the fact that he has given all for the kingdom of God. He or she should, in fact, give glory to God and give thanks for grace, saying with the apostle Paul, “But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, though which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 14, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?

2. How does this fourth healing on the Sabbath (as recorded by Luke) compare with the other healings on the Sabbath (cf. 6:1-11 and 10:13-17)? Where does this healing take place, and who is the special person to whom Jesus is demonstrating His love and compassion?

3. What is the spiritual lesson, as well as the common sense lesson, that Jesus teaches about seeking honor before men? Have you ever found yourself seeking the favor of others or wanting to be honored or esteemed by others?

4. What does Jesus teach about who should be the focus of one’s generosity? How are we doing at that?

5. Repeat in your own words Jesus’ parable about the man who invited his friends to a big dinner. First, recall the point of the message when it comes to future events in Jerusalem, then make a practical application concerning your own experiences. What lesson are you walking away with?

6. Jesus makes some critical statements about the cost of following Him. What are those costs, and are you paying them? (The question is not, “Are you willing to pay them?” but “Are you paying them?” There’s an important, life-changing difference.)

7. How does “salt…become tasteless?” If you are the “salt of the earth,” do you have a good flavor, or have you let the things of the world, or sin, make you tasteless? Would you describe yourself as a “disciple” of Jesus Christ, or as a “follower”?
14:1-24 takes place at a dinner held by a __________________________________________________________

14:1-6 – Jesus heals a man with “dropsy” on the Sabbath; He points out the Pharisees’ _______________________

14:7-11 – Jesus chastises the guests for seeking _______________________________________________________

14:12-14 – Jesus chastises the leader of the Pharisees for not reaching out to ______________________________
    - The poor are those who do not have basic needs; they also represent the ____________________________
    - The crippled are those who cannot walk; they also represent the _________________________________
    - The lame are those who can walk but have a limp; they also represent the __________________________
    - The blind are those who depend on others to lead them around; also, the __________________________

14:15-24 – Jesus gives a parable that prophesies how the Jews will reject Him and Gentiles will ____________

14:25-35 takes place after the dinner; He warns the crowd that is __________________________________________
    - to _______________________________________________________________________________________
    - to _______________________________________________________________________________________

The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 14
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 14

14:1-24  takes place at a dinner held by a leader of the Pharisees
- The discipler will want to explain that this Pharisee is perhaps meeting Jesus for the first time.
- This Pharisee is a leader; therefore, he is of high prestige and someone the other Pharisees would want to get close to.

14:1-6 – Jesus heals a man with “dropsy” on the Sabbath; He points out the Pharisees’ lack of caring (hypocrisy)
- The discipler will want to explain what “dropsy” is, and that it is a chronic condition (something that has been going on a long time and will continue for quite some time).
- Help the disciple understand how the Pharisees interpreted “work” on the Sabbath.
- Explain to the disciple that Jesus is testing the Pharisees in regard to the legitimacy of their Sabbath laws.
- Explain to the disciple the uncomfortable position Jesus has put the Pharisees in, whether they answer “Yes” to His question, or “No.”
- Ask the disciple about the issue of “bondage” here; that is, from bondage in Egypt to bondage to the Law.
- Ask the disciple if he or she can think of any nonsense laws the church has put on Christians that have resulted in bondage.

14:7-11 – Jesus chastises the guests for seeking positions of honor
- Explain to the disciple how formal dinners were arranged—not in chairs, but laying on cushions. Explain that the person closest to the host would have been recognized as the more favored, the position of honor.
- See if the disciple can explain what Jesus means when He gives this teaching. See if the disciple can discern whether it is better to seek to be exalted, or to be exalted by another.
- Make sure the disciple understands what Jesus is teaching in regard to the whole concepts of “self-esteem,” “selfies,” and the culture of narcissism in which most Christians live.
- Ask the disciple if he or she is guilty of acting like the Pharisees who were “picking out the places of honor.” Ask them what their motive was, and why it was so important to be recognized as important. What is it they are lacking in their personality that causes them to act this way. The teaching moment should be this: if a person is to be exalted, it should be God who is doing it. And even at that, every believer should be more concerned about exalting Christ than exalting oneself.

14:12-14 – Jesus chastises the leader of the Pharisees for not reaching out to the lower class
- Inform the disciple that the context for Jesus’ next teaching is that the leader of the Pharisees was probably a fairly wealthy individual, and those whom he invited to dinner were wealthy as well.
- Ask the disciple if he or she thinks Jesus is being rude to His host? (The disciple may need to be reminded of why the leader of the Pharisees asked Jesus to dinner in the first place. It certainly wasn’t because he was being kind to Jesus or looking after His needs. The leader of the Pharisees has evil, ulterior motives. Most likely, because the novice Pharisees were not able to stump Jesus, he himself will be the one who will put Jesus in His place.)

- The poor are those who do not have basic needs; they also represent the spiritually poor (poor in spirit)
  - Ask the disciple why it would have been better if the leader of the Pharisees had invited the poor instead of his wealthy friends.
  - Ask the disciple what his or her attitude is toward the poor in society. Are they getting what they deserve, or have they dug their own pit? Inform the disciple that his or her attitude toward the poor will determine how they respond to the poor. Ask the disciple how they plan to respond to this teaching.
  - See if the disciple can determine what is the comparison to being materially poor and spiritually poor? See if the disciple can think back to any passages in Luke that might answer the question. (E.g., Luke 6:20-26.)
The crippled are those who cannot walk; they also represent the spiritually paralyzed
- Have the disciple describe someone who is “crippled.” What is it that they cannot do? What ramifications does that have to their quality of life?
- Ask how being crippled represents a spiritual condition? Have the disciple review Luke 5:17-26 and how that healing relates to the problem of sin.
- See if the disciple can guess why it would be so difficult for a Pharisee to invite someone crippled to dinner (or lame, or blind, or poor). What was the prevailing view from the Pharisees’ point of view of why these individuals were in the condition they were in?

The lame are those who can walk but have a limp; they also represent the spiritually hurting
- Ask the disciple how a lame person differs from someone who is crippled. Ask how that would affect their ability to worship inside the temple compound. Ask how the Pharisees would tend to view those who were lame.
- See if the disciple can figure out what the lame person represents spiritually. See if the disciple can make a connection between someone who is lame and someone who is spiritually oppressed by the oppressive Sabbath laws devised by man.
- Most importantly, see if the disciple can relate this teaching to any current events and current attitudes in the church today.

The blind are those who depend on others to lead them around; also, the spiritually blind
- See if the disciple can figure out how a physically blind person represents someone who is spiritually blind. This particular physical disability is used often to describe all the hazards associated with spiritual blindness. Of course, the disciple must be asked what it means to be spiritually blind.
- Ask what is the most important thing that a person can do to help someone who is physically blind. Then ask what is the most important thing a person can do to help someone who is spiritually blind.
- At the end of this section, see if the disciple can determine what was the main point Jesus was making. Does it hinge on the question of “To whom do we offer our help, our resources, our time and our hospitality?”

14:15-24 – Jesus gives a parable that prophesies how the Jews will reject Him and Gentiles will receive Him
- This parable may need some explaining to the disciple, depending on how much they know about the inclusion of the Gentiles into the kingdom of God. How Jews looked down on Gentiles may need to be reviewed.
- See if the disciple can pick up on the irony of this parable, and what one of the guest had to say that prompted Jesus’ giving this parable.
- What are some excuses people come up with today not to come to Jesus (the banquet)?
- There is an important lesson here concerning the contrast of those who think they are righteous (the Pharisees) and those who know they are unrighteous (the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind, according to the teaching of the Pharisees). Who is most likely to believe they have a need? Who is most likely to feel that they do not deserve to experience God’s love? Who is most likely to respond to the invitation to have sins forgiven and eternal life rewarded? Of course, it will be those who have the greater need.

14:25-35 takes place after the dinner; He warns the crowd that is following Him…
- Have the disciple re-read this section and see if he or she can discern the difference between being a “follower” and a “disciple.”
- to count the cost
  - Ask the disciple what it means to count the costs, and what that implies for the person who truly desires to be a disciple and not a follower.
- to not be polluted by possessions
  - See if the disciple can determine why the accumulation of possessions—even legitimate ones—can interfere with doing the work of a true disciple.
CHAPTER 15

Overview of Luke 15
In chapter 15, Jesus presents three parables on love. The lesson will be this: those who are loved the least should be loved the most. The trigger for these parables is grumbling by the Pharisees that Jesus “receives sinners and eats with them.” The Pharisees are referring to tax collectors and to “sinners,” the latter being a general term used by them to describe anyone who did not live up to their standards, both legitimate descriptions of sin from the law of Moses, and illegitimate standards based on the thousands of manmade laws called “the traditions of the elders.” Jesus starts with two rhetorical questions, hoping that the logic may help the Pharisees see the obvious. He will follow up with a parable known as the parable of the prodigal son. All of these parables are lessons on caring and compassion for those who, in the eyes of the Pharisees, do not deserve it.

What to look for in Luke 15
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. You will quickly notice the types of people who are attracted to Jesus and His teachings, and those who criticize and reject Him.
3. Look for the relationship between those who come to hear Jesus and the theme of “lost.”
4. Look for four examples Jesus gives concerning things (or people) who are lost.
5. In the parable of the prodigal son, look for the differences between the younger son and the older son.
6. In the same parable, look for the reactions of the father, especially upon the return of the son who was lost.
7. See if you can figure out what was lost by the prodigal son.

1 Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him.
2 Both the Pharisees and the scribes began to grumble, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them.”

15:1-2 “Now all the tax collectors and the sinners were coming near Him to listen to Him” indicates a fundamental challenge to the religious elite of the day. “Sinners” could be anybody who was declared a sinner, not just by Mosaic law, but by the Pharisees based on their manmade interpretations of the law. Sinners could include those who didn’t keep Sabbath law, those who failed to attend synagogue on a regular basis, those who were deemed a sinner by virtue of their illness or physical disability, those who were unclean, those who were convicted of civil or religious crimes, and of course, prostitutes and pimps. Tax collectors, however, fell into a particularly contemptuous category. These were Jews who had “sold out” to and colluded with the Roman authorities and were paid a percentage of the taxes they collected from the Jews. Some tax collectors were fair, but most became greedy and took advantage of their position, collecting more money than was owed (e.g., Zaccheus in 19:2-8). If anyone complained, the tax collectors had the Roman solders to back them up. The complainer then ran the risk of being thrown in jail. In order to have that kind of clout, the tax collectors had to be “friends” with the
Gentile Romans and they often socialized together. Tax collectors were essentially Jewish in name only and often behaved like Gentiles. (There is no record in the New Testament that a tax collector, other than Matthew in company with Jesus, ever went near a synagogue.)

Jesus and His disciples, the tax collector Levi (Matthew) being one of them, spent many hours in the company of sinners and tax collectors. The reason these “sinners and tax collectors” are often cited together is because the tax collectors, despicable in the eyes of most Jews, kept company with those who were also rejected by the religious leaders, namely, prostitutes. Bad people gravitate to other bad people. So the tax collectors and sinners were essentially outcasts who formed a close-knit family, often partying nightly in what may have been drunken orgy-like affairs. The distain the general population had for them cannot be overestimated. It was with these social outcasts and pariahs that Jesus and His disciples often mingled. They had meals together, something strictly forbidden by the Pharisees if they were to remain “clean.” Touching, dining with, entering the house of, or even coming in contact with a possession of a sinner or tax collector would cause that individual to become “unclean.”

Notice that the tax collectors and sinners “were coming near….” The verb tense here indicates that they were continually coming to hear Jesus, and approaching Him in such a way that Luke describes them as coming “near.” In other words, instead of being judged and rejected as would have been the manner of the Pharisees, Jesus welcomed them, accepted them and, in effect, loved them. This means that, from the point of view of the Pharisees, Jesus was constantly coming in contact with those who were outcasts and unclean, thus Himself being defiled by them according to law. Why did Jesus therefore allow the tax collectors and sinners to continually come near to Him as the risk of ridicule from the religious elite? Because He loved them. Before, all that the sinners and tax collectors had received from the religious leaders was scorn, rejection, judgment and condemnation. But not so when they came to Jesus. He welcomed them, accepted them, and taught them the true meaning of what it meant to be in a right relationship with God. He gave them hope, He gave them a reason to make life changes, and most of all, He gave them love.

The three parables in this chapter, however, are not directed toward the sinners and tax collectors. They are directed to the very ones who, instead of judging and condemning sinners and tax collectors, and in effect withholding from them God’s love, should have been winning them back to a better way of life through the message of God’s love.
3 So He told them this parable, saying,

4 “What man among you, if he has a hundred sheep and has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open pasture and go after the one which is lost until he finds it?

5 “When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

6 “And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors,

Finally, let it be clear that Jesus never accepted nor condoned the lifestyle of the sinners and tax collectors. But rather than taking a position of judgment for their sins, He took the position of loving them away from their sins, sending the clear message that God loved them and had a better plan for their lives. Jesus taught them that if they would appreciate how much God loved them and wanted a better way of life for them, they would gladly turn away from the sins and seek to live a life pleasing to Him. It’s therefore God’s love that would win the day, not God’s judgment, and the apostle Levi (Matthew) would be the living proof of that.

15:3-32 What follows in the rest of the chapter are three parables Jesus uses to refute the accusations of the Pharisees that tax collectors and sinners aren’t worth associating with (15:3-10). The saddest thing about these first two parables is that Jesus has to use love for animals and money in order to prepare the Pharisees for hearing a parable about love for others, and these “others” are not sinners and tax collectors, but family.

Here we see how Jesus uses parables to teach spiritual truths. A parable is a story that isn’t necessarily true, but could be true. It is based on what could happen in real-life situations so that the hearers may identify with the story. A parable is also an everyday occurrence designed to teach a spiritual truth. Lastly, a parable is designed to teach spiritual truth to those who believe, and hide spiritual truth from those who do not believe, or who reject the speaker of the parable. The apostle Matthew explains this clearly in his gospel, 13:10-17. However, as Matthew informs us, even Jesus’ disciples did not understand the meaning of the parables until Jesus explained it to them. In summary, those who believe will seek to understand the meaning of the parable, and those who do not believe will scoff at the parable, scratching their heads in frustration.

The first two parables are rhetorical in nature, each beginning with a question along the line of, “Who wouldn’t…,” followed by “the answer should be obvious.”

15:4-7 In the economy of Jesus’ day, a single sheep was a valuable commodity. If the shepherd worked for a master, the loss of one sheep could cost him his job. If the shepherd himself owned the sheep, he had worked long and hard with careful breeding over the years to ensure his sheep were of the finest quality; their wool was thick, their meat was tender, and their health was good. However, as every shepherd knows, sheep are, quite frankly, stupid. They are not the most intelligent of livestock. They stray easily from the flock looking for the next better blade of grass. They
saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!’

7 “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

can “tune out” to their surroundings while grazing. They can wander into dangerous situations, being totally oblivious to danger. They can put themselves in harm’s way without even knowing it. Thus, they are subject to predators and, in this case, getting separated from the flock and ending up lost. Even worse, once they are separated from the flock, they have an amazing capacity to remain lost! They cannot remember from where they came or how they got there. There is no homing capability in sheep.

This parable is beautiful. It describes how people can get lost and stay lost spiritually. When it comes to one’s spiritual well-being, people can be, quite frankly, stupid. People can wander from one blade of untruth to another, to one clump of pleasure to another, from one pasture of supposed well-being and happiness to another, and have no awareness of the spiritual danger they are in. And there are predators about in the form of spiritual enemies.

But the greater point of this parable is the value of the one. Every single person on earth, be they a homosexual dying of AIDS or a Muslim fanatic or a convicted killer on death row, or your kind neighbor down the street, is valuable to God. Why? Because God knows what awaits that person after death if they do not turn to Jesus. Dying without the Savior has eternal consequences, consequences that cannot be reversed after death. As we will read in the next chapter, after death there is “a great chasm fixed.” What Jesus is teaching in this parable is that, because the consequences of dying without a right relationship with God are so terrible and permanent, every effort to save one sheep is important. While we often see the love and caring in this parable, we often overlook the truth behind it, that being lost from God is a terrible, terrible thing.

This parable is pointed at the Pharisees for a number of reasons. First, instead of condemning the sinners and tax collectors for their behavior, and in effect, elevating themselves in self-righteousness, the spiritual leaders of Israel should have shown more caring and compassion for those who are lost, if not mourning and weeping and tossing ashes over themselves because of the eternal consequences of being lost. Second, instead of focusing on God’s judgment of the sinners and tax collectors, they should have been teaching them about how much God loves them and cares for them; that they are worth saving, and they are valuable in God’s eyes and only wants the best for them. Third, Jesus is pointing out to the Pharisees their lack of love and caring. If the Pharisees were really messengers of God, they would be demonstrating God’s love as well as His justice. Unfortunately, the Pharisees have put all their eggs in the basket of justice and righteousness. Justice and righteousness without love
8 “Or what woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it?

9 “When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’

10 “In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

15:8-10 It is unfortunate that Jesus has to use the illustration of money to get His point over to the Pharisees. The coin here is a drachma, a Greek silver coin worth about $75 in today’s currency. It was equal in value to a denarius, a Roman silver coin, a day’s wage for a soldier or common laborer. The one who has lost the coin is a woman, and the implication is that she is alone and has no one to support her, similar to a widow. Therefore, one coin is of great value.

This, too, is a beautiful parable. Note how the woman finds the coin. She first lights a lamp. Light, in the New Testament, represents salvational truth; that is, truth that delivers one from spiritual darkness (cf. John 1:9). As Jesus will pray in the Gospel of John, “Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth” (17:17). After bringing light into the room (the implication is that the room is full of darkness), the woman sweeps the house. Why sweep? Because the house has dirt and dust in it, and the coin may be hidden by dirt. In others words, she goes and cleans every nook and cranny in the house, every corner, under every bed and table and chair, moving furniture, looking through cabinets and behind decorations, going to great lengths and effort to find that one missing coin. Here again, it is the value of one.

And notice what she does when she locates it: “...She calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin which I had lost!’” This was exactly the same words the shepherd used when he found his lost sheep. And, Jesus summarizes each parable the same way: “…There is joy...over one sinner who repents.”

The use of the word “repents” each time in this parable emphasizes that Jesus is not out just to make friends with sinners and tax collectors. He’s on a mission. His mission is to get them to repent; that is, turn their lives around and begin living a life that is acceptable to God. And how does Jesus do that? Not by trying to bully them into the kingdom by holding some artificial authoritarian hammer over their heads, but by demonstrating through His love that the Father in heaven loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives.

This is a stinging rebuke of the methods
And He said, “A man had two sons.

12 "The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.’ So he divided his wealth between them.

13 “And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living.

14 “Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished.

15 “So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 “And he would have gladly filled his
stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him.

17 “But when he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger!

18 ‘I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men.” ’

20 “So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him.

21 “And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 “But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet;

23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.’ And they began to celebrate.

the father says nothing, the younger son is wanting to be out from under the authority of his father. He no longer wants to work the estate or have his life directed by anyone other than himself. He no longer wants familial responsibilities and wants the freedom to live his life on his own. In saying goodbye to his father, he is saying essentially, “I don’t need you anymore.” This is exactly what happens when a person chooses to sin or embark on a lifestyle that is against the wishes of the Father. All sin is self-willed, and all self-will is a desire to be out from under God’s authority. The greatest problem with the desire to be out from under God’s authority is that the person is also choosing to be out from under God’s provision and protection. This desire to be out from under God’s authority was first seen in the garden of Eden, and is characteristic of all those who wander from God’s plan today.

Note that the father does not refuse the son’s request. The father gives him what he asks for, which amounts to one-third of the estate. The other son, being the first born, receives a double portion; that is, two-thirds.

Verse 13: The rise and fall of the wayward son is summarized in one phrase: “…there he squandered his estate with loose living.” “Loose living” is a euphemism for a raunchy lifestyle of debauchery, drunkenness and prostitution. He has spent his entire inheritance in hedonistic pleasures. Unfortunately, he is not able to phone home for more money…he is in a “distant country,” implying foreign soil. Fortunately for him at the time of his fall, the land is plenteous and he is able to live off the abundance of the land and the handouts of others. But things are quickly about to take a turn for the worse.

Be careful to note that there is not a hint that Satan was involved in the son’s choices. His decisions are made of his own free will. Theologically, what is involved here is the flesh, not the influence of outside spiritual forces.

Verse 14: Whereas once his life was under his control, now his life has gotten completely out of his control. Famines are usually caused by severe drought, and in those days, because most food was perishable, it didn’t take long for the food chain to whittle down to nothing. As in all instances of poverty caused by environmental catastrophe, people begin to look out only for themselves. Sharing is not an option, and the previous good will of his acquaintances dries up quickly. This would be particularly true of someone who isn’t a member of a family and has no one to turn to for help; the risk of living in a foreign land (“that country”). Thus, the wayward son not only has nothing, he has become “impoverished,” which is somewhat of an understatement. This is a kind way of saying destitute
and indigent. He is literally begging for every morsel of food and water he can get.

**Verse 15:** Fortunately for him, he is able to get a low-paying job. Unfortunately for him, he is feeding swine. Pigs are particularly disgusting to Jews, and even contact with them makes oneself unclean. So now, not only is the son dependent on someone who could care less about him, and not only has he sunk to his lowest level, but he has become unclean. The fact that the son has become unclean applies directly to the Pharisees who considered the tax collectors and sinners as unclean. Please note, though, that the Pharisees are *not wrong* about the way they have characterized the sinners and tax collectors: because of sin, they are indeed unclean. Where the Pharisees have gone wrong is in assuming that they themselves are clean and need no repentance. They are also wrong in the way that treat sinners: instead of loving them as Jesus loves them, they have shunned them and judged them.

**Verse 16:** Only pigs can eat pods. For a human, pods are of no nutritional value. The point of the willingness to eat pods is that the son is so starved, he is willing to eat anything just to fill his stomach and have that full sensation, whether it’s digestible or not. And, as stated above, no one is giving him anything to eat.

**Verse 17:** It is not uncommon that, in order for a person to realize how low they have sunk, they must first reach rock bottom. Testimonies to this experience abound. The low point for the son is that he is literally wallowing with the pigs; he has become one of them...unclean. Fortunately for him, “…he came to his senses.” Most often, people come to their senses when they realize they can no longer help themselves. In order for that to happen, they must come to the point that their lives are out of their control. They are helpless. They can no longer depend on others, and they can no longer depend upon themselves. All the son’s enablers are gone; they will enable him no more simply because they have nothing to give and nothing to enable him with. From a spiritual perspective, only those who realize they cannot help themselves come to a point of repentance. The problem with the Pharisees was that they believed they *could* help themselves. They could just tithe a little more, say an extra prayer, enact another Sabbath law, or judge another sinner.

By coming to his senses, the son is able to reflect back on that which was lost. He was once full; now he is starving. He was once esteemed; now he is unclean. He was once in control; now he is out of control. In seeking to be out from under his father’s authority, he has placed himself under the authority of people who do not love him, and elements and circumstances that control him. In seeking to live life...
entirely on his own, he has found himself alone and friendless. In his quest to gain that which was legitimately his, he has, of his own doing, lost everything. He is at the point of death physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Such are those who realize they are lost spiritually. They realize they cannot live without the knowledge that someone loves them. They realize they cannot find meaning in life on their own; that they need someone greater than themselves to direct them. They realize that their own choices have taken them far from where they really want to be. And most of all, they realize they need help, and that they cannot, in spite of what they formerly believed, help themselves. It’s at this point that a person finds comfort in repentance, and it is only at this point that repentance becomes the last escape, the last way out. Because the Pharisees believed themselves beyond needing repentance, they are forever stuck in a situation worse than wallowing with swine; they are the swine and pitifully ignorant of their own uncleanness because their standards are based on law, not on love.

Verse 18: It is at this low point that the son begins to formulate a plan. He realizes he needs to return home and return to the loving care of his father. In his coming to his senses, he has faced a hard fact...he has sinned. Not only has he sinned against God (“heaven”), but he has sinned against his father.

It is a terrible point to get to when you realize how much you have strayed from that which you know is right. It’s an even more terrible thing to realize how much you have hurt others by your sin, especially someone who loves you very much. You realize how much lust has overruled love in your life, and led you down a path that you knew was wrong, but couldn’t seem to resist. You took your freedoms and turned them into license. You took your heritage and made a mockery of it. You assumed the pleasures you sought were innocent and justified, just a part of experiencing the world. You said goodbye to those who held you accountable and, as a result, shook hands with those who led you down an ever-descending path of spiritual corruption. You end up doing things you wish you’d never done, and can never fully erase from your memory. You find yourself selfishly taking advantage of those who come under your narcissistic spell, and you squander without regard whatever healthy relationships you encounter. It is one thing to realize you are in need of help and that you cannot help yourself. It is quite another thing to realize you have sinned against God, the Father in heaven who has loved you all along. It is a devastating, breaking, dark moment to come face to face with your sin. And yet, through the mercy and
compassion of the Father, it is the most liberating and hopeful moment you can ever have. Coming to your spiritual senses, repentance, is the most freeing act in the world. The wayward son has come to that moment, and he has decided to return to his father. Unfortunately, it is a moment the Pharisees will never know nor understand, for in their eyes, they need no repentance.

Verse 19: Part of repentance is a sense of extreme unworthiness. It is not just a part, but it is a necessary part. You have lost all sense of self-importance. You have lost all pride, and you have lost all self-esteem. Although the son is still, in fact, a son, he does not consider himself worthy of being a son. Why? Because he has not lived up to his son-ness. He has not lived up to what his father designed him to be and what his father hoped that he would be. He has not only disappointed his father, he has pained him deeply. The son has removed himself so far from his father’s presence that he is incapable of conceiving that his father still loves him and longs for his presence. And this is one of the problems with sin: we lose sight of how much we bring pain to the Father, and we begin to believe that He has stopped loving us. After all, how could God continue to love someone who has sinned so badly? We begin to believe that our sins are beyond forgiving, and that we indeed deserve to be judged and rejected by the Father. But this is the very thing Jesus came to refute: no one is beyond the Father’s love…no one, no matter how badly or terribly or despicably we have sinned, no matter how selfishly we have lived, no matter how cruelly we have betrayed the love of others, no matter how badly we have hurt the very ones we love. All it takes is to come to our spiritual senses and turn our intentions back to the Father who has never stopped loving us.

Verse 20: The attention is now turned to the father. Note that “…while he was still a long way off, his father saw him….” The father had been looking and hoping for his son’s return. This is a perfect picture of the Father who never stops looking for return of the lost son. But note also that the father never went looking for his son. The shepherd who searched for the lost sheep needed to because sheep are, quite frankly, stupid. But not so in this case. The son isn’t stupid. He, being raised as he was, was quite capable of coming to his senses and finding his way home all on his own. And when the father saw him, he ran out and “embraced him and kissed him.” The father never once scolded the son. The father never once said, “I told you so.” The father never counted him as unclean or incapable of forgiveness or a second-class citizen, a “hired hand.” The love that the father has for the son is unconditional and never-ending. That is exactly how God the Father looks
toward those who are lost: His love is unconditional and never-ending, and that is the very message that Jesus the Son is trying to communicate to His audience. The love of the Pharisees is conditional and can be withheld at the blink of an eye. But the love of the Father is eternal and immutable.

The father of the wayward son knew what the son needed most: not a scolding nor a lecture nor a punishment such as being sent out to the field with the hired hands. What the son needed most was the love of the father. What the son needed was to know that, in spite of his poor judgment, in spite of his selfishness, and in spite of his sins, his father still loved him and accepted him and welcomed him back. Why? Because the son “came to his senses,” repented, faced his sins, and willingly returned to his father. This is a lesson on the never-ending love of God for His children.

Verse 21: The son never gets to finish the speech he had so carefully practiced all the way home. The father’s love was too overwhelming.

Verse 22: The father’s response is one of quickly restoring the son to his previous status. He is one of the family, and he will remain one of the family. Even though he is certainly worthy of being treated like just another hired hand, he is restored. He comes home with no robe; he is given a robe of position and prominence. He returns to his father without credibility; he is given a ring of the family seal, the sign of authority. He limps to his father barefooted like a field hand; he is given sandals to protect his feet from the thorns. His father has not only welcomed him back, he has restored him to his previous status as one of his sons. In short, the father has fully forgiven the son, and all is forgotten. The father holds nothing back from the son who repented; all he wanted him to do was to come home.

So it is with our Father in heaven: all He wants is for His children to repent and return home. Only then can we be restored, and only then can we enjoy the full blessings He has for us.

Verse 23: The enthusiasm and excitement of the father over the return of the son which was lost is manifested in his instructions for a celebration. A full banquet is ordered. And so it is in heaven when a sinner repents and seeks to return to the Father. Joy is the key emotion in all of the three parables.

That the father wants to celebrate the son’s return rather than judge him for his sins, is a perfect emphasis on the nature of God. God’s first and foremost expression is love. Even though God is also a God of justice, justice and judgment come only after His eternal, persistent and persevering offer of love has not only been rejected, but mocked and scorned. But the Father’s first action is to love, to forgive, to welcome, to receive with joy, and to
25 “Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing.
26 “And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be.
27 “And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’
28 “But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him.
29 “But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a

celebrate the return of those who were lost. God is love, and it is His nature to express love first. In the parable, the father’s desire to celebrate the return of his son is something that should never be overlooked in sharing Jesus Christ with others.

Verse 24: The reason for celebration is now made clear by the father: “…this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.” The son was physically alive but spiritually dead; he could be physically found, but he was spiritually lost. There is no doubt that the son realized this about himself, and that is what caused him to repent.

The problem with those who are lost is that most do not realize they are lost. They believe that because they are physically alive, they are also spiritually alive. And because they can be physically found, they are spiritual “found.” Nothing could be further from the truth. The Pharisees had this problem, as do all those who do not feel they need God. They believe they can help themselves, and that God will automatically count them worthy of their self-sufficiency. Just as it was difficult to convince the Pharisees of their need to repent, so, too, is it difficult to convince self-sufficient people of their need for God. Throw into the mix their personal sins, those behaviors they know are wrong but tend to justify, and the chance of their repentance is slim. What they need in their lives is “a severe famine.”

Finally, note the phrase “…this son of mine….” The son has never lost his identity as a son of the father. So, too, we as children of God, never lose our identity as a child of God, no matter how badly we may have gone astray. Once a child of God, always a child of God.

Verses 25-28a: Now we come to the appearance of the older son. As stated earlier, the older son is a type of Pharisee. He does not rejoice in his brother’s return. In fact, he becomes jealous of the attention he is getting. The older son believes that the father was wrong to restore him into a right relationship; that the wayward son should be punished for leaving him with all the work and bringing grief to his father. The last thing on earth the younger son deserves is a celebration. Yet the father has done the very opposite of what the older son believes should be done; the father is celebrating and throwing the lost son a party. His response? He becomes angry and is not willing to go in and join the party.

There are a number of issues here that directly condemn the Pharisees. First, the Pharisees believe that sinners don’t deserve God’s blessings, especially after the lifestyle they have lived, the people they have hurt, the shame they have brought to Judaism, and the embarrassment they have brought to the
command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends;

30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’

31 “And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours.

32 ‘But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’ ”

religious leaders. Second, to see Jesus ministering to sinners and tax collectors just makes them angry. Why should “that kind” be ministered to? Their response? They will boycott the party. Third, it is obvious that the older son does not love the younger son. And herein lies the problem with the Pharisees: they do not love the tax collectors and the sinners. They are incapable of seeing beyond the sin to the sinner. They do not value them as worthy of God’s love. They cannot fathom that God would hate the sin but love the sinner. They cannot distinguish between the person and the person’s behaviors. They are unable to see the sinner as God sees the sinner: a lost sheep, a lost coin, a lost soul. Even worse, they cannot accept the fact that God loves the sinner and watches for his return. Those who turn away from God do not merit His love, but only His punishment. They want no rewards to go to the sinner: no robe, no ring, no sandal. They only want justice, and the justice they want cannot tolerate love. Love must be overruled by justice, and love must not be part of the equation. Restoration means little, and repentance is meaningless. For the Pharisee, once a sinner, always a sinner. Once unclean, always unclean. There is no such thing as a celebration for someone who begs for forgiveness. Once lost, always lost.

Verse 28b: The amazing thing is this short end to the verse is that, believe it or not, God still loves the Pharisee. As the father is pleading with the older son to not only welcome his brother home, but to experience the joy of celebrating his return, so, too, does God desire for the Pharisee to join in on the celebration of those who are repenting of sins and returning to God. If Pharisees were motivated by love rather than law and legalism, they would have joined Jesus in fellowshipping with the tax collectors and sinners. Through love, they would have seen the new life that Jesus was bringing to those who were previously alienated from God. Love would have overruled law, and love would have ruled their responses. But such was not the case. Like the older son, they made excuses why they should boycott the celebration.

Verses 29-30: The older son is not happy for his brother. The older son believes that, not only does his brother not deserve the celebration, but that he himself deserves more. After all, he has “…never neglected a command....” Well, here we see the hypocrisy and self-deception of the Pharisees. They believe they have never neglected a command when, in fact, while they are saying this to themselves, they are neglecting the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” The Pharisees have successfully eliminated the need to show love out of all the commands they have enacted. It’s a case of law at the expense of love. And having propped themselves up
so successfully with law, they have legislated out of their spiritual lives the need to love. The law has blinded them to the ability to experience and express God’s love. Not only has the law become the keystone of their identity, it has become the wall behind which they shut out the need for love. Love is like an enemy; the law has become a weapon. And like the older son, the Pharisees have found two thousand excuses not to love.

Note that the older son makes a ridiculous, irrational statement: “…but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth…” First of all, the older son does not refer to the younger son as his brother, when in fact, he is to be his brother’s keeper. Second, it is absolutely untrue that the younger son “devoured” the father’s wealth. Not only has the father lost nothing, but the older son still has everything coming to him. So what’s his problem? Third, he makes sure that the father knows how the younger son squandered his inheritance: with “prostitutes.” This is a subtle way of demeaning the brother. Fourth, he is accusing the father of poor judgment. That the father showed love and compassion to the son that returned is abhorrent to the older son. In other words, the older son believes he is smarter than the father. This was exactly the situation with the Pharisees: they believed they were smarter than Jesus; that Jesus, if He were the Messiah, should never be associating with sinners. God is too holy and just for that. So, behind the great wall of law, the Pharisees are unable to see over to the other side, the side of love.

Verses 31-32: Note that the father still refers to the older son as “son.” The father doesn’t deny that the older son has indeed been a good son, and that he will indeed receive his inheritance when the time comes. Yet the father is pleading with the older son to accept the younger son as a “brother of yours,” and to see what a wonderful thing has happened to his brother. The father’s plea to the older son is to open his eyes and see the good thing and not the bad, to rejoice in the present and forget the past, to experience the joy of the father and put aside his jealous anger. If anyone should be angry, it would have been the father. But he is not, and therefore, the older son should not be angry. The older son should join the party.

Finally, it should not be overlooked that, even though the lost son came to his senses and was welcomed back by his father, there was a price to pay. The price was that his inheritance was gone. All that was left of the father’s estate belonged to the older son, the one who did not squander his inheritance. The younger son is now at the mercy of his older brother. The younger son must live under the reality that there are earthly consequences to
indulgence in sin. This is true for whether a person is a Christian or not. If a Christian and a non-Christian jump out of plane without parachutes, both will hit the ground at terminal velocity. Being a Christian does not automatically protect one from the earthly consequences of choosing a life of sin. The caveat to this is that the Christian can find forgiveness and discover the grace of God in spite of his sin, thus lead a life of ongoing redemption. Nevertheless, the lesson is clear: there is an earthly price to pay for sin. Innocence lost can never be regained.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 15, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?

2. How does the concern of the Pharisees over who Jesus spends time with reflect their attitude toward others? What did they use to “separate” themselves from those they considered unworthy of God’s concern? How does the issue of love play a role here?

3. Identify the three parables Jesus tells His audience and find two common themes that connect all three parables together.

4. In the parable of the lost son, which character do you identify with the most? Is it possible that in one way or another you can identify with two, or even all of the characters? Are you willing to share that discovery about yourself with others?

5. How does the theme of “joy” permeate the three parables? Who is doing the rejoicing? What should have been the reaction to the Pharisees to the parables about that which was lost being found?

6. Why do you think Jesus made the statement, “…there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”? Is Jesus saying that righteous people (or those who think they are righteous) are not as valuable to God as someone who is lost? What is the point Jesus is making here?

7. In the parable of the lost son, what factors do you believe made the lost son come to “his senses”?
Luke 15

The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 15

15:1-2 – Jesus is spending time with and ministering to tax collectors and sinners. This causes the Pharisees and scribes to ___________________________. Why?

15:3-32 – Because the religious leaders obviously do not see any benefit in Jesus spending time with the sinners, Jesus begins teaching a series of ___________________________________.

The purpose of parables:
1. A parable is designed to teach a ____________________________________________;
2. A parable is a story that could be true but is not necessarily ______________________;
3. A parable is designed to reveal truth to believers and hide truth from____________________________ .

15:4-7 – The parable of the __________________________________________

Major themes:
1. The value of the __________________________________________
2. The joy in heaven over recovering one who is __________________
3. The joy for the one who _______________

15:8-10 – The parable of the __________________________________________

Major themes:
1. The value of the __________________________________________
2. The joy among angels over recovering one who is ______________
3. The joy for the one who ______________

15:11-32 – The parable of the __________________________________________

Major themes:
1. The son chose of his own accord to ______________________________________________
2. A person may not realize they are spiritually lost until they hit __________________________________
3. The father was always looking for ______________________________________________
4. There was great celebration when ______________________________________________
5. The fact is that the lost son squandered his inheritance; ______________________________

Question: How is God speaking to you through His word today?
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 15

15:1-2 – Jesus is spending time with and ministering to tax collectors and sinners. This causes the Pharisees and scribes to grumble. Why?
  • The discipler may need to review why tax collectors and sinners were so abhorrent to Pharisees.
  • Ask the disciple what kind of reaction the Pharisees, experts in the Old Testament, should have had toward those who were lost because of sin. (Law vs. love)

15:3-32 – Because the religious leaders obviously do not see any benefit in Jesus spending time with the sinners, Jesus begins teaching a series of parables.
  • The discipler is equipped here to explain the purpose of parables; see below

The purpose of parables:
  • The discipler may need to elaborate each of these points.

1. A parable is designed to teach a spiritual truth
  • Parables are not just cute stories such as Aesop’s Fables, or proverbs which teach lessons about life. They are specifically intended to teach a spiritual truth that helps the listener see how God sees things.
  • Parables are often taught to help the listener understand what the kingdom of God looks like.
  • Parables are also taught to help a believer understand how to live a godly life, or how to be a true follower of Jesus.
  • Parables do not predict the future, but equip the believer how to cope with whatever the future holds.

2. A parable is a story that could be true but is not necessarily true:
  • Parables are therefore taken from everyday settings and events that the listener can relate to.
  • Parable are uniquely designed for the given audience.

3. A parable is designed to reveal truth to believers and hide truth from doubters and skeptics.
  • A believer will attempt to understand the meaning of the parable; he or she will seek out the spiritual truth which should result in changed behavior or changed relationships.
  • An unbeliever will not want to waste time trying to understand a parable, and in fact may be so blinded by disbelief that he is completely unable to grasp the spiritual truth.

15:4-7 – The parable of the lost sheep
  • All of Jesus’ audience would be familiar with sheep. The disciple may not be.
  • The discipler may need to explain to the disciple the characteristics of sheep and how they can become lost.

Major themes:
1. The value of the lost individual (the “one”)
   • The key word here is “value.” Every individual is valuable to God. Can the disciple name some kind of individuals that the world—or even the church—might find NOT valuable to God?
   • Ensure that the disciple understands why it is so important to God that a lost individual is found.
   • Ask the disciple what the reaction of the Pharisees should have been toward the lost being found. Can the disciple describe why the Pharisees would not see finding the lost “sinner” a cause for rejoicing?

2. The joy in heaven over recovering one who is lost & unaware he is lost
   • Ask the disciple why there is so much rejoicing over a spiritually lost person being found.
3. The joy for the one who finds (recovered) the lost
   - Ask the disciple if he or she can determine why the Pharisees were not rejoicing over lost sinners being found.
   - Make sure the disciple clearly understands the fact that the Pharisees viewed sinners only through the eyes of the law, whereas God sees sinners through the eyes of love.

15:8-10 – The parable of the lost coin
   - The themes are the same as the previous parable. One exception is that the main character in the parable of the lost sheep is a man; the main character in this parable is a woman.

Major themes:
1. The value of the lost individual (the “one”)
2. The joy among angels over recovering one who is lost
3. The joy for the one who finds

15:11-32 – The parable of the lost son (prodigal son)
   - Quite likely, the disciple has heard of this parable. Ask him to retell the parable in his own words.
   - The disciple may not know the meaning of the term “prodigal.” It means one who spends money or resources in a reckless, self-serving way.

Major themes:
1. The son chose of his own accord to leave the presence of his father
   - Ask the disciple if he or she has ever acted like a prodigal, or known someone who has. (The answer to the latter usually involves a family member.)
   - Ask the disciple if he or she can identify with the lost son.

2. A person may not realize they are spiritually lost until they hit rock bottom
   - If the disciple is able to identify with the prodigal son, ask what happened to turn him around and make him come to “his senses.” (This can be a very personal and intimate time, and the discipler should allow the disciple to speak freely and, if necessary, acknowledge repentance.)

3. The father was always looking for the return of the lost son
   - A great discussion can be elicited here. The disciple may be the lost son, or the disciple could actually represent the father who was looking for the lost son. If the latter is the case, ask if he or she ever wanted to “give up” on the one who was lost.

4. There was great celebration when the lost son returned
   - Ask the disciple if he or she has ever felt like the son who was NOT lost.
   - Ask the disciple if the church he or she attends celebrates the recovery of a spiritually lost person.

5. The fact is that the lost son squandered his inheritance; there are earthly consequences for sin.
   - This is a very important point to stress to the disciple. Ask the disciple what can be lost by becoming a prodigal son. For example, innocence, finances, and relationships may be lost. Other consequences can be bad memories, a loss of physical or emotional health, guilt, regret, and loss of self-esteem.
   - Ensure that the disciple does not leave the session on a negative note. What should be emphasized is the never-ending love of our Father in heaven who not only forgives completely, but throws banquets for a returning lost son.

Question: How is God speaking to you through His word today?
   - This is a great place to ask the disciple, “How has God spoken to you through His word today?”
CHAPTER 16

Overview of Luke 16
In chapter 16, Jesus continues his teachings, both to His disciples and to the Pharisees. He will first give a parable about a shrewd manager who squandered away his master’s resources. This parable will apply both to His disciples and to the Pharisees. Jesus will then give a teaching on faithfulness, and how His followers are expected to utilize the resources God gives them. He will also make one of His most poignant statements in Scripture about serving two masters, thus defining a clear measure of the heart. This chapter will then end with a long parable called “The rich man and Lazarus.” There will be an abundance of applications from this parable, including applications about money, caring, denial, rejection, and the afterlife. The disciple may find this parable somewhat disturbing.

What to look for in Luke 16
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. You will see Jesus continuing to teach with parables, of which there are two in this chapter.
3. Look for the parable of the “shrewd steward,” and try to understand why his master called him shrewd.
4. Look for two lessons to be learned from the parable of the shrewd steward.
5. Jesus will teach an important lesson about divorce that the Pharisees will not like. It is a judgment against them.
6. Carefully read the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, and ask yourself if it applies to you.
7. Look for Jesus’ teachings on life after death.

1 Now He was also saying to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and this manager was reported to him as squandering his possessions.

16:1 Whereas the previous parables (in chapter 15) were spoken to the Pharisees, Jesus, though including the Pharisees, now turns His attention to His disciples. However, one must not lose sight of the fact that the themes of the parables in chapter 15 are continued right into chapter 16. Remember that the chapter divisions were designated long after the Scriptures were written. Thus, in Luke’s original text, the thought processes continue from the parable of the lost son to this parable, the parable of the unrighteous manager (or “unjust steward,” in other translations). Unfortunately, this parable is one of the least understood and most misinterpreted of all of Jesus’ parables. Because the unrighteous manager is praised, some have gone so far as to suggest that the parable is mistranslated, on even extra-biblical. As we will see, nothing could be further from the truth.

The key word that ties the two parables together is the verb “to squander” (i.e., to waste or misuse). Whereas the lost son “squandered his (own) estate,” in this parable, the manager was discovered “squandering” the possessions of another, possessions he had been entrusted with by his master.

It will be helpful in interpreting this parable if one keeps in mind that the master is God and the unrighteous steward (manager) refers primarily to the...
2 “And he called him and said to him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an accounting of your management, for you can no longer be manager.’

3 “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do, since my master is taking the management away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg.

4 ‘I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the management people will welcome me into their homes.’

16:2 Verse 2 summarizes a story of household intrigue. The manager has been accused of wasting the master’s money, something that he doesn’t deny. This would be akin to repentance, his first act being confession that he is indeed guilty of not handling well what the master had entrusted to him. Note that the master does not cast him out of his household; he simply states that he is being demoted because he hasn’t handled the master’s assets well, that he is going to be replaced by another, and that he will no longer have access to the master’s resources.

To the Pharisees who, as verse 14 will state “were lovers of money,” this parable will make...
5 “And he summoned each one of his master’s debtors, and he began saying to the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

6 “And he said, ‘A hundred measures of oil.’ And he said to him, ‘Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.’

7 “Then he said to another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ And he said, ‘A hundred measures of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, and write eighty.’

8 “And his master praised the unrighteous manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light.

9 “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.

immediate sense. But to the disciples, who had left behind all possessions, the underlying meaning must be something else, and will not be completely identified until verses 10-13. Nevertheless, Jesus is making an analogy between the proper utilization of “unrighteous wealth” and the “true riches” that will be given them for carrying out the matters of the kingdom, especially during the days of the early church that is to come. Yet, even at the time it is given, this parable has significance. The disciples have been given the authority and power to proclaim the gospel, heal, and cast out demons. How will they use those gifts? They have also been given the opportunity of a lifetime—to follow Jesus and learn from Him. How will they take advantage of this opportunity? They have also been taught that when they pray, they are to continually be forgiving others their debts. Will they indeed follow through with that instruction? The lesson will be that they need to be shrewd about the privileges, the gifts, and the teachings they have been given.

16:3 The first thing the manager needs to do is face reality. He needs to come to grips with the fact that he is about to have his master’s resources as well as his authority taken away from him. Therefore, he faces the real risk of not being forgiven for his mismanagement of his master’s resources. And, he needs to face the fact that he is limited in his own strengths and abilities. In fact, he was much better off having at his disposal the master’s resources than he will be relying upon his own. This is a clear warning to the disciples: once they are left alone in the early church, they cannot rely upon their own resources, or resort to the world’s ways, to carry out the affairs of the kingdom.

16:4 The second thing the manager does is to come up with a plan. The plan is simple: give grace and favor to others by forgiving them of his portion, or profit, from the debt. By doing that, he will put himself in a position where they will show grace and favor to him, thus in turn, forgiving him of what debts he may accumulate by relying upon their hospitality.

16:5-7 Even more powerful principles begin to emerge in verses 5-7, and center around the issue of debt. If one reflects back to the Lord’s prayer in chapter 11, one will notice the emphasis on forgiveness: “And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves also forgive everyone who is indebted to us” (11:4). In the kingdom of God, debt is synonymous with sin, and in this parable, earthly debt to the master is a type of spiritual indebtedness to God because of sin. One of the greatest resources God provides His disciples is the ability to forgive, and have that forgiveness recognized by God Himself. One will notice in the upcoming verses that
10 “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.

11 “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?

12 “And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another’s, who will give you that which is your own?

13 “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

16:10-13 The illustration having been given in the form of a parable sets the tone for the spiritual principles that follow. It is the small ethical, moral, monetary, spiritual and relational choices that we make on a day-to-day basis that set the tone for the wider, more far-reaching decisions that inevitably come our way. Failing to notify the cashier that he has returned too much cash opens the door for justifying cooking the books at the company. Failing to tithe anything to the church sets the stage for exercising greed with one’s possessions. Indulging in a little pornography clears the way for an affair. Being faithful in “a very little thing” is as much a statement of character as being “faithful…in much.”

Verses 10-12 are an exercise in logic as well as human nature and the spiritual condition. Consistency of character can be observed in the handling of “unrighteous wealth” as much as anything. The term “unrighteous wealth” refers specifically to money and possessions. It is contrasted to “true riches” that are spiritual in nature and come from God Himself. If one is not able to handle money and material possessions in a trustworthy and loving fashion, why would God entrust that individual with heavenly riches such as spiritual gifts? And, conversely, if one is not faithful in handling well the spiritual blessings that have been given by God, why would He entrust that individual with earthly possessions?

Verse 13 is certainly one of the most powerful and poignant teachings of Jesus: no one can be in service both to God and to money or possessions. There is no greater hindrance to becoming a true disciple of Jesus Christ and a worthy bearer of lasting fruit for the kingdom than money and possessions. Period. Thus, there are many followers
14 Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and were scoffing at Him.

15 And He said to them, “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God.
reward for keeping Mosaic law and the traditions of the elders. If you were poor, you deserved to be poor because, obviously, you had sinned. Therefore, Pharisees felt that because they were righteous, they deserved to have money.

It was stated by someone that men strive to become wealthy for two reasons: power over women for sex, and power over men for admiration and respect. Jesus will soon describe the former when He chastises the Pharisees about divorce (v. 18). In verse 15, He focuses on the latter, the need for esteem among men.

The efforts by the Pharisees to “justify” themselves “in the sight of men” are almost too numerous to list. They controlled who could and who couldn’t offer sacrifices in the temple. They devised hundreds of laws restricting work on the Sabbath, which including healing. They wore elaborate robes and vestments and phylacteries to make themselves appear spiritual and holy to the public. Instead of fulfilling their mission of keeping people separated from the pagan world, they separated themselves from the people and began acting like the pagan world. They held over the peoples’ heads the threat of pronouncements, judgments and labels of “unclean,” “outcast,” “sinner” and “blasphemer,” thus keeping even devout people in fear of exclusion from the temple. Whereas in most societies it is government that holds power over people, in this theocratic Jewish society, it was the religious authorities who held power over people. Even worse, in holding this enormous power, they inevitably “justified” themselves before others. Their pride completely overruled any sense of the need to repent. Their pockets completely validated their negligence of the poor. Their power completely justified their hunger for esteem.

But before we condemn the Pharisees who justified themselves before men, the American evangelical is just as guilty. Hiding behind the veil of free enterprise, capitalism, the American dream and a Western work ethic, many Christians justify their wealth and affluence “in the sight of men” by believing that they “have worked hard for” and “earned” what they have. The poor are poor because they choose to be poor. Therefore, a sense of entitlement can often be found in the American evangelical community. That might explain why the average charitable giving of the American Christian is less than three percent of their income, while at the same time, living with an income and lifestyle that represents the top one or two percent of the world’s population. Such justification of wealth and privilege by the American Christian represents nothing less than a hardness of heart toward the poor, the lame, the crippled and the blind, to say nothing of the
Luke 16

16 “The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.

17 But it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the law to fail.

advancement of the kingdom of God through missions.

Jesus’ response to the hardness of heart of the Pharisees is not to focus on their narcissistic behaviors, but to direct their attention to their hearts. Men may observe their outward appearance, but God looks at the heart. Somewhere in the emergence of the sect of the Jewish priesthood, they had placed the issue of the heart on the back burner, focusing instead on the letter of the law. Unlike David, who was “a man after God’s own heart,” they were men seeking the esteem of others. Their hearts had become cold and hardened, leaving little room for compassion and no room for loving your neighbor as yourself. Such lust for the esteem of men “is detestable in the sight of God,” for in seeking to please men, they had failed to serve men with love. Unfortunately, this hardness of heart toward others is not foreign to the evangelical community today. The quest for power over others, the theology of health, wealth and prosperity, the lust for charismatic spiritual gifts, the hunger for mega-this and mega-that are almost too numerous to list.

Regardless of the era, the heart of man changes little. Times and context change only the specifics.

16:16-17 When gospel writers refer to the Law and the Prophets, they are referring to the Old Testament. Basically, the Law referred to the Pentateuch, or the first five books of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Prophets, on the other hand, included all the Major and Minor Prophets, and, most of the time, all the historical and poetic books as well. The phrase “Law and Prophets” was a convenient way of saying, “All those parts of the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible) that Jewish theology is based on.”

Unfortunately, the Pharisees also included the Hebrew interpretations of the Law and the Prophets, what is now called the Talmud in its earlier, unwritten form. These writings were also referred to as “the traditions of the elders.” It is from these writings that the additional Sabbath laws were based. Even more unfortunate is the fact that the Pharisees and scribes attributed to “the traditions of the elders” the same spiritual authority as the Law and the Prophets, making them equal to Scripture in authority and practice.

Verse 16 is a source of much lexical and interpretive discussion on its meaning. In Greek, it literally translates, “The Law and the Prophets until John…” The words “were proclaimed” were added by the editors of the NASB to help the reader understand the passage. They may or may not be correct; it’s their best guess based on context. The added words could just as well have been “were
18 Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery.

16:18 Now Jesus addresses another way in which the Pharisees abused their position and power. The subject is divorce, but the real issue is lust. This little verse, elaborated on in much more detail in Matthew’s gospel, is loaded with irony.

Let’s look at verse 18 clause by clause. First, “Everyone who divorces his wife....” Divorce was not forbidden by Mosaic law (Deut. 24:1-4). As

preached” to fit the rest of the verse. The problem is that there is no verb in the phrase, and its construction places the emphasis on the Law and Prophets, not John.

The second part of the verse is also perplexing, and results in even more interpretive challenges. The construction of the verb “forcing” could be “forcing himself” into the kingdom (middle voice), or “being forced” into the kingdom (passive voice).

Here are two possible ways to translate and interpret verse 16 using quite a bit of literary license. Please bear with the author:

“The Law and the Prophets pointed the way toward the kingdom of God until John the Baptist appeared on the scene, the last of the Old Testament prophets. But since John preached, the good news about the kingdom of God has been preached by Me with outstanding results, and people are falling over themselves trying to enter into it.”

(This interpretation is based on the middle voice, and pictures a mob scene outside a Target on Black Friday.)

Here is another possibility: “Until John the Baptist, it was the Law and the Prophets that pointed the way to the kingdom of God. Now, the good news about the kingdom of God is actually being preached so that the Law and the Prophets are no longer needed to point the way...it’s here now! Indeed, it is your own mishandling of the Law and the Prophets that are forcing people into the kingdom. The people are hearing something much better from Me.”

(This interpretation is based on the passive voice, and pictures a crowd of protestors running for shelter from police with fire hoses.)

Lest Jesus’ audience assume that He is nullifying the law of Moses by preaching the gospel of the kingdom, verse 17 clears up any misconceptions: every “stroke of a letter of the Law” will be fulfilled. The NASB word “stroke” is the term used for a Hebrew “tittle,” a small decorative part of the smallest Hebrew letter, the yodh. The equivalent in the English alphabet would be the dot over an “i.” In other words, everything written in the Old Testament will come to pass. What was true in Jesus’ day is true today and tomorrow and in the age to come: “The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever” (Isa. 40:8).
Matthew elaborates, a justifiable cause for divorce was unfaithfulness; that is, adultery. And, as Jesus qualifies in Matthew, God allowed a provision for divorce because of their “hardness of heart.” In other words, even if the wife repented (assuming she was the one who had the affair), love, forgiveness and reconciliation was overruled by anger, vengeance and shunning, and the husband could proceed with the divorce.

But here is the problem. Just as the religious leaders had defined hundreds of laws as to what constitutes work on the Sabbath, so they declared as law numerous reasons a man could divorce his wife. The irony is this: the Pharisees, while condemning Gentiles as being unclean and less than human, nevertheless adopted Greek standards when it came to divorce, and wrote those very standards into their law books! And the Greek standards were this: you can divorce your wife for any reason, similar as it is in America today. The only difference? In the Greek world, a woman could ask for a divorce. Unfortunately for a Jewish women, only men could seek a writ of divorce. Therefore, a Pharisee could ask for a writ of divorce if he didn’t like his wife’s cooking. He could divorce her if she didn’t please him sexually. He could divorce her if he didn’t consider her as pretty as some other woman, thus not measuring up to his artificial standards of beauty. And the list goes on and on.

But now we come to the second part of Jesus’ statement that points directly to the heart of the matter. The true motive behind divorce by the Pharisees was to sexually experience another woman, nothing short of lust. Therefore, Jesus adds that if a Pharisee divorces his wife, on whatever grounds he may come up with, and marries another woman, he commits adultery, a violation of the seventh commandment. This statement by Jesus would naturally infuriate the Pharisees, for in their mind they had come up with a very clever way to have as many wives as they wanted, only instead of multiple wives like those awful Gentiles, their system involved serial wives. In other words, by using a legal system in the name of God, they were no different than the very “sinners” they condemned. The Pharisees justified their lustful acts with law, thereby blinding themselves to the fact that they were even worse sinners. This must have infuriated Jesus.

The last part of verse 18 points to even greater hypocrisy: wife swapping. When a Pharisee divorced his wife, a lesser Pharisee might find the divorced wife quite attractive, perhaps even more attractive than his present wife. Therefore, serial divorces resulted in serial marriages resulting in serial acts of adultery.

At the heart of the topic of marriage, divorce and
19 “Now there was a rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, joyously living in splendor every day.

20 “And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores, and longing to be fed with the crumbs which were falling from the rich man’s table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

21 “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

22 “In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

23 “And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send...'

adultery, is the issue of love. Jesus’ statement in verse 18 goes right to the heart of the matter: love was overruled by lust in the name of the law. Whereas God’s law is designed to teach the nature of true love, the Pharisees had distorted God’s law to satisfy their own lust. It is a very sad commentary on the religious hierarchy in Jesus’ day, just as it is a very sad commentary on today’s view of marriage and divorce.

There is one last comment that needs to be made on this verse (and is consistent with Matthew’s version). Some churches teach that if there is a divorce, no matter who is at fault, no matter what is the reason for the divorce, and no matter whether the couple was Christian or not before the divorce, it is a sin to remarry, as remarrying constitutes adultery. Some remarried couples who have come under this teaching actually contemplate divorcing one another so as not to be living in sin! This is an absurd conclusion, an even more absurd teaching by the church, and is tantamount to modern-day Pharisaic legalism and oppression. It is bondage to an interpretation taken completely out of context.

Here is this writer’s take on the matter: **stay in whatever state you are in!** If you were divorced and have remarried, whether Christian or not at the time, **stay in your present state**, especially if there are children involved. Re-divorcing from a re-marrying does not a re-repenting make! If there has been sin involved, such as adultery, then it needs to be acknowledged and confessed. Then move on! Do not make a difficult matter worse by subscribing to a spurious teaching that requires divorcing from a remarriage.

16:19-31 Chapter 18 ends with a troubling parable. On every level, it is disturbing in its outcome, first by the consequences of ignoring God’s command to love your neighbor as yourself, and second, by the failure of those to accept truth about who Jesus is in spite of all the evidence. The end of the parable represents a fulfillment of the “unpardonable sin.” (However, see note on 12:10 regarding the term “unpardonable sin.”). This parable is directed not just to the Pharisees, but to anyone who, for one reason or another, fails to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior in spite of all the evidence. It cuts right to the chase of rejecting Jesus, and prophesies, in a terrible way, the end of the sect of Pharisees.

16:19 “Now there was a rich man....” This parable will be one of many contrasts, beginning with the two main characters. The rich man is characterized three ways: he is rich (meaning quite wealthy); he is well-dressed in purple (a color reserved for royalty) and fine linen (*byssus*, aka sea silk), both of which were costly and hard to come by;
Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’

25 ‘But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

26 ‘And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.’

27 ‘And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father’s house—

28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’

29 ‘But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’

30 ‘But he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!’

31 ‘But he said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.’”

and he lives in splendor (he has a large household of servants providing sumptuous food and fine wine on a daily basis). These three descriptors define a lifestyle of pleasure. He not only has great affluence, but he buys whatever he wants whenever he wants. He obviously lives in a mansion surrounded by a wall designed to keep out uninvited guests. He is nameless, however. The Pharisees, many of whom were rich, would immediately identify the rich man as “the good guy.” Their initial interpretation would be that this was a man blessed by God, who was probably righteously keeping the law in order to deserve such divine favor.

16:20-21 By contrast, there is Lazarus, the poor man. Lazarus is the only person given a name in Jesus’ parables. There are two reasons Jesus chooses the name Lazarus. The first is obvious: not too many days from now Jesus will raise His friend Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, from the dead. This fact will have more significance at the end of the parable. But there is a second reason. Lazarus is Latin for the Hebrew name Eleazar. Translated, Eleazar means “God has helped.” Thus, by giving the poor man the name Lazarus, Jesus is immediately countering the belief of the Pharisees that it was the rich man whom God had helped, not the poor man. In the eyes of the Pharisees, the poor man was poor because he was under God’s judgment, and the rich man was rich because he was under God’s favor.

It was customary in biblical times for the poor to gather at the gate of the rich in hopes that, as the rich were coming and going, they would drop alms on their blanket, such as one would see people today dropping money into a Salvation Army bucket at Christmas time. Notice, too, that Lazarus was in genuine need. He “was laid at (the rich man’s) gate,” meaning that he was unable to get there by himself. Caring others had to place him there. It is quite clear, then, that Lazarus must beg for money to buy food. In those days, this would have meant that Lazarus was not far from death.

Lazarus was also covered with sores. He obviously could not afford to pay a physician for balm or ointment. Lazarus’s sores, most likely caused by malnutrition, festered and became painfully infected, oozing pus which stray dogs found tasty, making the infection worse, for a dog’s tongue is full of bacteria. It would not be long before Lazarus’s sores resulted in sepsis, or infection of the blood. One must not assume the dogs were like household pets. Most likely they were covered with fleas and ticks. Not only were dogs wandering scavengers, trying themselves to survive, but dogs were considered unclean. Jews often referred to Gentiles as “dogs,” a severe insult signifying that Gentiles were sub-human. Not only would the sores themselves make
you ceremonially unclean, but to have a dog lick your sores would make you even more unclean.

Lazarus was also starving to death. All he could think about was where the next morsel of food was coming from. Yet he isn’t asking for much…a crumb would be a delicacy.

Thus, in three verses, we see stark contrasts between someone who was well supplied to take care of himself, and did so, and someone who had no one to take care of him, and left so.

16:22 The contrasts continue into the death of each man, a sobering reminder that life does not end with a last breath. Just as Lazarus “was laid” at the gate of the rich man, he is now “carried away” by angels. He may have been poor, but there was always someone to care for him.

Lazarus is carried “to Abraham’s bosom.” This is a Hebraism for heaven. Ironically, it is a picture of dining, for in the Jewish meal, the most important guest reclined near the bosom of the host; that is, right next to him and sometimes, right up against him. In other words, Lazarus is now feasting in “splendor” in heaven.

In contrast, the rich man is not carried by anybody other than those who buried him in the ground. Lazarus and the rich man have now traded places. Lazarus is “living in splendor every day,” and the rich man is being “laid” at the gate of Hades.

16:23 The rich man now finds himself in Hades, totally conscious and totally aware of his surroundings. Whereas in his earthly life he was living in splendor every day, now he is living in torment every day, and there is no end in sight. The notion that the rich man would end up in Hades would have been particularly abhorrent to the Pharisees, being the exact opposite of conventional rabbinic theology.

Hades was considered the abode of the dead. It is the Greek word for the Hebrew word Sheol. The common teaching of the rabbis was that after death, both good people and wicked people gathered in Hades to await the final judgment. However, Jesus immediately corrects that theology by teaching that only the wicked go to Hades, and the righteous go to heaven. The New Testament, therefore, teaches quite clearly that Hades is synonymous with hell, the place of everlasting torment.

Parables are meant to teach a spiritual principle, and therefore not every detail can be taken literally. Therefore, that the rich man “lifted up his eyes,” and “saw” Lazarus is simply a way of saying that, in some manner, the rich man was conscious enough to perceive that his situation was not the same as Lazarus’s; Lazarus was in heavenly splendor, and he was in hellish agony. What can be taken literally is something the New Testament teaches clearly: hell is
a place of everlasting torment. The exact nature of that torment is unknown, but one part of it may be the knowledge that, had the rich man lived his life differently, he wouldn’t be eternally separated from heavenly splendor. While on earth, he had the opportunity to live his life differently, but he chose not to. Few things create more mental anguish than to know you had the opportunity to change your life for the better, and passed it up.

16:24 The rich man, in his agony, cries out to Abraham, not Lazarus. Lazarus is out of the picture; he is shielded from the agony of others, nestled in the bosom of Abraham. Note, too, that the rich man refers to Abraham as “Father.” Such a reference clearly indicates that even though he is a Jew, being a child of Abraham didn’t automatically grant him access to Abraham’s bosom. This would, of course, be a direct insult to the Pharisees who taught that, by being descendants of Abraham, God would automatically grant them special privilege, thus ensuring eternity in heaven. Jesus is stating in very clear terms that simply being a descendant of Abraham does not guarantee access to Abraham’s bosom. It takes more, as we will see later in the passage.

The rich man cries out for “mercy,” just as Lazarus would have cried out for mercy from the rich man going in and out of the gate. Yet the rich man showed no mercy to Lazarus and ignored his pleas. The rest of this verse is filled with a vivid picture of the agony of being eternally separated from God. This writer has worked in hospital burn units, and of all the traumas experienced by patients, burn victims suffer the most. Burns to the face and mouth are particularly painful, as the lips and tongue are extremely sensitive to touch and occupy large areas of the cerebral cortex that registers sensation. Burns to the mouth and tongue leave one with a constant thirst, but drinking even water is painful and never satisfies the thirst. Swallowing is also painful. Therefore, the rich man’s request for just a drop of water is extremely realistic and vividly illustrates the agony from the never-ending “flame.”

Whether or not eternal fire or flame is actual or metaphorical, we don’t know. Hell is most often illustrated by fire, but hell is also described as “outer darkness.” We do know, however, that because burns are so painful and agonizing, flame and fire are appropriate illustrations of what it is like to be in hell…it is torment.

16:25 The contrasts in afterlife is placed in the context of the situation before death—“good things” versus “bad things.” Note that the rich man “received” good things. The clear implication is that he was given the good things by God. It is also implied that Lazarus did not receive good things,
indicating that the lives of both men were under God’s control. Speculating a little more, one might suggest that God gave the good things to the rich man in order to test him on how he might use the resources God gave him—to serve himself or to serve others. But now the situation is reversed and, unfortunately for the rich man, worse. Whereas a change of circumstances could have taken place before death, had the rich man been willing to share his good things, after death there is no more chance to change the situation. The reason for this is found in the next verse.

16:26 Verse 26 clearly indicates that before death, some people have the opportunity to change their circumstances, but others do not. Lazarus did not have the opportunity to change his circumstances, but the rich man did. Those with greater possessions have the greater opportunity to do greater good. Those who have no possessions, the poor, are at the “mercy” of those who have the greater possessions. However, death takes away all opportunities to change, all opportunities to share, and all opportunities for the rich to show love to the poor rather than themselves. Why? Because death results in “a great chasm fixed”; that is, when all possessions are lost through death, there is nothing left to share, and no avenue left for the rich to show love to the poor. Even more importantly, God has designed life and eternity in such a way that only during our earthly life can we choose to change our circumstances. Once earthly life ends, our choices to change are taken away. Therefore, life on earth is a spiritual proving ground to “love your neighbor as yourself.” During life, eternal destination is determined by the choices we make. Once life is over, eternal destination is decided by God based on how we lived our earthly life, and that destination does not change.

16:27-29 The rich man, realizing that his circumstances are not going to change, therefore increasing his torment, pleads on behalf of those closest to him on earth—“I have five brothers.” Why does Jesus use the number five? There is nothing mystical or allegorical in the number five. Five is a number used frequently throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Numbers 7:17-83) to denote a sufficient or adequate amount; that is, not too many, not too few. Jesus therefore used the number five frequently for His Jewish audience.

The plea on the rich man’s part to warn his brothers implies that they, too, were wealthy and “living in splendor every day.” Abraham’s response is not encouraging: “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.” Moses and the Prophets is the same as “the Law and the Prophets,” only personified. Jesus is clearly stating that if the
Pharisees truly understood and followed the Old Testament, they would not only recognize Him as the Messiah, they would have been living their lives differently. They would have followed Moses' command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Lev. 19:18), and they would have heeded the words of such prophets as Zechariah when he wrote, “Dispense true justice and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother; and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor…” (7:9-10). Jesus is saying that the brothers (implying the Pharisees) have all they need from God to make the right choices in life. Unfortunately, the rich man will admit that Moses and the Prophets is not enough, which in itself is a condemnation of the brothers and an insult to God.

16:30-31 The rich man, admitting that his brothers ignore and neglect the teachings of Moses and the Prophets, takes another tack. He requests Abraham to send Lazarus back from the dead. If his brothers saw someone rise from the dead, then surely they would believe, repent, change their ways, and not end up in eternal torment. Abraham’s response is truly disheartening. Even if the brothers witness someone being raised from the dead, it will not be enough to persuade them. This fact, which is in effect a prophecy, becomes reality when Jesus raises His friend Lazarus from the dead. The Pharisees did not accept Jesus as the Messiah in spite of the evidence. And, with the exception of a few like Nicodemus, this tragic scenario will be played out once again when Jesus Himself is raised from the dead.

There are a number of lessons in this parable that require readers’ attention. First, the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” permeates all of Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation. It is found throughout the Old Testament, especially in the Prophets. And, for readers of the New Testament, it is, as James describes it, “the royal law.”

Second, there is a lesson on material possessions. Especially in American culture where capitalism reigns through free enterprise, there is the strong tendency to believe that everything we have, we’ve earned through hard work. Whereas part of that work ethic is true—no one succeeds without hard work—lots of people in the world work even harder and have much less. The follower of Jesus Christ must understand that everything earned comes from God. Therefore the onus is for the one who has much to give much. The more you have, the more you give. The more you earn, the more you share.

Third, this parable is ultimately a parable about love. The rich man loved only himself. His lack of love for others, especially the dredges of the earth, led to a narcissistic lifestyle of comfort and pleasure. He saw the poor as getting what they deserve. He
considered the poor as not worthy of his time or possessions. He might share his blessings with those of like kind, but he would certainly not waste his resources on those who didn’t deserve it. It was his lack of love for others that was his eternal undoing.

Fourth, there is the lesson that God loves and cares for the unlovable. Those individuals or groups in life that do not meet up to our standards, who are lowly by the world’s standards, who have dug their own pits and can’t climb out, who are poor and destitute and orphaned, God loves. God loves the prisoner, the drug addict, the homosexual, the adulterer, the beggar, those living in ghettos as well as those living in mansions, the Islamic fundamentalist, the terrorist, the suicide bomber, the thief, the murderer, the porn star and whoever else the righteous may consider not worth their time or resources. And God loved the rich man. Why? Because God knows all about eternity, and what it means to be eternally separated from Him by a great chasm fixed. As the apostle Peter writes, God does not want anyone to perish, but for everyone to have eternal life (2 Pet. 3:9). The consequences for dying without Jesus Christ in one’s heart are just too terrible.

Fifth, there is the lesson that there are eternal rewards for loving your neighbor as yourself, and eternal consequences for failing to do so. The rich man failed this command, and suffered greatly for it. In this parable, the failure to love was the rich man’s undoing.

Lastly, it does not appear that the eternal consequences for the rich man were the result of his simply being wealthy. His problem was that he used his wealth to satisfy himself and to live in “splendor.” His judgment came from the fact that he hoarded his wealth for himself. Therefore, his judgment was based on the observation that he completely ignored the needs of those around him, in spite of the fact that he was aware of their need. In the bigger picture, God blessed him with wealth for the purpose of giving to those in need; that is, the poor. Instead, he kept his blessings to himself, thus ignoring the needs of those around him.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, how has God spoken to you through His word? Of the many principles presented in chapter 16, what principle stands out most to you? Once you identify the principle, what do you intend to do about it in the form of action?

2. When you first read the parable of the “shrewd steward” (“unjust steward,” “unrighteous manager”), before you read the commentary, what struck you as odd about it? Did it seem like Jesus was praising someone who had acted in a selfish or conniving manner? Why do you think the master praised his manager? After answering these questions, how do you relate personally to this parable? Is it applicable to you? How?

3. How do you intend to personally apply Jesus’ teaching, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much”? How does your answer affect your priorities of where you spend you money, how you spend your time, and how you approach your relationships?

4. Relate personally to Jesus’ teaching, “No servant can serve two masters.” Tie your response into the last word of the verse, “wealth.”

5. Identify the three important teachings in verses 14-18. Apply each teaching to your own life.

6. Identify three important teachings from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Make a list of all the contrasts that you can find in the parable.

7. Does the parable of the rich man and Lazarus make you uncomfortable? Why? If the parable makes you uncomfortable, what changes do you plan on making in your life from what you’ve learned from that parable?
Chapter 16 is composed of a parable, four teachings, followed by another parable. The parables are like bookends to the teachings. All the teachings and both parables focus on the issue of ________________.

16:1-9 – First parable: this is the parable of the ______________________________________________________
- This parable is related to the parable of the lost son through the word _________________________________
- This parable is also related in theme regarding the subject of ________________________________________
- The key phrase is “each one of his master’s _______________________________
- The point of the parable: forgiveness of the debt of others brings ________________________________

16:10-13 – First teaching: be shrewd in the use of ____________________________________________________

16:14-15 – Second teaching: never use wealth (“mammon”) to be ___________________________________________________________________

16:16-17 – Third teaching: these truths are clearly stated in Scripture and will be ________________

16:18 – Fourth teaching is a teaching to the Pharisees about divorce, a type of __________________________

16:19-31 – Second parable: this is the parable about the rich man and ________________________________

Write down one way God is speaking to you today through His word:
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 16

- Before giving the answer to the introductory statement below, ask the disciple if he or she can identify the prevailing theme of the chapter.
- Second, ask the disciple what part of chapter 16 stands out the most. In most instances, the disciple will refer to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus.

Chapter 16 is composed of a parable, four teachings, followed by another parable. The parables are like bookends to the teachings. All the teachings and both parables focus on the issue of money.

- Help the disciple discover this by pointing out the two parables and the four teachings.

16:1-9 – First parable: this is the parable of the shrewd manager.

- Ask the disciple to read the parable and try to explain it. Most likely, there will be some questions on the part of the disciple, especially as to why the manager’s master praised him for his shrewdness.
- There may need to be explanation of how masters, or businessmen, worked in those days. There are illustrations in the commentary that refer to modern-day comparisons.
- This parable is related to the parable of the lost son through the word “squanderer.”
  - Have the disciple refer back to the parable of the lost son (prodigal son) in chapter 15. Have the disciple identify the similarities.
  - Have the disciple explain how each main character “squandered” the resources given them. (Note: in the parable of the lost son, it was his own possessions he squandered. In the parable to the shrewd manager, it was his boss’s resources he squandered.
  - Have the disciple retell the actions the shrewd manager took with his master’s debtors. See if the disciple can figure out why he did what he did.
- This parable is also related in theme regarding the subject of forgiveness.
  - Make sure the disciple understands the concept of forgiveness.
  - Have the disciple find the concept of forgiveness in this parable and in the parable of the lost son.

- The key phrase is “each one of his master’s debtors.”
  - Have the disciple identify who are the “debtors” in this parable.
  - Raise the issue of authority. Note that the master certainly had the authority to forgive debtors, and the parable implies that the manager was also given authority to forgive debtors.
  - Ask the disciple how this relates to the statement about forgiveness in the Lord’s prayer.
  - Ask the disciple if there is anyone in his or her life whom they need to forgive.

- The point of the parable: forgiveness of the debt of others brings praise from God.
  - See if the disciple can determine why the master praised the manager.
  - Ask the disciple this question: “How important is it to God that we forgive those who have sinned against us?” Then ask “Why is it important to God?”

16:10-13 – First teaching: be shrewd in the use of spiritual and material resources.

- See if the disciple can follow the logic of verse 10 concerning faithfulness. Ask the disciple to give some examples or illustrations.
- Have the disciple state in his own words the meaning of verse 13. Ask the disciple if he plans to make any changes in his life as a result.

- Ask the disciple what is the meaning of the following phrases:
  - “who were lovers of money”
  - “were scoffing at Him” (Why?)
  - “who justify yourselves in the sight of men” (How and why do they justify?)
  - “that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God”
- See if the disciple can come up with any contemporary examples. (The discipler may need to have some of his own! Examples include fame, notoriety, praise, recognition, man or woman of the year awards, etc.)
- It is important to help the disciple learn that praise from men and accomplishments in the world are meaningless to God. What is important to God are things the world may never recognize, or even scoff at, such as becoming a nameless person in an unrecognized ministry.

16:16-17 – Third teaching: these truths are clearly stated in Scripture and will be fulfilled.

- Explain to the disciple the term “the Law and the Prophets.”
- This teaching by Jesus in verse 16 will definitely need some explanation. The discipler should try to keep it more simple than the commentary!
- Explain what “one stroke of a letter of the Law” is. The point is this: everything in the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) will be fulfilled!

16:18 – Fourth teaching is a teaching to the Pharisees about divorce, a type of greed.

- This verse may raise some anxious questions by a disciple that has been divorced, and especially if they are remarried. The discipler will need to explain the context in terms of how the Pharisees were using the law to justify “serial” adultery.
- Let the disciple know that there are many, varying interpretations of this verse, especially when compared to Matthew’s version. The disciple should be aware that the opinion of some churches is that divorce of any kind is never justified. And, worst of all, there are some churches that will always accept the husband’s story, but not the wife’s (regardless of the circumstances), and the wife may be asked to leave the church. The disciple, especially if a woman, should avoid such churches.
- Should the disciple have encountered a church that teaches remarried couples should divorce because they are living in adultery, help the disciple understand how illogical the notion is that divorcing one another will solve any problem or make one any the less sinful. (In fact, the sinful party here is the church that is teaching that notion.)

16:19-31 – Second parable: this is the parable about the rich man and Lazarus.

- Ask the disciple if the parable makes him or her feel uncomfortable. Ask why.
- Have the disciple retell the parable in his or her own words.
- Ensure that the disciple understands the meaning of key words, especially what “Abraham’s bosom” and “great chasm fixed” means.
- Ask the disciple to tie in the theme of money with this parable.
- The disciple should understand that the rich man is not being condemned because he is rich, but because he did not respond to the needs of those around him, and that he hoarded his riches for himself.
- Ask the disciple if he or she grasps the consequences of being destined to Hades versus the “Abraham’s bosom.”
- Ask the disciple if he or she sees themselves as financially or materially blessed. If the answer is “Yes,” ask them what action they plan on taking after reading this parable.
- Ask the disciple is they understand the meaning of verses 30 and 31, and how that related to the Pharisees. Ask the disciple how these verses relate to people today. If people were to witness Jesus raising Himself from the dead today, would they repent?
CHAPTER 17

Overview of Luke 17
In chapter 17, Jesus’ teaching abruptly changes from correction of the Pharisees to warnings and preparations for the disciples. The transition takes place during the teaching on “stumbling blocks.” Jesus will instruct His disciples to be on guard against them, and when it comes to how they are to treat one another, there is no substitute for forgiveness. As Jesus is going on His way, He encounters some lepers. He heals all ten of them, but only one returns to give thanks. The leper will receive a special word from Jesus regarding his acknowledgement of Jesus’ mercy and love. Soon after, the Pharisees will begin questioning Jesus about the kingdom of God. Jesus will give them a surprising answer, and then begin introducing the disciples to the concept of one Messiah, two comings. This will be followed by strict warnings on readiness and preparedness, and what disciples must always be watching for.

What to look for in Luke 17
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “How is God speaking to me personally through His word?”
2. Look for the kind of “stumbling blocks” that Jesus’ disciples can encounter, and how that relates to the church.
3. Determine how Jesus expects His disciples to respond to stumbling blocks that come from other disciples.
4. In this chapter, Jesus will heal ten lepers. Look for the irony in the response of those who are healed.
5. See if you can determine the relationship between being a leper and being ceremonially unclean?
6. Look for the critical answer Jesus gives the Pharisees regarding their question about the kingdom of God.
7. Look for the key theme in Jesus’ teaching about His “second coming.”

He said to His disciples, “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come, but woe to him through whom they come!

“it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Completing His admonishment of the Pharisees and scribes, Jesus now turns His attention to the disciples. Jesus begins by warning them against the teachings of the Pharisees, particularly as it pertains to the law. However, He is also preparing all of His disciples for the far future, both from persecutions and heresies to come, and from others within the future church itself. This latter principle is elaborated on by Matthew in chapter 18.

Jesus opens His teaching by warning His disciples about “stumbling blocks.” The Greek word is skandalon from which we get our English words “scandal” and “scandalous.” It is also translated “offenses,” “snares,” “traps,” “temptations to sin,” and “things that cause us to stumble” in various translations. Literally, the word refers to a rock in someone’s path that cannot be seen, thus causing one to stumble or suffer injury. In the context of the New Testament, it refers to anything that impedes a Christian’s spiritual growth or negatively impacts their faith. It may not always be temptation to sin, but could be. A stumbling block may also involve false teaching, gossip, unjust accusations, or non-Christian
attitudes or behavior. The apostle Paul warned Christians not to be stumbling blocks to the faith of other Christians (Rom.14:13; 1 Cor. 8:9). The cross became a stumbling block to Jews (1 Cor. 2:3).

The problem of becoming a stumbling block to the faith of others is that there is a price to pay spiritually. The “woe” directed toward those who cause others to stumble is no less a woe than those directed toward the Pharisees and scribes (Luke 11:42-52). Woe is synonymous with judgment. It implies discipline handed out by God Himself. The analogy Jesus gives is that of a millstone; that is, a large round stone used for grinding wheat or barley in a circular mill. The stone was heavy enough that a beast of burden was required to pull it. The picture is quite vivid: someone thrown into the ocean with a millstone around their neck is going to sink and drown. Such “descent” into deep, dark water with no hope of return is a picture of pure judgment with eternal consequences.

The “little ones” in verse 2 does not refer just to young children, but to any of God’s children.

What would cause someone to place a stumbling block before another? The answer is quite simple: a failure to show biblical love to that person. The person who demonstrates biblical love will not place a stumbling block before one of God’s children. He will not tempt him, he will not lead him astray regarding biblical truth, and he will not offend him or sin against him. He will do that which contributes toward another Christian’s spiritual growth, and not do anything that impedes his faith. To love is to want what is best for another person in the same manner as the Father in heaven wants what is best for His children. The mature Christian will recognize this and therefore never become a stumbling block to another child of God. However, as we learn in verses 3-4, impediments to spiritual growth will inevitably come our way, whether intentional or unintentional, whether at the hands of a false teacher, a sinner, or another well-meaning Christian. Verses 3-4 teach the believer what to do about that.

17:3-4 The phrase “Be on your guard!” means to stand ready for an attack. Why? Because “It is inevitable that stumbling blocks come.” The instruction is to be alert, be diligent, be observant and scan the horizon for attacks by the enemy. In this context, the enemy may be your friend, or more specifically, your “brother.” Once again, this instruction to the disciples will be greatly elaborated on by Matthew in which Jesus’ instruction includes a parable.

The statement “If your brother sins...” is an interesting grammatical construction in the Greek. It is a third-class condition of probable future, and could
The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

And the Lord said, “If you had faith like a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and be planted in the sea’; and it would obey you.

The apostles’ request to “Increase our faith!” is in response to the preceding verse. The rabbis taught that a person only had to forgive someone three times; that is, three strikes, you’re out! Once you had forgiven someone three times, you didn’t have to forgive them any more no matter how sorry or repentant they were. But Jesus is instructing His...
7 “Which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep, will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat’?
8 “But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat, and properly clothe yourself and serve me while I eat and drink; and afterward you may eat and drink’?
9 “He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he?
10 “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’ ”

disciples to be always forgiving which, to the apostles, seems like an impossible task. Therefore, the outburst to increase their ability to believe.

In verses 6-10, Jesus gently corrects the apostles’ request. He is saying, “It’s not a matter of faith…it’s a matter of obedience.” Faith, therefore, is not the issue. A mustard seed doesn’t request more faith to do what it does…it just does it because of what it is. The apostles are to do it (forgive) because of who they are. Just as the mustard seed has all the right DNA to grow into a great plant, the apostles have all the spiritual DNA they need to be constantly forgiving of others. Jesus then takes the analogy a step further. If they had that kind of faith, they could say to a tree, “Be uprooted and be planted in the sea, and it would obey you.” The key word here is “obey.” The mulberry tree would “obey” because of the one giving the order. The apostles should obey because of the One giving the order.

There is one other interesting twist to Jesus’ analogy. The mulberry tree referred to here is the sycamine, or black mulberry tree. Related to the fig tree, it is known for its delicious fruit. The “sea” almost always refers to the nations; that is, the Gentiles. By using this analogy, Jesus is instructing His disciples that their faith will bring spiritual fruit even to the Gentiles. It is far too early in the apostles’ development for them to comprehend the magnitude of Jesus’ teaching, but one day they will. The gospel of the cross is a gospel of forgiveness, God’s forgiveness of man’s sins, and Christians’ forgiveness of others.

One last note on verse 6. It goes without saying that there is no record that the apostles ever actually tried to uproot a tree and cast it into the sea. They clearly understood that Jesus’ statement was an illustration on obedience, not faith.

**Verses 7-10** takes the instruction on forgiveness a step further. Followers of Jesus Christ should not expect special consideration or thanks for simply doing what they are instructed to do. There is no special reward in heaven for being a forgiving person. The reward has already been received...God’s forgiveness. Therefore, followers of Jesus Christ forgive because they have been forgiven. Forgiving others does not make one more spiritual; forgiving others is what Christians do because of who they are.

So, follow the key words in these verses to see the relationship to forgiving others: “obey” (v. 6); “prepare” (imperative mood, a command; v. 8); “commanded” (vv. 9 & 10); “that which we ought to have done” (v. 10).

Lastly, note how the slaves refer to themselves—“unworthy.” The beauty of being forgiven is that it is not deserved. The Christian does not deserve, and has not earned the right, to be forgiven by God the Father.
11 While He was on the way to Jerusalem, He was passing between Samaria and Galilee.
12 As He entered a village, ten leprous men who stood at a distance met Him;
13 and they raised their voices, saying, “Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”
14 When He saw them, He said to them, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.”
And as they were going, they were cleansed.
15 Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying
God with a loud voice,
16 and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan.
17 Then Jesus answered and said, “Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine—where are they?
18 “Was no one found who returned to give glory to God, except this foreigner?”
19 And He said to him, “Stand up and go; your faith has made you well.”

for all the sins that have been committed against Him. Therefore, Christians should not expect special consideration by forgiving others, for they, too, may not deserve to be forgiven. The follower of Jesus Christ forgives anyway.

17:11-19 This is the third and last occasion when Luke states that Jesus is on a mission toward Jerusalem (see 9:51 and 13:22). His journey takes Him out of the region of Galilee and close to the region of Samaria. He and His disciples could very well have been in the Jordan Valley where there is plenty of water, although this is not certain. On His way, He enters an unnamed village where He encounters ten lepers. This incident, recorded by Luke in this particular place in the text, will point to the benefits of obedience.

There are ten lepers waiting for Jesus to arrive. By law, they were required to remain at a distance from others because they were ceremonially and physically unclean, a law described in Leviticus 14. Leprosy is, in fact, not actually that contagious, being transmitted through water droplets. By Jewish law, lepers were required to shout “Unclean!” whenever they were near people, as a way of warning others to stay away. Being unclean, they were prohibited from entering synagogues or the temple in Jerusalem. Lepers were cast out of communities and required to live in colonies outside the village, having no contact with anyone other than other lepers. In Jewish culture, leprosy was equated with sin and, based on Miriam’s experience in her murmuring against Moses (Num. 12:10), lepers were considered under God’s judgment. From a Jewish perspective, lepers were isolated from God Himself.

In biblical times, the pure form of leprosy (aka Hansen’s Disease) was the result of a specific bacterial infection (Mycobacterium leprae). Leprosy is a progressive disease that does not heal on its own. Lepers often lose fingers or toes because the bacteria affect peripheral nerves, thereby robbing the extremities of sensation, even pain. Therefore, a leper may not know that he is stepping on a burning coal or grabbing a hot cooking utensil. Interestingly enough, 95% of the world’s population has a natural immunity to leprosy.

But looking under a microscope for rod shaped, acid-fast bacterium was not an option in biblical times. Therefore, other skin diseases, such as psoriasis, neurofibromatosis, and granulomatosis were placed in the same category as leprosy. Some of these disease experienced spontaneous remission and therefore someone could show themselves to the priest and be declared clean.

Seeing Jesus, the lepers “raised their voices, saying, ‘Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!’”
theology of the moment cannot be overlooked. Those infected with “sin” call out to Jesus asking for mercy. This is a beautiful picture of salvation. It is through Christ alone that sins are forgiven and the soul is cleansed. However, there is a caveat to this scene. Jesus doesn’t immediately heal the lepers! Instead, He gives them a command. Jesus instructs the lepers to obey Levitical law and present themselves to the priests to be pronounced clean. By doing so, Jesus is validating Mosaic law and putting the lepers in a position where they can officially be recognized as acceptable for temple worship. “And as they were going, they were cleansed.” Note, too, that Luke interchanges the use of the words “cleansed” (v. 14) with “healed” (v. 15).

As pointed out above, notice that the cleansing did not occur until the lepers obeyed Jesus’ command. This scene fits in perfectly with the command to forgive in verses 5-11. The clear implication is that those who fail to forgive are no better off than a leper, and their sins remain unforgiven (cf. 11:4). This is not to say that in order for God to forgive us our sins, we must first forgive others. The lesson is that because our sins have been forgiven, God expects His children to forgive others as well, and the consequences for not doing so are as grave as leprosy.

The final irony of this event takes place in verses 15-19. All ten lepers realized they had been cleansed, but only one of them, a Samaritan, turned around, glorified God, fell on his face at the feet of Jesus, and gave Him thanks. The implication is that the other nine lepers were Jews, but the Samaritan had no Jewish priest to go to...he only had Jesus. This is a picture of Israel accepting God’s blessings but failing to fall “at His feet” and worship Jesus as the Messiah. Who did? The lowest of the lowest—a Samaritan leper.

Jesus’ response to the Samaritan leper focuses on his faith: “…your faith has made you well.” The word for “well” is sozo in the Greek, meaning “saved.” The tense of the verb “has made” is the perfect tense, meaning that the faith the leper demonstrated not only healed and cleansed him, but his faith carried over into the present and the future. In other words, whereas the other nine lepers had a healing that would last a lifetime, the Samaritan leper had a healing that would last an eternity…he was saved through faith.

The love lesson in this event is this: God offers His love to everyone. Many people are more than happy to receive His blessings, but only a few return His love by falling at the feet of Jesus. As the apostle John wrote, “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become
Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or, ‘There it is!’ For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.”

What appears to be an abrupt change of subject by Luke is actually a segue between the healing of the Samaritan leper and the kingdom of God. This subject change is prompted by a question that the Pharisees had asked Jesus: “When is the kingdom of God coming?” To understand their question and Jesus’ response, the reader must understand what the Pharisees were envisioning when they asked the question.

The Pharisees envisioned the kingdom of God to be the sovereign rule of God over the world, similar to the way King Solomon was ruler of the world. The kingdom of God would be the antithesis to the kingdom of Rome. The Messiah would literally be king, the monarch, and all the world, His subjects. Jews, of course, would exist closest to the king, and all Gentiles would be subject to the king as proselytes. The urgency of the Pharisees’ question stemmed from the Jews being under Roman domination. Therefore, foremost on the minds of the Pharisees was that the Messiah would come in power and glory, overthrow the Roman Empire, and set up Jerusalem as the capital of the world. The Jews, of course, would be the ruling class.

Jesus responds to the Pharisees’ question by declaring that “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.…” What is interesting about the Pharisees’ question and Jesus’ response is that none of the dialogue is directed toward the future. Except for “having been questioned,” all verbs are present tense. Here is what the Pharisees are actually asking: “If you are the Messiah, then where’s your kingdom? Show us a sign.” More simply, “Okay, if you’re the Messiah, when do you plan on setting up your kingdom?” Jesus’ response is also directed toward the present, and could be rendered, “The kingdom of God is coming right now! It is already here! But it is not coming with signs that you can observe. It is not a place you can walk to, nor is it a earthly object you can observe.” He then finishes His answer with, “Look! The kingdom of God is in your very midst!” meaning, “It’s happening right in front of you…can’t you see it?”

(Note: There are two ways to translate the Greek words “in your midst”: “in your midst” (NASB) or “within you” (NKJV). The more literal rendering is “within you,” meaning that the kingdom of God is not an external realm, but a spiritual state of being that exists within your heart. Many modern translators prefer “in your midst” with the idea that (1) Jesus Himself is the personification of the kingdom of God and is standing right in front of them, or (2) the kingdom of God is happening in your midst, through such things as miracles and the healing of lepers. The
22 And He said to the disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, and you will not see it.

23 “They will say to you, ‘Look there! Look here!’ Do not go away, and do not run after them.

24 “For just like the lightning, when it flashes out of one part of the sky, shines to the other part of the sky, so will the Son of Man be in His day.

The reader can enjoy either translation and interpretation, and still appreciate the irony of the question, which only points out the blindness of Israel’s spiritual leaders.)

Lastly, verse 21 sums up “the kingdom of God” as Luke wants the reader to understand it: the kingdom of God is not a realm… it is the new relationship to God through Christ that brings redemption and eternal life. Up to this verse, Luke has used the phrase “kingdom of God” 25 times, and he will use it another 17 times before the end of his gospel. His placement of the Pharisees’ question here points out the irony: Jesus just brought the kingdom of God into the life of a Samaritan leper; He healed him physically and saved him spiritually. That is the kingdom of God that the blind Pharisees just can’t grasp.

17:22-37 The remainder of chapter 17 directs the reader specifically toward the end times, and this is why the preceding verses can be confusing. Luke’s thought here is, “Since you asked….” Notice that Jesus’ description of the end times is not directed toward the Pharisees (it is not even certain they were present, based on the Greek phrasing of verse 20), but toward the disciples.

But here is the main point: the kingdom of God is not the same as the appearance of the Son of Man. They are not even two separate events, for the kingdom of God is what abides within the heart of a person, made possible only through Jesus Christ. The appearance of the Son of Man to set up His kingdom on earth is an event that will only happen sometime in the future, and only after another event—the crucifixion of the Messiah—has taken place.

The study of eschatological events (the end times) has very little to say about love, yet it has everything to do with love. The events described in verses 22-37 represent a transition between the time when “most people’s love will grow cold” (Matt. 24:12), and the time “They will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks…. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war” (Isa. 2:4).

Verse 22 serves as the introduction to the appearance of the Son of Man in glory, clearly delineated by use of the future tense: “The days will come….” Jesus now transitions from the true meaning of the kingdom of God to the future kingdom when He will indeed reign upon the earth. But the description is not something the disciples are excited to hear: the days before He establishes His kingdom will be horrible, as Matthew describes in vivid detail in chapters 24 and 25. Things will be so bad on the earth that disciples of Jesus will long for His physical presence, but they will not find Him.
25 “But first He must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.

26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man:

27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

28 “It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building;

29 but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all.

30 “It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.

31 “On that day, the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and

Deceived by false hope and baseless expectations, many false prophets and false teachers will mislead the masses. Jesus’ warning to His disciples is clear: don’t believe it for a minute. The coming of the Son of Man will not be a prolonged event that gives people time to prepare and seek Him out. His coming will be as swift and unpredictable as a flash of lighting, and when it strikes, it will be thunderous and it will light up the entire earth.

Before that happens, however, something else must take place: the Son of Man must suffer (verse 25). Here is the point that the Jewish nation has never understood: there will be one Messiah, but two “comings.” Based on the Father’s love, the second coming could only occur if the first coming has taken place. Whereas the second coming would fulfill Jewish hopes and expectations for a reigning Messiah, the first coming brings hope to the world. The Jews were and have been unable to grasp this because their primary concern is for themselves, not the world. But “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” at the first coming so that, through the Messiah, “the world might be saved.” Knowing the suffering the cross would bring, the first coming was the supreme act of love both by the Father and by the Son. The Jewish nation was unable to recognize this because they failed to love Gentiles and they failed to love sinners. And because of this—their failure to recognize God’s act of love when it was presented—they remain blinded with hardened hearts to this day (John 12:40; Rom 11:25).

Beginning in verse 26, Jesus now goes into detail about His second coming. That this section refers to the second coming is designated by the phrase “the days of the Son of Man,” which is essentially equivalent to “the day of the Lord” found many times in the Old Testament prophets.

The key thought in verses 26 through 30 is that everyday life will be going on as usual. The Second Coming will occur at a time that no one expects and no one is watching for it. The references to Noah and to Lot indicate that it will be a day of judgment upon a corrupt and sinful world (cf. Gen. 6:5-11; 18:20). Unlike the first coming that offered God’s love to the world, the second coming will only offer God’s wrath on all unrighteousness. Both good and bad people will be caught up in the judgment upon the world. The nature of the judgment will be utter destruction.

Verses 31-36 become problematic in interpretation. In terms of timing and who exactly Jesus is referring to, the interpretation depends on one’s view of the events surrounding the second coming. Some believe that the phrase “one will be taken” refers to those who will be judged and destroyed, while others take the view that the phrase refers to those who are “raptured.” Still others do not
likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back.
32 “Remember Lot’s wife.
33 “Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it.
34 “I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.
35 “There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken and the other will be left.
36 [“Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other will be left.”]

37 And answering they said to Him, “Where, Lord?” And He said to them, “Where the body is, there also the vultures will be gathered.”

believe this passage refers to the second coming at all, but to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70. This author prefers not to take a position but to rely simply upon the principle lesson of the passage: at all times, even on ordinary, non-eventful days, be ready. The lesson this passage is teaching is one of preparation and readiness. A good analogy is found in those who live in earthquake zones. In spite of all the efforts of scientists, no one can accurately predict when the next earthquake is coming. Therefore, those who live in earthquake country must always be prepared so that when the earth starts shaking, it comes as no great surprise or threat.

Yet, there is an important question for the disciple of Jesus Christ: just how does one prepare? The answer is found in verse 33. Those who are busy taking care of their own interests, wrapped up in their own pleasures, enamored by the things of the world and adopting its values, will not be prepared. This verse harkens right back to passages like Luke 12:21, 14:33, and 16:13. (The reader of this commentary is highly encouraged to refresh one’s memory by looking these passages up!) The point is this: at all times, the disciple of Jesus Christ must be focused on the kingdom of God, and the main way to do that is by showing biblical love to all others. To be ready means to “love your neighbor as yourself.” To be ready means to “love one another” just as Jesus has loved us. To be ready means to be always forgiving, always offering grace, always giving of oneself to help “the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind.” To be ready means to be “rich toward God” and not store up treasures for oneself. To be ready means to be involved in the ongoing work of the Spirit, in whatever form that might take, be it in the family, in the church, in missions, or in the workplace. To be ready means to walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit and to always be manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-23). The disciple who is ready is the disciple who loves with the same love as God who so loved the world (John 3:16). The disciple who is ready is the disciple who denies himself, takes up his cross daily and follows Jesus (Luke 9:23).

Finally, it is interesting to note in verse 37 that the disciples do not ask Jesus “When, Lord?” as the Pharisees had done in verse 20. The question, “Where, Lord?” refers back to Jesus’ answer in verse 21: “the kingdom of God is in your midst” (or, “within you”). This writer believes that Jesus’ answer in verse 37 has nothing to do with the end times. It has everything to do with Jesus and the disciples. This is easy to understand if we interpret the “vultures” to be the Pharisees. Vultures are scavengers and they prey, not only on dead things, but on helpless things. The sense here is that the Pharisees are gathering, looking for a weakness, looking for an opening to
devour Jesus and His followers. This interpretation fits whether one translates verse 21 as “in your midst” or “within you,” for either one refers to the kingdom of God that, in effect, the Pharisees are bent on destroying. Therefore, verse 37 could be interpreted to read, “Where the kingdom of God resides, the Pharisees are gathering to destroy.” And, because the kingdom of God is based on God’s love, those who are incapable of love will do anything they can to devour it.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In this chapter, Jesus provides teaching on “stumbling blocks.” What are stumbling blocks? From where do stumbling blocks come? How is the Christian to handle stumbling blocks that come from other Christians? How often are Christians supposed to forgive one another?

2. How does Jesus respond to the disciples’ request to “Increase our faith”? Why do you suppose the disciples made that request in the first place? Regarding the mulberry tree illustration, was there ever a time in Scripture when a disciple tried to send one into the sea? Therefore, what was the point of the illustration?

3. Recount the incident of the ten lepers. Why were lepers considered unclean, and how were they to behave around others? At what time in their encounter with Jesus did they experience healing? What does that tell you about obeying Jesus?

4. Of the lepers that were healed, how many of them turned back to give thanks to Jesus? What was unusual about the one who turned back, and why did he receive a special blessing? Is there a difference between healing and being saved?

5. In this chapter, Jesus gives a specific answer the Pharisees’ question about when to expect the kingdom of God to come. What was Jesus’ response, and how does His response apply to you? Can you define the kingdom of God? Is the kingdom of God in you, or in your midst?

6. What is the main theme in Jesus teachings about His second coming? Ask yourself, “Am I ready?”

7. Can you see the kingdom of God? (The answer is “Yes!”) How do you see it, and what does it look like? Give at least 3 illustrations that you’ve seen in other people, and then give three experiences in which you have manifested the kingdom of God to others.
Chapter 17 covers various teachings by Jesus while “on the way to Jerusalem” (v. 11). This is the third and final time Luke mentions Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Though there are many illustrations in chapter 17, there are no parables. The transition from the end of chapter 16 to the beginning of chapter 17 is based on relationships; that is, how we treat others. In chapter 16, relationships focused on how we treat the poor. In chapter 17, relationships focus on how we treat __________________________________.

17:1-2 – Jesus’ teaching on _____________________________________________________________

Lesson: Temptations to sin or be led astray are ____________________________________________

17:3-4 – Jesus’ teaching on ___________________________________________________________

Lesson: One of the ways we Christians are identified is by our willingness to________________

17:5-10 – Jesus’ teaching on __________________________________________________________

Lesson: One of the characteristics of Christians is that living by faith is____________________

17:11-19 – Jesus’ encounter with the ______________________________________________________

Lesson: There is a difference between being healed and being__________________________

17:20-21 – Jesus’ teaching on __________________________________________________________

Lesson: Don’t go looking for the kingdom of God in any other place than __________________

17:22-36 – Jesus’ teaching on __________________________________________________________

Lesson: The key to determining when the second coming will occur is ________________________

17:37 – Jesus’ warning about ___________________________________________________________

Lesson: Wherever the people of the kingdom gather, expect there will be____________________
Chapter 17 covers various teachings by Jesus while “on the way to Jerusalem” (v. 11). This is the third and final time Luke mentions Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem. Though there are many illustrations in chapter 17, there are no parables. The transition from the end of chapter 16 to the beginning of chapter 17 is based on relationships; that is, how we treat others. In chapter 16, relationships focused on how we treat the poor. In chapter 17, relationships focus on how we treat one another.

17:1-2 – Jesus’ teaching on **stumbling blocks**.

- The discipler will want to explain to the disciple the meaning of the words “stumbling blocks” and “millstones.”
- Explain that stumbling blocks can come in many forms: temptation to sin, false teachings, enticement by the world, et cetera, and can come from many directions, even other Christians.
- Ensure that the judgment in verse 1 (“woe”) is directed, not toward those who fall due to stumbling blocks, but those who create the stumbling blocks in whatever form they may take.

Lesson: Temptations to sin or be led astray are **inevitable**.

- Explain to the disciple that running into stumbling blocks is inevitable and unavoidable.
- Explain that stumbling blocks can even come through well-meaning or misled Christians.

17:3-4 – Jesus’ teaching on **forgiveness**.

- This is a very important section of Scripture for the disciple to understand and apply personally.
- It may be helpful for the discipler to have the disciple read the parallel passage in Matthew 18:21-35 to help see the spiritual consequences for failure to forgive one’s brother.
- It may also be helpful to read the other parallel passage in Matthew 18:15-20 regarding the word “rebuke.” The discipler will need to know that the word means something slightly different in Greek than it does in English.
- Ask the disciple is there is ever a time that one’s brother should not or cannot be offered forgiveness. (The answer is no.)
- Ensure that the disciple understands the meaning of the word “to forgive” in Greek.
- Ask the disciple if there is anyone in his or her life that needs to be forgiven. (Note: the discipler cannot appropriately teach this lesson unless he or she has also been continually offering forgiveness to others. This point may require some personal introspection.)

Lesson: One of the ways we Christians are identified is by our willingness to **forgive**.

- Ask the disciple why the act of forgiveness is so important to God.
- Ask the disciple why all Christians should be identified by their willingness to forgive.

17:5-10 – Jesus’ teaching on **faith**.

- Show the discipler how this next section of Jesus’ teaching relates back to the subject of forgiveness.
- Ensure that the disciple understands that the faith referred to here is actually a statement on obedience to offer forgiveness.
- Ask the discipler if there is anywhere in the NT where an apostle tried by faith to uproot a mulberry tree and throw it into the sea! The symbolism of the tree and the sea will need to be explained.
- Show how Jesus’ next teaching on thanking the slave relates, not to faith, but to obedience.
- Make sure that the discipler understands that it is not the quantity of the faith that is the subject here, but the quality of the obedience.
Lesson: One of the characteristics of Christians is that living by faith is what we do.

- See if the disciple can determine the relationship between the sweet fruit of the mulberry tree and the image of the sea. (I.e., the gospel going to the Gentiles.)
- See if the disciple can adequately describe what it means to live by faith, and how that relates to forgiveness.

17:11-19 – Jesus’ encounter with the ten lepers.

- The disciple may need to know that nature of the disease called leprosy and why it causes so much disfigurement.
- The disciple will certainly need to know how having leprosy affected a person’s spiritual life and access to the temple.
- See if the disciple can find the relationship between the fact that one of the lepers was a Samaritan (considered an unclean person) and being the only one who returned to Jesus to give thanks.

Lesson: There is a difference between being healed and being saved.

- Ask the disciple the difference between being “healed” and being “saved.”
- See if the disciple can find the love messages in the first 19 verses, especially the last story about the lepers. How does love play a role in the life of the true disciple, and how is that illustrated in the first 19 verses.

17:20-21 – Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God.

- The discipler will need to explain the Jewish leaders’ concept of the “kingdom of God,” as to what they were expecting, and what they were really asking Jesus.
- Let the disciple determine what the meaning of “in your midst” means. (Note: there are two views here.)

Lesson: Don’t go looking for the kingdom of God in any other place than in yourself.

- See if the disciple can come to the conclusion “where” the kingdom of God is. The disciple should walk away with the understanding that the kingdom of God today is within himself (herself).

17:22-36 – Jesus’ teaching on the (His) Second Coming.

- Make sure the disciple understands the concept of “one Messiah, two comings.” This can be readily seen in verse 25 with the words, “But first....”

Lesson: The key to determining when the second coming will occur is to live like it’s happening today.

- Make sure the disciple understands the main theme of verses 26-36 in terms of “readiness.”
- Ask the disciple how he or she is becoming “ready.” Make sure that the emphasis is on relationships.

17:37 – Jesus’ warning about false teachers.

- The disciple will want to discover the relationship between “vultures” and false teachers.

Lesson: Wherever the people of the kingdom gather, expect there will be predators (scavengers).

- The discipler will want to have at the ready some examples of false teachers and false prophets who are at work today. There are many; many examples that can be gleaned from Christian apologetic websites. The goal here is to ensure that the disciple does not fall prey to these “vultures.”
CHAPTER 18

Overview of Luke 18
In chapter 18, Luke continues his narrative of Jesus’ journey toward Jerusalem. He will use key words from the parables in the previous chapter to introduce new topics in this one. The first theme will be one on the importance of persistent prayer, and how prayer is related to faith and love. The proper attitude associated with genuine brokenness is presented in a parable comparing the prayers of a Pharisee to the prayer of a tax collector. The Pharisee will demonstrate great love for himself, but he will show no love for the tax collector. We see also in this chapter Jesus’ love of children and how He compares their simple faith to how His disciples ought to believe. Included in this chapter is Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler. The chapter concludes with Jesus traveling through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem and heals a man from his blindness. The blind man becomes a follower of Jesus.

What to look for in Luke 18
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “What is God teaching me about love?”
2. Look for Jesus’ teaching on prayer and how persistent prayer for others is a sign of love.
3. Observe the difference in the attitudes between the prayers of a Pharisee and those of a tax collector. One loves himself, the other loathes himself.
4. See how Jesus demonstrates love even for infants.
5. A rich young ruler will attempt to justify himself before Jesus in quest of eternal life. Look for how Jesus exposes the ruler’s love for things rather than for others.
6. Find the foreshadowing of the cross, and begin to grasp what love will be expressed there.
7. Look for the love that Jesus shows a blind man as He passes through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem.

1 Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart,

18:1 The reader would do well to remember that the chapter divisions are arbitrary and were not separated by Luke himself. Therefore, in interpreting verses 1-8, one must realize that the teaching on prayer and faith here is a continuation of the previous discussion on the second coming. This is made obvious in verse 8, “…when the Son of Man comes…” In this paragraph, Jesus is warning His followers that, even though His return is certain, there may be a lengthy delay. Remember, too, that at this point in their training, the disciples did not realize that there would one Messiah, two comings. They are unable to differentiate the two comings at this point and, like the Pharisees, are expecting Jesus to set up a kingdom on earth. That there will be a delay in Jesus’ return does not become evident to the apostles until well into the development of the early church.

Throughout his gospel, Luke refers many times to the importance of prayer. (Prayer, in various forms and contexts, appears 26 times in the gospel. The
Luke 18:2-8

2 saying, “In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man.

3 “There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’

4 “For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man,

5 yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.’ ”

6 And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said;

7 now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?

8 “I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”

The parable that follows is not unlike the theme of the parable found in 11:5-8. It is a theme of persistence in prayer. In this parable, the judge is not a righteous, God-fearing man. (Note the parallel with the unrighteous manager in the previous parable.) He is not one to have compassion on others, nor does he have any inclination to “dispense true justice” or show mercy on widows, something taught frequently in the OT (e.g., Zech. 7:9-10). In fact, not only is this judge not God-fearing, he is not one to respect others and value individual rights. He is a heartless judge, always handing down the harshest of penalties and never giving anyone the benefit of the doubt. Unfortunately, this poor widow gets this unrighteous judge assigned to her case. Widows, by their very circumstances, were vulnerable to con men and scam artists, and having no husband to protect them, could be easily taken advantage of.

The details of the widow’s case are not specified. We can infer, however, that she needs legal protection, such as a restraining order, or an order to cease-and-desist. It could be that someone is trying to take possession of what little she has, or it could be that someone is trying to “buy” her for the purpose of making her a servant because she is in debt. Whatever the situation is, it is dire enough that she is seeking legal protection from an opponent that is out to ruin her.

In terms of the interpretation of the parable and its application to the disciples, the lesson is pretty clear: as followers of Jesus Christ, there will be opposition from the world and from Satan. Followers of Jesus Christ may be as vulnerable as widows when it comes to the way the world will treat them, and always under attack from the primary opponent, the devil. The only way they are going to survive is to go to the judge and ask for protection and justice. For the disciples, this will mean being persistent in prayer.

In the parable, the judge grows weary of the widow’s persistence, and he finally gives in: “I will give her legal protection.” Jesus wants to ensure that the disciples get the point of the parable. Therefore, a paraphrase of verse 6 could read, “Did you get what the unrighteous judge did? He granted the widow her request simply because she was so persistent.” Jesus
then follows up the parable with a rhetorical question (i.e., a question that has an obvious answer): “Will not God bring about justice for His elect...?” In other words, if an unrighteous judge can show favor to the widow, how much more can the Righteous Judge show favor toward His elect who persist?

Special mention needs to be made of the word “elect” in verse 7. The Greek word is from ἐκλεκτός meaning “chosen one” and “chosen as a favorite one.” This is the second time Luke has used this term, but this is the only time Luke uses it in reference to followers of Jesus. Matthew uses the same term referring to Jesus’ followers, but note this: the only time Luke and Matthew use this term in regard to Christians is in the context of those going through great persecution in the end times (cf. Matt. 23). The other two times that Luke uses the term is in reference to Jesus Himself, where the Father calls Him “My Chosen One” during the transfiguration (9:35). So, here’s the point. When Jesus gave this parable—which seems on the surface to be a rather insignificant parable—Jesus, the Chosen One, is calling His followers “chosen ones.” Just as Jesus was chosen by the Father to be a light of truth and love to a lost world, so the followers of Jesus Christ are chosen by Him to be lights of truth and love to a lost world. And just as Jesus experienced suffering and persecution, so the followers of Jesus Christ are chosen by Him to experience suffering and persecution. Therefore, all followers of Jesus Christ are chosen ones; many may experience suffering, hardship, rejection, persecution and even death, but they have been chosen by Him to do so. The beauty—and good news—of being called chosen ones by Jesus is a matter of identity: the follower of Jesus Christ who suffers may identify with the One who suffered for us all. And that is why, in Acts 5, Peter and the apostles, having been imprisoned and flogged by the religious leaders, “...went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (5:41). And that is why those who suffer in the end times may rejoice, for “He will bring about justice for them quickly” (v. 8). What gets “the judge’s” attention? Those “...who cry to Him day and night...” In other words, the elect are constantly and persistently bringing before God a cry for justice on earth, not just for themselves, but for others. It is the force behind “Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt 6:10).

In terms of immediate application for today, believers must be mindful of the thousands of Christians throughout the world who are under extreme persecution. Christians are being falsely accused, imprisoned, even murdered in the name of another god. Churches, as well as their homes and
And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt:

“Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.’

But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, the sinner!’

“I tell you, this man went to his house businesses, are being torched and burned. So, what is the Christian who is not one of those being persecuted to do? He is to pray for those who are, that God’s justice will prevail and that the faith of those being persecuted will not fail. Praying for others who suffer persecution, even if their names are not known, is one of the most loving acts a comfortable Christian can do. Thus the critical question in verse 8: “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?” That is, will those who are being persecuted keep the faith, and will those who are not being persecuted be sacrificially praying by faith for those who are?

Finally, the relationship between prayer and faith needs to be mentioned. No person can be persistent in prayer without having faith. To pray at all takes faith—to pray persistently day in and day out takes enduring faith. But mindless repetition is not what is intended here. What is intended is weeping over those who are persecuted, groaning over the evils of the world, distress over the plight of other Christians, and mourning over those who are spiritually lost. Persistent faith requires persistent emotional involvement. Persistent prayer requires sacrifice of time and energy and emotional resources, all being acts of love for the brethren. Only those who have faith will pray persistently, and only those who pray persistently manifest great faith and love for others. So the lesson is clear: the true follower of Jesus Christ is a person of persistent prayer. Few things in the Christian life require more faith than persistent prayer.

The following parable is another “while we’re on the subject” moment for Luke. (Remember, Luke was never a companion of Jesus, and therefore everything he learned about Jesus’ teachings he learned from outside sources. Thus, many of Jesus’ parables recorded by Luke are not necessarily chronological. Thus, Luke’s tendency to order the parables according to theme.)

The relationship between this parable and the one preceding it is the tax collector’s phrase in verse 13: “God, be merciful to me…. Just as the widow sought mercy from the unrighteous judge, so, too, do sinners seek mercy from God, the Righteous Judge. But let’s look at the beginning of the parable.

In verse 9, it is a bit odd that Luke did not identify specifically the “people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous.” Of course, one may assume that Jesus was referring only to the Pharisees, but the religious leaders are almost always identified by Luke. Therefore, it is quite possible that Luke is referring also to religious Jews who are not Pharisees, who pride themselves on keeping the Sabbath and following the traditions of the elders.
justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

One must not get lulled into the assumption that the only bad guys opposing Jesus were Pharisees and scribes. There were probably many, many more upstanding Jews, some with great wealth, who were quite comfortable in their relationship with God by keeping the laws of Moses, and uncomfortable with the parables Jesus was teaching. The text does not actually say this, of course, so it is a matter of conjecture. Nevertheless, when it comes to application, the contrast between the spirit of the Pharisee and the spirit of the tax collector is timeless and excludes no one.

This parable focuses on how one perceives oneself in relation to God. It is a contrast of spiritual self-reflection, as well as a contrast in truthfulness versus self-deception. In the parable, the Pharisee is quite selective in how he compares himself to others. The tax collector compares himself only to God. The Pharisee selectively chooses sins he knows he has not committed, and selectively chooses good works he knows he can control. The tax collector makes no effort to justify himself, and does not attempt to excuse himself by any good deed he may have done. The Pharisee seeks to earn God’s favor by good works. The tax collector seeks to experience God’s mercy by confessing his faults. The Pharisee finds no need for repentance; the tax collector finds no reason to be acceptable to God. The Pharisee sees God only as the God of law and righteousness; the tax collector sees God only as the God of mercy. The Pharisee denies any sin to confess; the tax collector identifies with his personal sins. The Pharisee sees himself as a righteous man and views others “with contempt.” The tax collector sees himself as worthy of contempt, and views himself as a sinner. The Pharisee sees himself as righteous; the tax collector sees himself as unrighteous. The Pharisee sees no need to repent; the tax collector repents by beating his breast.

Therefore it is the tax collector, not the religious Pharisee, who understands what it means to repent. Jesus, therefore, has given a clear illustration of how repentance begins: it begins by acknowledging one’s spiritual depravity and turning to God for mercy. To truly repent, one must first acknowledge one’s need to repent; that is, coming face to face with personal sin. Note that the sins of the tax collector are never specified. They do not need to be: his sins, whatever they may have been, make him a sinner.

The problem with self-righteous people is that they, like this Pharisee, may agree theologically that they are sinners, but consider that their sins are not as bad as those who are real sinners; that is, sinners who are worse than they. They become selective in the sins they use to separate themselves from worse sinners. The problem is that by being selective about their sins—or social causes—they forget that they,
Luke 18

15 And they were bringing even their babies to Him so that He would touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they began rebuking them.

16 But Jesus called for them, saying, “Permit the children to come to Me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

17 “Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.”

too, are totally depraved from the perspective of a holy God. For example, a Christian may have never taken a drink or ever become drunk, but when it comes to eating, they are a glutton and have no discipline when it comes to food. A Christian may be a staunch defender of the unborn, but treat those who oppose their view with contempt instead of love. A Christian may be vehemently anti-gay, but forgets that time he or she was once in an unholy sexual relationship. A pastor may pride himself on building a megachurch from scratch, but completely ignore the plight of persecuted Christians throughout the world. A missionary may feel supremely good about what he or she has accomplished in a third world country, but ignore the fact that they have left behind a trail of broken relationships.

The key to putting this parable in perspective is the word “justified” in verse 14. “Justified” is the verb form of the noun “righteous” and could be translated “made righteous.” It is a word that will become a cornerstone in the writings of the apostle Paul, as he explains what it means to be “justified by faith” (e.g., Rom 5:1). The clear implication in this parable is that the Pharisee was not justified because he considered himself righteous when in fact he was not. The tax collector was justified because he admitted that he was a sinner, felt awful about that, and flung himself at the mercy of God. The Pharisee did not humble himself, but justified himself. The tax collector humbled himself, and therefore became justified. It is easy to see why the Pharisees did not care for the teachings of Jesus.

Jesus concludes the parable by repeating what he has already taught in 14:11: “Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.” This parable is a clear illustration of that teaching.

18:15-17 This is the second time Luke mentions children as a part of the crowd who followed Jesus and the disciples (cf. 9:47). Although men are mentioned the most, it is obvious that women and their children were also part of Jesus’ following. (See also 8:1-3.) The tense of the verb “were bringing” means that this was something that was going on throughout Jesus’ ministry. Whereas in 9:47, Jesus takes a young boy to stand beside Him, verse 15 specifically mentions “babies.” Mothers often brought their babies and small children to rabbis for the purpose of having the rabbi bless them. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to know what Jesus said when He touched the babies and blessed them, and how those who were blessed by Him turned out as adults? However, the emphasis of this paragraph is not on babies, but on the disciples—they began rebuking the women for bringing their babies to Jesus! Most likely
the disciples’ thinking was that Jesus didn’t have time for children; that He was too busy dealing with Pharisees and teaching the men following Him. Jesus’ response to the rebuke of the disciples is “Permit the children to come to Me….” Perhaps it’s not just children that Jesus is referring to, but anyone who desires to sit at His feet. We already know of this kind of response from Jesus when Mary sat at His feet at the home of Lazarus (10:38-42).

The lesson here is twofold. First, “do not hinder them.” In other words, do not become a “stumbling block” to those who want to know more about Jesus, and, for that matter, God Himself. This was exactly what the Pharisees had done: they had devised an elaborate system of laws and traditions that made it difficult for the average Jew to know God, much less to feel in a right relationship with Him. His justice and holiness were emphasized at the expense of His mercy, compassion, love and acceptance of those who repent and desire to worship Him. Church history is full of examples where those in authority have made it difficult for the common worshiper to find God, either by establishing an elaborate liturgical system that sets God off at a distance, or by enacting rules and regulations that emphasize sin rather than grace. “Permit the children to come to Me” is one of the greatest teachings there is on the grace, the love, and the acceptance God the Father has for those who truly seek Him.

The second lesson is found in the phrase, “the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” The kingdom of God belongs to those who seek out and desire to be with Jesus. Jesus is the pathway to God and His kingdom. It may seem like a simple and not very profound phrase, and is easily overlooked by the interpretation that the kingdom of God belongs to those who have child-like faith. While that interpretation is certainly true, the phrase has so much more significance.

The Pharisees taught that the kingdom of God was an actual kingdom, a sovereign realm that would be established on earth by the Messiah. Jesus has already informed the Pharisees and His disciples that the kingdom of God is not an earthly kingdom at all, but a new relationship with God through Jesus that brings redemption and eternal life. The kingdom of God means peace by being in a right relationship with God. It means being in a loving relationship with the Father because He loves His children to come to Him. It means experiencing such divine love that all fear of judgment and condemnation are gone. The kingdom of God, therefore, does not have to be earned; it simply has to be received through faith…yes, simple, innocent, shameless child-like faith. The kingdom of God “belongs to such as these” because the kingdom of God is not a place, it is a
18 A ruler questioned Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?”

19 And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

20 “You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor your father and mother.’ ”

21 And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

22 When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

18:18-27 Here we have the tragic story—not a parable—of what is referred to as “the rich young ruler.” This incident was important enough in the minds of the disciples to be included in the other synoptic gospels of Matthew and Mark (Matt 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-27). The question asked by the young ruler is identical to the one asked by the scribe in 10:25. In that incident, based on the scribe’s response, the answer focused on the Great Commandment. This request focuses on the Ten Commandments themselves. Just like the question posed by the scribe, it is a question based on works: “What must I do to earn now what I believe is mine to have?” He does not ask, “What must I believe?” or “Who must I be?” To the ruler’s credit, inheriting eternal life is something that is his responsibility, not another’s. Also, one mustn’t read too much into the ruler’s address as “Teacher.” The fact that he does not refer to Jesus as “Master” or “Lord” does not indicate that he is unwilling to accept Jesus’ uniqueness; “Teacher” would be a very acceptable relationship: a relationship with God through the love of Jesus Himself. The children that came to Jesus knew little about the established religious way, but they knew everything about a relationship that showed unconditional love and acceptance.

The last verse, verse 17, is far more telling than the casual reader of Scripture can comprehend: the kingdom of God is all about relationships; the relationship with God, the relationship with Jesus Christ, and relationships between one another. The kingdom of God means being held in Jesus’ loving arms in full acceptance, full comfort, and full compassion for His children. Could there possibly be anything more satisfying and peaceful? But the problem is this: those who don’t understand that the kingdom of God is a relationship and not just a system of truth and Scripture knowledge, will never enter it. Biblical truth always points to biblical love, but biblical truth alone does not a relationship make. Truth without love is no truth at all, no matter how many Bible verses are quoted. Truth without love makes for Pharisees. Truth with love makes for the kingdom of God. The children that came to Jesus came without fear, without limitations, without regard for what others might think. They came to Jesus because they knew love when they saw it, and mothers brought their children to Jesus because, unlike the Pharisees, there were no conditions of the law attached. It’s those who come to Jesus in a child-like manner that can fully grasp, fully appreciate, and fully accept that God is love, and God’s greatest expression of His love is found in the person of Jesus Christ.
23 But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich. 24 And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

address to a rabbi. Instead, in order to set Jesus apart from other rabbis and perhaps earn His attention, the ruler addresses Jesus as “Good Teacher.” Addressing Him as “Good Teacher” is picked up on by Jesus Himself: “No one is good except God alone.” Some sources state that rabbis were never addressed as “good” in this manner, as the Greek word for “good” here means absolute goodness, an attribute that could only be ascribed to God Himself. The sense of Jesus’ response is this: “If no one is absolutely good but God, then are you assuming I’m God?” The motive behind the ruler’s addressing Jesus as “good” is only a matter of conjecture, however.

This ruler is probably the ruler of a synagogue. As has been stated previously in this commentary, wealth was a sign of God’s favor. The Talmud taught that the more righteous and “good” you were, the more God blessed you with wealth. The more wealth you had, the more alms you could give to the poor. The more alms you gave, the more inclined you were to “inherit” eternal life; that is, transitioning into “Abraham’s bosom” after death. Jesus will utterly destroy the teaching that giving alms out of one’s wealth is a path to eternal life.

In Luke’s account, five of the six commandments from the “second tablet” are listed. The Ten Commandments were arbitrarily divided by the scribes into two tablets. The first tablet contained the first four commandments, and focused on one’s relationship with God. The second tablet contained the other six commandments and focused on relationship with others; that is, how God’s people were to treat one another. In this account, the tenth commandment regarding covetousness is omitted by Jesus. Here again, why Jesus didn’t include it is purely a matter of conjecture, but one possibility is that the 10th commandment would have been the only commandment the rich young ruler could not have lived up to. One rarely accumulates wealth without also harboring greed and taking advantage of others. The other question is why Jesus focused on the second tablet. This writer believes that Jesus focused on the second tablet because it opens the door to pointing out the ruler’s primary flaw: a failure to love others. More about that as we continue.

The rich young ruler’s response in verse 21 is a bit shocking, but probably not untrue if taken at face value and according to the way the Jewish leaders taught. He may never have murdered anyone, or committed adultery, or done any of these things the way they are described by a strict, legalistic interpretation of Mosaic law. What Jesus is going to eventually point out is that murder involves more than just killing someone; it may involve hating. Murder can include, for example, the murder of a person’s reputation, or even a wish to do harm.
Adultery can be more than sleeping with another man’s wife: even looking at a woman in a lustful manner can be adultery because it is a sign of what is going on in a man’s heart. The Pharisees failed to recognize the issue of the heart, thinking that only committing the act was sin. They were unable to see that the nature of sin is such that acts are only expressions of the heart, that the very nature of mankind is polluted with sin. By limiting the definition of sin to specific acts, they devised a workaround to the corruption of the heart. Ironically, the teachers of the Old Testament scriptures failed to apply to themselves the lesson from Noah: “The wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). It’s at the level of the heart, not the law, that Jesus exposes the weakness of the rich young ruler.

It should be noted that Mark’s account includes the observation that Jesus “felt a love” for the young ruler, for, on a superficial level, there seemed to be an honest effort on the ruler’s part to live righteously by God’s laws rather than man’s power. Perhaps there was on the ruler’s part a desire to be good and to stay in a right relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. So it must not be assumed that the ruler is not forthright in his question: he really wants to do what is right to inherit eternal life.

In verse 22, however, Jesus exposes a critical flaw in the ruler’s heart and identifies the one thing the ruler was unable to see for himself—he loved financial security and wealth more than he loved people. There are two aspects of Jesus’ command that require attention. First, Jesus instructs the ruler to part with his possessions. That would be a difficult instruction for the ruler because, according to his theology, his wealth was a sign of God’s favor toward him. He would be giving away the very thing God had granted him. In the ruler’s belief system, he had gained great wealth because he had, in his mind, kept all the commandments. So, he deserved what God had given him...he had earned God’s favor. But the second part of the command is even more telling—he was to dismantle his wealth and distribute it to the poor. The irony of this conundrum cannot be overlooked by the Western mind: according to Jewish theology, the poor were poor because God made them poor, and they were poor because they had not kept all the commandments as the ruler had. The poor were poor because they deserved to be poor. The poor were poor because they had sinned and fallen out of favor with God. Why, then, should the rich young ruler give that which he deserved to those who deserved nothing? Why should he who had not sinned give all that he had to those
25 “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 They who heard it said, “Then who can be saved?”

27 But He said, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God.”

who had sinned?

So, there are two issues the rich young ruler is struggling with. First, he is instructed by the One he called “Good” to give up everything he owns and follow those who own nothing. Second, he is instructed to give everything he owns to those whom he believes don’t deserve it. To follow those who owned nothing would, ironically, put him in the category of the poor! It is too much for the conflicted young ruler to accept, and, in verse 23, “when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.”

One might imagine a dramatic pause between verses 23 and 24. The young ruler is standing there, looking at Jesus, internally conflicted, and trying to come up with a solution in which he can have it both ways: maintain his wealth and follow Jesus. Note in verse 24 that Jesus addressed him, not the disciples: “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!” It is a terrible moment of indecision on the part of the young ruler. Jesus is clearly pointing out to the ruler what he already knows: he loves his financial security, his luxuries and conveniences, his social status and his prestige, and his erroneous belief system more than he loves others, especially the poor, and more than he loves the opportunity to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Once again, Jesus’ words are being fleshed out: “You cannot serve God and wealth” (16:13). Matthew adds that when he heard Jesus’ words in verse 22, “he went away grieving….” No doubt, Jesus grieved as well.

Verses 25-27 are addressed directly to the disciples. Some have theorized that Jesus wasn’t referring specifically to a sewing needle, but to a narrow gate leading into Jerusalem. This point has never been proven and is probably not the case. It was not uncommon for Jewish teachers to use hyperbole to make a point, so the disciples would have had no difficulty understanding Jesus’ analogy. Regardless, the main point must not be overlooked: it is very difficult, if not impossible, for the rich to “enter the kingdom of God.” (Not impossible, but difficult.) Just as this was a difficult concept for Jews to grasp, their belief system being what it was, it is just as difficult a concept for the Western mind to grasp. Whereas the Jews considered the rich to be favored by God, the Western mind considers riches to be the result of capitalism, free enterprise and hard work. Regardless of where one’s rationalism comes from, the result is the same: riches, wealth and possessions are an enormous obstacle to discovering the joys of the kingdom of God. Why? Because there is greater joy and spiritual satisfaction in giving to those in need than there is to keeping wealth and possessions.

Peter, speaking for all the disciples, seeks validation for his sacrifices by following Jesus. Peter, James and John had a successful fishing business, and they left that financial security to become...
you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God,
30 who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.”

31 Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.
32 “For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon,
33 and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.”
34 But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things that were said.

18:31-34 Having completed His journey through Samaria and entering the Jordan Valley, Jesus and the disciples arrive at the foot of the hills leading up to Jerusalem. Next stop: Jericho. The phrase “up to Jerusalem” means literally “up.” They are beginning their journey to Jerusalem in the city of Jericho, which sat about 800 feet below sea level. They will take the 20 mile winding road to Jerusalem which is roughly 3000 feet above sea level, nearly a 4000 foot elevation gain. Just before entering Jericho, where no doubt the crowds were awaiting His arrival, Jesus pulls the twelve aside in order to prepare them for what is going to happen to Him in Jerusalem. Verse 34 states that the twelve did not “comprehend” what Jesus was telling them because it “was hidden” from them. The word “hidden” is krypto meaning “to keep safe, to keep secret.” The English word “cryptography” comes from this word. It is the verb tense, however, that is interesting. The verb is perfect passive which means that someone from an outside source intentionally and continually kept the meaning of Jesus’ words hidden from their understanding. This was no doubt the work of the Holy Spirit. But why would He keep these words hidden? The most likely reason is that the disciples would have tried to prevent the crucifixion from happening, for in their minds, Jesus was about to set up His earthly kingdom and needed to be alive and well to do so.
There is a powerful lesson in this act of keeping the twelve from understanding God’s plan. God often hides His plans from His children because we will inevitably attempt to change it, especially if we don’t like His plan, and even more so if His plans involve our sacrifice and suffering. The flesh attempts to avoid sacrifice; God expects His children to sacrifice. The mindset of the world teaches us to avoid suffering; God calls His children to suffer for His name’s sake. Satan will place comfort and pleasures in our path to keep us from fulfilling God’s plan for our lives; God instructs His children to be on guard for Satan’s schemes to carry out God’s plan of salvation for a lost world. Even in the evangelical culture today, suffering and sacrifice have become dirty words; in the kingdom of God, the foundation of the cross is based on suffering and sacrifice.

Jesus has been preparing the disciples for His suffering and His rejection by the elders throughout His journey to Jerusalem (cf. 9:22-27, 44). Here, He warns them again, and goes into even more detail. What will happen to Him has been vividly described in the Old Testament (e.g., Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Furthermore, not only will He be rejected by the elders, but He will be “handed over to the Gentiles,” a new detail foretelling His being turned over to Pilate and the Romans for crucifixion. As foretold by the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53 seven hundred years earlier, He will be “mocked…mistreated…spit upon…and scourged,” abuses specific to Roman crucifixion. Then He will be killed. Of course, not only did the twelve want to hear none of that, but they had not begun to understand God’s plan of one Messiah, two comings. The twelve will not understand any of this until Jesus clearly opens their minds to the Scriptures after the resurrection (Luke 24:44-47).

In observing all the details of Jesus’ words to His disciples concerning His impending rejection and suffering, one must not overlook the incredible love behind the words. Imagine Jesus’ thoughts as He begins leading the disciples up the road to Jerusalem. The disciples are anticipating a great welcoming party and joyous celebration, for the King is coming; Jesus is anticipating the cross. The disciples are expecting applause and recognition for having been with the Messiah from the beginning; Jesus is expecting the pain and agony of Roman scourging. The disciples are planning to take their place next to the newly enthroned King of Jerusalem; Jesus is planning on taking His place on a wooden cross by having rusty nails driven through His hands and feet. The apostle John would perhaps reflect on Jesus’ love and sacrifice the most: “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13).
35 As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging.
36 Now hearing a crowd going by, he began to inquire what this was.
37 They told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by.
38 And he called out, saying, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
39 Those who led the way were sternly telling him to be quiet; but he kept crying out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”
40 And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him,
41 “What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!”
42 And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.”
43 Immediately he regained his sight and began following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.

Just as the twelve did not want to face the reality that suffering and sacrifice are part and parcel to following Jesus, so, too, do Christians today improvise every excuse to avoid suffering and sacrifice for the One who gave Himself in love for our eternal blessings. But suffering and sacrifice have a reward: “…the third day He will rise again.” The reward for those who are willing to suffer and sacrifice for Jesus’ sake is the promise of entering into His reward—the hope of eternal life. These promises were too much for the disciples to grasp when they first heard the words, but there is no excuse for today’s Christian who receives the benefit of the whole story—the death and the resurrection. In receiving the reward of eternal life, the cross itself can become a stumbling block to those who deny its necessity. To receive eternal life and the blessings that follow, all roads lead to the cross of Jesus Christ where sins are confessed and repentance becomes an act of worship. To acknowledge sins and repent of them involves suffering the truth about oneself. To live on behalf of the One was saved us from our sins involves constant sacrifice. There is no work-around; only the cross leads to eternal life.

18:35-43 We know from Mark’s gospel that the blind man’s name is Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46). That his name is remembered suggests that Bartimaeus became a lifelong disciple of Jesus even after the resurrection and into the early days of the church. Beggars often sat along the roadside leading to Jerusalem, as that was a major thoroughfare for pilgrims on their way to Jewish feasts in Jerusalem. What is unique about this incident is that Bartimaeus addresses Jesus of Nazareth as “Son of David.” Based on the Messianic passage in Isaiah 11:1-5, this is a clear acknowledgement that Bartimaeus, most likely due to the reports he has heard, believes that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah. Bartimaeus is not unlike Simeon who was “looking for the consolation of Israel” in Luke 2:25-32. Incidentally, this is the first and only time Luke records Jesus being addressed as the “Son of David,” although he records the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary: “…the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David…” (Luke 1:32).

There is a great irony in Bartimaeus’s acknowledging Jesus as the Messiah. A man who is blind can “see” that Jesus is the Messiah, while those who can see, the Pharisees, are blind to the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. It is a contrast of physical sight versus spiritual sight. The beggar sees; those with great wealth and religious knowledge cannot see. Physical blindness is often used by the New Testament writers as a metaphor for spiritual blindness.
And just like the disciples who were rebuking mothers from bringing their children to be blessed by Jesus, so, too, do the leaders of the procession attempt to keep Bartimaeus at bay. But, just as the widow in the parable at the beginning of the chapter persistently pursued the judge, Bartimaeus persistently pursues Jesus of Nazareth.

And here lies another wonderful lesson on prayer: in the midst of the noise and confusion, Jesus listens. Jesus always hears those who acknowledge Him as Lord and cry out for mercy, no matter who they are, no matter where they are, no matter what condition they are in.

Note, too, that Jesus asks Bartimaeus, “What do you want Me to do for you?” Bartimaeus could have asked for a lot of things. He could have asked for enough money so that he would no longer have to beg. That is, he could have asked for material things or for anything that could improve his material well being. Instead, he asks, “Lord, I want to regain my sight.” Bartimaeus wants his physical sight to match his spiritual sight. He wants to see Jesus. Little does he realize that he already “sees” more than anyone in the crowd around him, perhaps even the disciples who have never called Jesus “Son of David.”

Out of His great love for Bartimaeus, Jesus speaks: “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” That is, your faith in Jesus and who He is has saved him. Once again we hear the words Jesus spoke to the Samaritan leper who was healed, “Your faith has made you well” (17:19), and to the woman who anointed His feet with perfume (7:50).

It is acknowledging Jesus for who He is and for His act of mercy on the cross that saves people from their sins. It is faith in Him—trusting in, relying upon, adhering to—that saves us from our sins. Whereas most people already have physical sight, the cry for mercy acknowledges our need for spiritual sight. Amidst the crowd and the noise and confusion of the day, Jesus always hears, spiritual sight is given, our souls are healed, and we are saved.

The response of Bartimaeus is the prototype response for all those who receive their spiritual sight: he began following Him on the road to Jerusalem, and glorifying God. Such a change in one’s life is contagious: “…when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.” So, too, will it be when someone begins following Jesus: praise to God will come forth. And if praise to God does not come from other people, there will be “joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. This chapter begins with teachings on prayer. There are two parables. The first one involves a widow and an unrighteous judge. Can you identify two principles from this parable?

2. The second parable on prayer involves a Pharisee and a tax collector. Identify 3 things each person says that are characteristic of how one should and how one should not come to God in prayer. Having reread these parables, how do the lessons learned here affect your attitude to prayer? Do you spend time with God in prayer? In not, why not? If so, what should your initial thoughts be when you come before God’s throne of grace?

3. Reflect on Jesus’ statement, “Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it at all.” Is Jesus referring to one’s acceptance into heaven, or is Jesus referring to something else? What does it mean to come to Jesus like a child? Have you ever not wanted someone to come to Jesus?

4. Review the real-time story of the rich young ruler. What lessons did you learn from his experience? If you stop to realize that most Americans fit into the upper 5th percentile of the world’s population in terms of income and wealth, does it cause you to think of what may be holding you back from becoming completely involved in the work of the kingdom of God? Why does Jesus conclude the encounter with the phrase, “The things that are impossible with people are possible with God”?

5. In verse 29, Jesus makes the statement, “There is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God who will not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.” Does this mean that all Christians are to leave loved ones for the sake of the kingdom? If not, why? Do missionaries tend to leave loved ones behind? How about those who are raised in Muslim or Jewish homes and convert to Christianity?

6. Toward the end of the chapter, Jesus informs the disciples that when He arrives in Jerusalem, He will be turned over to the Gentiles and killed. Did the disciples understand Jesus’ words? Do you understand Jesus’ words, and how do they relate to your willingness to suffer and sacrifice for the same of the kingdom?

7. When entering Jericho, Jesus is greeted by a blind man. Why is this incident so ironic? (That is, concerning the fact that the man was physically blind.) In regard to the teachings on prayer in the beginning of the chapter, how do you plan to improve your prayer life concerning those who are spiritually blind?
The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 18

18:1-8 – The parable of the ______________________________________________________
   Point: The key words are ____________________________________________________

18:9-14 – The parable of the ______________________________________________________
   Point: God hears the prayers of the _____________________________________________

18:15-17 – Jesus blesses _________________________________________________________
   Point: It’s not just a matter of having child-like faith; it’s a matter of ____________

18:18-27 – Jesus’ encounter with the _____________________________________________
   Point: This is one of the great examples where obeying truth does not equate to ______

18:28-30 – Jesus affirms Peter’s observation that the disciples have left all to __________
   Point: This statement by Jesus refers (e.g.) to missionaries and ______________________

18:31-34 – Jesus warns the disciples what will happen to Him in Jerusalem: ____________
   Point: Even a sacrificial follower of Jesus can be blinded by a _______________________

18:35-43 – In Jericho, Jesus heals a man who is _____________________________________
   Point: The man was physically blind but could see _________________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 18

18:1-8 – The parable of the **unrighteous judge** (or persistent widow)

- Ensure that the disciple remembers that Luke did not write his gospel with chapter and verse headings. Therefore, there is no real break between the subjects of chapter 17 and 18.
- It is important that the disciple see the relationship between this parable and the main theme of the previous chapter concerning the second coming.
- Does the disciple see the relationship between the parables of the unrighteous steward and the unrighteous judge?
- Can the disciple describe the main theme of the parable (persistence in prayer)?
- The disciple will certainly want to understand the plight of widows in biblical times.

Point: The key words are *continually coming*

- Can the disciple fill in the blank before being given the answer?
- See if the disciple can figure out what the lesson here is. Start with the phrase, “If the unrighteous judge finally grants the widow’s request, how much more can...?”
- Ask the disciple to draw some personal applications concerning this parable.
- Ask the disciple what he or she plans on doing as a result of learning about his parable.

18:9-14 – The parable of the **Pharisee and the tax collector**

- The disciple will want to be reminded that wealth to a Jew’s time meant having God’s favor, and being poor meant being the recipient of God’s judgment.
- Have the disciple go through the parable and draw comparisons between the Pharisee’s prayer and the tax collector’s. Ask what is wrong with the Pharisee’s portrayal of himself.
- Have the disciple reflect on the whole concept of repentance, and how important that is in one’s relationship with God.

Point: God hears the prayers of the **repentant sinner**

- See if the disciple can fill in the blank before giving the answer.
- Explain the word “justified” and its relationship to the word “righteous.”
- Ask the disciple which category he or she tends to fit themselves in, Pharisee or sinner.

18:15-17 – Jesus blesses **the children**

- Ask the disciple why he or she thinks Jesus’ disciples were “rebuking” children to come to Him.
- Ask the disciple what is the relationship between the faith of a child and the kind of faith that God wants His children to have.
- See if the disciple can draw the relationship between the children and Jesus’ teaching on the kingdom of God. It might help for the disciple to understand the Jewish prevailing beliefs concerning the kingdom of God. What does the disciple believe the kingdom of God is?

Point: It’s not just a matter of having child-like faith; it’s a matter of **relationship**

- What is the relationship between child-like faith and relationships?
- What does biblical truth always point to? How is it that a person, even a pastor or elder or deacon, can have lots of faith (truth) and not have love?
- Ask the disciple if he or she can draw the relationship between Jesus’ teaching on prayer (above parable) and having child-like faith?
18:18-27 – Jesus’ encounter with the rich young ruler

- In teaching this parable, the discipler will want to focus on the fact that the rich young ruler thinks that earning eternal life depends on keeping the Ten Commandments. (There may need to be some explanation of the “two tablets” here.) Note that Jesus places the emphasis on the second of the two tablets; that is, on how one treats others.
- See if the disciple can describe ways many Christians today believe they are going to become a disciple of Jesus. Is it enough just to “accept Jesus” by raising one’s hand or going forward during an invitation at the end of a sermon?
- Ask the disciple why Jesus omitted the tenth commandment regarding coveting.
- Ask the disciple if he or she thinks Jesus was asking too much of the rich young ruler?
- It may be helpful to remind the disciple of the significance of the key words “rich” and “poor” found in the parable. See if the disciple can place himself in the shoes of the ruler in regards to just giving it all to poor people?
- Can the disciple determine what was most valuable to the ruler, and what ruled his heart? See if the disciple can remember the teaching of Luke 16:13.

Point: This is one of the great examples where obeying truth does not equate to love for others

- See if the disciple can fill in the blank on their own.
- Does the disciple see the difference between having truth and manifesting that truth by loving others?
- Ask the disciple if he or she can remember any “bad” Christians. What raised the red flags? Was it what they said about others, or how they acted toward others?
- Now see if the disciple can explain Jesus’ teaching about the eye of the needle.

18:28-30 – Jesus affirms Peter’s observation that the disciples have left all to follow Him

- Can the disciple list the benefits of leaving behind family or financial security for the sake of following Jesus? Who might fit into this category?
- Here again, there may be a difference between being a disciple of Jesus and being a follower.

Point: This statement by Jesus refers (e.g.) to missionaries and persecuted Christians

- If the disciple hasn’t been exposed to the plight of persecuted Christians, this is a good place to do it.

18:31-34 – Jesus warns the disciples what will happen to Him in Jerusalem: Roman crucifixion

- Today’s Bible readers have the benefit of hindsight; that is, we know what happened to Jesus when He went to Jerusalem. Can the disciple recall what Jesus’ disciples believed would happen?
- Why does Luke, inspired by the Holy Spirit, say that “the meaning of this statement was hidden from them”? (v. 34). Why would God hide anything from His children?

Point: Even a sacrificial follower of Jesus can be blinded by a unrealistic expectations

- Ask the disciple what are his or her expectations about becoming a follower of Jesus Christ.

18:35-43 – In Jericho, Jesus heals a man who is physically blind

- Determine if the disciple can see the irony of Bartimaeus, who is physically blind, knowing that Jesus is the “Son of David.”
- See if the disciple can explain the difference between being physically blind and being spiritually blind?

Point: The man was physically blind but could see spiritually

- What makes the change in a person who is spiritual blind, but comes to the point that their spiritual eyesight is clear regarding Jesus?
- What was Bartimaeus’s response to Jesus making him physically able to see?
CHAPTER 19

Overview of Luke 19
In chapter 19, Jesus and His disciples begin the final portion of their journey to Jerusalem. It will be Jesus’ last ascent from Jericho up the steep, winding road into the hills of Judea. Before leaving Jericho, a large metropolis at that time, Jesus stops over at the house of a chief tax collector named Zaccheus. As a result of Zaccheus’s response to Jesus, Jesus will pronounce him a true son of Abraham. While on the subject of money, Jesus will then give a parable about the “fruit that leads to repentance” and the wise use of the gifts God gives to His people. The latter part of the chapter focuses on Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, celebrated today as Palm Sunday. Luke will clearly state that the crowds celebrating His arrival are expecting the Messiah to be a conquering king. As a result, Jesus will have another run-in with the Pharisees. Jesus will stop on the way and weep over the people of Jerusalem, and give them a disturbing prophecy concerning what awaits them in the not-so-far future. He will then enter the temple and drive out the moneychangers.

What to look for in Luke 19
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “What is God teaching me about love?”
2. You will discover that Jesus meets a chief tax collector and, unlike the people who hate and reject him, Jesus’ love for him will “bear fruits in keeping with repentance.”
3. Look for Jesus’ teaching on the responsible use of spiritual resources that will be given to the church after His ascension.
4. When Jesus begins His “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem, ask whether or not the people’s celebration was love for Him and His mission, or love for themselves.
5. Ask why the Pharisees told Jesus to rebuke His disciples for the use of palm branches, and what Jesus’ response was.
6. On the outskirts of Jerusalem, Jesus will pause and weep over the city. What do you believe was the cause of Jesus’ weeping, and what motivated Him to weep so strongly?
7. In the temple, Jesus will drive out the moneychangers. Why do you believe Jesus was so angry with them?

1 He entered Jericho and was passing through.

19:1 Jericho was no small town at this time in history. The old Jericho with the crumbled walls was history. Herod the Great had built up the city into a metropolis, complete with aqueducts, a fortress, a hippodrome and a winter palace. Jesus enters the thriving city of Jericho with Bartimaeus as part of the crowd. His life has changed and he is now following Jesus and glorying God with the rest of the crowd. We can assume by the next few verses that the crowd following Jesus is quite large, and word of mouth has verified His wonderful healings and teachings. The man He is about to encounter will be a textbook case for what John the Baptist called “fruits in keeping with repentance” (3:8) Unlike the rich young ruler, this encounter will show that it is possible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (18:24-27).
2 And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich.

3 Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature.

4 So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree in order to see Him, for He was about to pass through that way.

5 When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house.”

6 And he hurried and came down and received Him gladly.

7 When they saw it, they all began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.”

8 Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.”

9 And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham.

10 “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

19:2-10 This is the true story about a man named Zaccheus. Zaccheus is no ordinary tax collector—he was the “chief” tax collector in charge of overseeing all the other tax collectors in the surrounding district. Jericho had become a center for tax assessment, especially for the East-West trade routes. Zaccheus’s employment by the Romans as a chief tax collector has not only made him a rich man, but a pariah. Having become rich at the expense of other Jews made him all the more despised by the people. The name “Zaccheus” is the Greek form of the Hebrew name that means “pure.” Being a chief tax collector, small of stature, and having the name “pure,” he may have been the brunt of many mean jokes.

If anything good can be said about Zaccheus before he encounters Jesus, he is shrewd and knows how to plan ahead. Anticipating that he would not be able to see Jesus because of the crush, he runs ahead and climbs a sycamore tree (a fig-mulberry tree which has a sweet but inferior fruit, not to be confused with the sycamine tree, which is the black mulberry tree). There is a wonderful picture of irony in Zaccheus climbing a sycamore tree. The sycamore wood was known for its durability and was used to make coffins. So here we have a man who is socially and spiritually dead perching himself in a tree used to make coffins! Also, it must be acknowledged that Zaccheus has hardened himself against the opinion of others, for it must have been a sight to see someone so prominent and notorious in the community to be literally hanging out on a limb.

Much to Zaccheus’s surprise, Jesus stops at the very place where he has perched himself. Whether Jesus providentially knew Zaccheus’s name, occupation and reputation, or simply asked, “Who’s that man perched in the tree?” is unknown. Regardless, Jesus invites Himself to stay at Zaccheus’s residence. (This is the only incidence in the gospels where Jesus invites Himself into another person’s home.) Being a rich man, Zaccheus no doubt had a large house that would accommodate many people, and he probably used it as a center for social gatherings with other tax collectors and their friends.

Verses 5 and 6 are a picture of salvation and the love of Christ offered to all people. Jesus offers to enter into Zaccheus’s life (the act of love on God’s part), and Zaccheus “received Him gladly.” Jesus is fulfilling what He came to do: “To seek and to save that which was lost.” How Zaccheus responds to Jesus’ inviting Himself into his life will be the act of love on his part.

Most likely, Zaccheus had heard that Jesus was a friend of tax collectors and sinners. In Jericho, then, it was the tax collector with whom Jesus chose to lodge, not the home of a Pharisee or other prominent citizen. It is the dead man in a coffin tree that Jesus
chooses to stay with.

Of course, the crowd was not happy that Jesus chose to overnight with a much despised man, and began to grumble. Ironically, the crowd has quickly converted their finicky emotions from giving “praise to God” when Bartimaeus was healed, to grumbling when they didn’t appreciate Jesus’ choice of hosts. **Verse 7**, therefore, confirms that Zaccheus was not well liked by the community.

**Verse 8** is startling, to say the least. Without Jesus saying a word to Zaccheus other than inviting Himself into his home, without pointing out his sins or calling him to repentance, Zaccheus immediately responds with what John the Baptist called the “fruits in keeping with repentance” (3:8). When exactly Zaccheus entered “the kingdom of God” is not certain, but the sequence is unmistakable: he wanted to see Jesus, Jesus reached out to him, and he received Him gladly. He then proved his faith in Jesus by immediately dispossessing himself of half his wealth for the sake of the poor, and making amends to all whom he had cheated. Zaccheus’s generosity to those whom he had defrauded shows that he is going over and beyond what the law required, for only one-fifth of what had been gained by fraud was required to be returned (Lev. 6:5).

The reader must realize, too, that it was not Zaccheus’s giving away his wealth that saved him, but his faith in Jesus when he “received Him gladly.” Giving away his possessions was the proof of his faith, and showed that he was truly repentant of his sins. His faith was real and not just lip service.

Jesus therefore acknowledges that a rich man can indeed “enter the kingdom of God”: “Today salvation has come to this house” (**verse 9**). Jesus then explains that what has taken place in Zaccheus’s life is what it means to be a true “son of Abraham,” something that all Jews should have become by their knowledge of the Law and the Prophets, and something the Pharisees should have been teaching all along.

Jesus then summarizes His mission: “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” The clear meaning here is that Zaccheus was a physical descendant of Abraham who had become spiritually lost. Now, by virtue of his faith in Jesus, he had become a spiritual son of Abraham as well as a physical one. The subject of finding the lost was the major theme in Luke chapter 15, and the parable of the lost son has come a reality.

It is a perfect example of God’s love for the lost, and how “receiving (Jesus) gladly” leads to life-changing love for others, especially the poor.

11 While they were listening to these things, Jesus went on to tell a parable, 19:11 Still in or near Jericho, Jesus resumes preparing His disciples for what’s waiting for them in Jerusalem. Luke comments that the purpose for Jesus
because He was near Jerusalem, and they supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.

So He said, “A nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return.

And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘Do business with this until I come back.’

“But his citizens hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, ‘We do not want this man to reign over us.’

19:12-14 In this parable, the nobleman is, of course, Jesus. His departure “to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself” refers to His ascension into heaven, forty days after the crucifixion. The nobleman plans to return. But, “When the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on earth?” In giving this parable, Jesus is directly addressing the expectation of the people acknowledged by Luke: “They supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately” (v. 11).

This parable, though quite similar to the one told by Jesus in Matthew 25, is not the same either in detail or in the lesson being taught. This parable was specifically directed toward those following Him in
the district of Jericho, those who would understand immediately the context of the parable.

In the Roman order of political appointees, it was the custom for those chosen by Caesar to travel to Rome to officially receive their assigned region, or “kingdom.” Herod the Great had done this when he received authority over Judea. History shows that one of Herod’s sons, Archelaus, did the same when he was appointed to replace his father as tetrarch over Judea. Many Jews were unhappy about this appointment because Archelaus had a terrible reputation. Therefore, a delegation of Jews traveled to Rome to protest the appointment; they were ignored. However, as the Jews had warned, Archelaus turned out to be a very incompetent ruler and was eventually replaced. One of the things he did, however, was to build a palace in Jericho. After a series of other failed appointees, the man finally appointed by Caesar to be tetrarch over Judea was none other than Pontius Pilate.

Like the Roman political appointees who traveled to Rome to receive their kingdom, Jesus Himself will be ascending to heaven after the resurrection to receive His kingdom. He will be away for some time; however, the disciples understand none of this, for they, like the people, are expecting Jesus to establish His “political” kingdom once He reaches Jerusalem. So Jesus is preparing His disciples by teaching them clearly and in terms they could readily understand that He will be away for some time, and they, His servants, have important responsibilities. Those responsibilities cannot be fulfilled unless they have the necessary resources and tools to do the job, so He gives to each servant necessary resources to carry on the business. The fact that Jesus uses the word business means that He, the owner, has expectations from His employees, and that their “job” involves work that should bear fruit and produce results. Just to make the distinction from the parable in Matthew 25, each of the ten servants in this parable is given one mina. (A mina was a Greek unit of money equal to about three months salary, or one-sixtieth of a talent. This indicates that the slaves have a limited amount of time to produce results, just as Christians have a limited amount of time on earth to bear fruit for the kingdom of God.)

Now the “citizens” enter the picture. The citizens are not the servants; in fact, in this particular parable, the citizens represent the Jews. In the extended scenario, Jesus is the nobleman, the kingdom is the earth, the slaves represent the church, and the citizens represent the Jewish nation. Why? Because of the statement, “We do not want this man to reign over us.” Historically, this was a reference to Archelaus; more importantly, this is a reference to the Jews rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.
Luke 19

15 “When he returned, after receiving the kingdom, he ordered that these slaves, to whom he had given the money, be called to him so that he might know what business they had done.

16 “The first appeared, saying, ‘Master, your mina has made ten minas more.’

17 “And he said to him, ‘Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, you are to be in authority over ten cities.’

18 “The second came, saying, ‘Your mina, master, has made five minas.’

19 “And he said to him also, ‘And you are to be over five cities.’

20 “Another came, saying, ‘Master, here is your mina, which I kept put away in a handkerchief;

21 for I was afraid of you, because you are an exacting man; you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.’

22 “He said to him, ‘By your own words I will judge you, you worthless slave. Did you know that I am an exacting man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow?

23 ‘Then why did you not put my money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?’

24 “Then he said to the bystanders, ‘Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has the ten minas.’

25 “And they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas already.’

26 “I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.

27 “But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence.”

Verses 15-19 jump ahead to the return of the nobleman and the accountability of His slaves; that is, the return of Christ…the second coming. The first servant has had fantastic results and turned his one mina into ten, a thousand-fold increase. Therefore, he is given a great reward—authority over ten cities; once again, a political situation the people would clearly understand according to the times. The reader should note that this is a substantial reward. Likewise, the second servant has turned his one mina into five minas. Again, he is praised by the nobleman and given a reward equal to the fruit he bore. The last servant, however, is a different story, as indicated in verses 20-26. The third servant did nothing with the resources the nobleman gave him. The implication here is that the servant was too busy taking care of his personal needs, wants, leisure and pleasures to take time to invest the resources that were given to him. He enjoyed having the mina, but chose to do nothing constructive with it. This is a clear example of enjoying the blessings God gives His children but choosing to do nothing with them.

The slave gives three feeble excuses: (1) “I was afraid of you…”; (2) “…you are an exacting man…”; (3) “…you take up what you did not lay down and reap what you did not sow.” The first excuse is a case of self-deception. If his fear was out of reverence and respect for his master, he would have worked hard to invest the mina. However, his fear is based on a lack of faith; his master was willing to entrust him with His resources, but he doesn't take the master seriously. The second excuse is supposed to justify the first. The trouble is, he didn't know his master very well. The word “exact” comes from the Greek word austeros, from which we get our English word “austere.” The problem here is that the slave saw his master as only strict and austere, and not someone who is fair and just, and who is only asking for what is reasonable. Allegorically, it is a clear case of seeing the justice and righteous side of God without seeing the loving and compassionate side of God, something the Pharisees had trouble with. Had he seen the loving side of the master—that He came to seek and to save that which was lost—he would have shared the master’s love with others.

The third and final excuse is actually an insult. One commentator suggests that this was a well-known proverb referring to someone who used others to make a profit, like a manipulator who uses others for their own purposes, or a venture capitalist who invests in others solely for the purpose of making a profit. Therefore, the nobleman makes the statement, “By your own words I will judge you….” In other words, the slave’s own words betray an untrusting, ungrateful, presumptuous and selfish heart which ignores the instructions of the nobleman and invests
only in himself. The fact that he kept the mina in a “handkerchief” is telling: the soudarion was supposed to be used to wipe the perspiration off one’s face from hard work! Verse 23 shows the lack of logic on the part of the slave’s reasoning: even if he was preoccupied with his own earthly affairs, he could have at least put his mina into the hands of someone else to bear some fruit. The bottom line was a failure to take the nobleman’s instructions seriously.

It is an on-going problem with the church in America today.

As a result of the worthless slave’s actions, his resources are taken from him and given to another, one who has shown skill and faithfulness in carrying out the nobleman’s charge. Because he showed faithfulness in carrying out his master’s charge, he will be given even more to work with.

In verse 27, “these enemies of mine” refers back to “citizens” in verse 14 who “hated him.” Because the citizens represent the Jews, this verse is no doubt a prophecy awaiting, not only the Jews when Jerusalem is utterly destroyed by the Romans in AD 70, but those who reject Jesus Christ during the church age.

The lesson in this parable is a powerful one. Jesus is clearly teaching His disciples something that they will not recall until after the resurrection: that Jesus will be raised from the dead, will ascend into heaven, and will be “away” for an extended period of time before He returns and establishes His earthly kingdom. The disciples will learn from this parable that Jesus will send a “Helper,” the Holy Spirit bearing gifts, and the disciples are to use these gifts for the sake of the spiritual kingdom of God on earth. Those in the church who fail to use their gifts, who quench the Holy Spirit, who continue to walk in the flesh and not in the Spirit, and who fail to fulfill the Great Commission, will experience rather terrible consequences. Not only are they unworthy to be called servants, but they cannot be trusted with the resources God has given them, and what resources they have will be taken away and given to those who are more deserving.

In concluding this parable, it would be easy to relegate the meaning to how Christians should utilize their spiritual resources during the church age. And, in so doing, it would be easy to overlook the powerful message of love found in this parable. That is because the church is made up of people, and the church is to constantly be reaching out to lost people. Some Christians are more gifted than others for reaching out in love with the gospel of Jesus Christ; that is, some may have “ten” converts, others “five”—both get rewarded. But the one servant who invested nothing in doing the work of the Master not
28 After He had said these things, He was going on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

29 When He approached Bethphage and Bethany, near the mount that is called Olivet, He sent two of the disciples,
   saying, “Go into the village ahead of you; there, as you enter, you will find a colt tied on which no one yet has ever sat; untie it and bring it here.
   31 “If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you untying it?’ you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of it.’ ”
   32 So those who were sent went away and found it just as He had told them.
   33 As they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, “Why are you untying the colt?”
   34 They said, “The Lord has need of it.”
   35 They brought it to Jesus, and they threw their coats on the colt and put Jesus on it.
   36 As He was going, they were spreading their coats on the road.

37 As soon as He was approaching, near only received no reward, but the one resource was taken away. We Christians can find all sorts of ways to hang onto our blessings—our one mina—and share them with no one. When it comes to love, we can find all sorts of ways to avoid reaching out in love to others: we can love our pets more than we love people; we can love our toys and recreational vehicles more than we love people; we can love our careers, our hobbies, our addictions, our houses, our reputations more than we love people, especially those who are lost; and we can love the blessing of our affluence and wealth, and completely ignore the fact that God gave these blessings to us so that we might bless others less fortunate. The resource God has given us is the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of love, the Spirit that enables us and directs our spirits to love one another, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

In parsing the parable, we ought not overlook the command to love that prompts it.
the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of the disciples began to praise God joyfully with a loud voice for all the miracles which they had seen,

38 shouting: “BLESSED IS THE KING WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD; Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

39 Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, rebuke Your disciples.”

40 But Jesus answered, “I tell you, if these become silent, the stones will cry out!”

All of these events—the unridden colt, the coats, the lifting of Jesus onto the donkey—are acts that point to royalty. That is, Jesus is being presented as a king. In the context of Zechariah 9:9, however, he is also being presented as the fulfillment of a well-known prophecy concerning the royal nature of the Messiah: “Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even a colt, the foal of a donkey.” The disciples and crowd are unaware that this is only the first coming of the Messiah, and His mission will be that of a suffering servant; the second coming, the triumphant conquering king, is yet to come.

As Jesus descends from the Mount of Olives, the crowds begin throwing their robes and coats along the road and, as the apostle John implies in his gospel, palm branches were being waved (12:13). This gesture was characteristic of the arrival of royalty, as the waving of palm branches followed by laying them on the road with their coats helped keep the dust down. One Jewish commentator mentions, however, that the use of palm leaves was not normal for the Feast of Passover; palm branches were not a part of Passover, and only hands were waved when reciting the Psalms of Ascent. By cutting, waving and using palm branches, the crowd was employing a custom used only during the Feast of Booths (aka Feast of Tabernacles), a feast anticipating the arrival of conquering king of the Jews, the Messiah. Therefore, the presence of palm leaves during Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem signified that the crowd expected Jesus to be the conquering king, not the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. On the descent down from the mount, Jesus passes Gethsemane where He will experience agony and arrest the night before the crucifixion.

Jesus now arrives at the base of the Mount of Olives, about to cross the Kidron Valley and ascend up to Jerusalem (verses 37-40). What is not often realized about the Kidron Valley is that there was a river of blood in it from all the sacrifices taking place in the temple. Daily, and especially during the feasts, thousands of animals were slaughtered during temple sacrifices. From the temple, the blood would run down the slopes of Zion and into the Kidron Valley. It is a fitting scene for the One who Himself is about to be sacrificed. The irony of the locations Jesus passes on His way to Jerusalem must not be overlooked by the reader, especially when one realizes that Jesus is well aware of what will take place in the next week. Instead of the blood of lambs flowing, His blood will flow. Instead of peace and rest in the Garden of Gethsemane, there will be anguish and betrayal. And instead of the joyous
When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it,

shouts of a jubilant crowd, there will be complete rejection of Him because He failed to fulfill their expectations as a conquering king, and they will cry out, “Crucify Him!” Only His love for the lost compelled Him toward Jerusalem, and only His willingness to sacrifice Himself as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” drives Him toward the cross.

At the base of the mount, the crowd, perhaps at the urging of the disciples, keeps shouting, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord!” The crowd is quoting from Psalm 118, a well-known Messianic Psalm of Ascents, and the most quoted psalm in the New Testament. The crowd, in their enthusiasm to proclaim a new king over Israel, has skipped over the verse that says, “The stone which the builders rejected…. The phrase, “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest” is not found in the Old Testament, and found here only in Luke. Perhaps Luke included it here because it reminded him of the proclamation by the angels at Jesus’ birth (2:14).

As Jesus is about the enter Jerusalem, some Pharisees insist that He hush His followers. There were probably two reasons the Pharisees wanted the crowd hushed and dispersed. First, a near-riotous crowd announcing the arrival of a new king would have greatly caught the attention of the Roman authorities, thus potentially invoking a violent response. The second, however, is more likely—they are upset that Jesus’ disciples are clearly declaring Him the Messiah, by virtue of their praises from Psalm 118. The word “rebuke” could be translated “command” or “order.”

Jesus answers the Pharisees with a well-known proverb that speaks of the impossible happening: “…if these become silent, the stones will cry out.” The irony of Jesus’ response should not be lost on the reader: the stones of the building will cry out for the chief cornerstone, for it is around the chief cornerstone that everything else is measured.

19:41-44 Luke uses the word klaiō to speak of Jesus’ weeping over Jerusalem. It is the same word used most often to describe grieving and wailing for the dead. The cause of His grief and mourning is the knowledge of what is in store for His people as a result of their rejection of Him, a rejection born out of unfulfilled expectations.

The problem here is that the people wanted the Messiah, but only on their own terms. They wanted a king, not a servant. They wanted a conqueror, not a sufferer. They wanted someone who would make their lives better from the world’s perspective, not someone who would restore their lives from God’s perspective. Because the jubilation of the crowd was based on wrong motives, they were unwilling, and
42 saying, “If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes.

43 “For the days will come upon you when your enemies will throw up a barricade against you, and surround you and hem you in on every side,

44 and they will level you to the ground and your children within you, and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation.”

therefore unable, to receive the Messiah in the manner God intended. God knew that their cheers would turn to jeers, their reception would turn to rejection, and their faithfulness would turn to faithlessness because their hearts were not right. Therefore, God hid the truth from their eyes, just as He hid the truth about Jesus’ suffering and sacrifice from the understanding of the disciples (18:34).

One must not be concerned that God often hides truth from His children. Just as parents do not always tell their children everything, the Father does not tell His children everything. He tells us only that which we need to know, and only that which will benefit us in the long run. God hides only what we cannot understand or accept at the moment, and only what we might reject if we knew the outcome. There is good news, however. Jesus states twice in Luke, “For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light” (8:17; 12:2). Just as Jesus’ destiny at the cross eventually was understood by the disciples, so, too, will those things hidden from God’s children come to light.

Jesus explains why He is mourning in verses 42-44—great tragedy and incalculable suffering await God’s people. Jesus is not describing the end times or His second coming. The ultimate rejection of the Messiah by the Jews will bring great judgment—the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the slaughter of almost all of its residents by the Roman general Titus in AD 70. The walls of Jerusalem will be leveled, Herod’s temple will be torn down stone by stone, the city will be made uninhabitable by layer upon layer of salt, and over six hundred thousand people—men, women and children—will be slaughtered. The few survivors will be sent off to the Roman circus to be the victims of gladiators and beasts, a foreshadowing of what will happen to Christians. Unlike the return of the Jews in 70 years after the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC, the Jews will not return to Jerusalem for almost 2000 years. The reason for this terrible outcome? The Jews failed to receive Jesus as Messiah on God’s terms.

There is an important lesson here for all Christians. Everyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior must accept Him on God’s terms, not his own, and not on the terms of contemporary Christian culture. By accepting Jesus Christ, one also accepts a life of sacrifice and suffering. Period. This statement is not conventional wisdom in modern American evangelical circles, for it is much more pleasant to celebrate and enjoy God’s blessing for oneself. It is much easier to quote only the first half of our spiritual identity, “…we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ…,” and completely ignore the second
Luke 19:45-46

45 Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, saying to them, “It is written, ‘AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,’ but you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.’

46 Whether or not Jesus entered the temple compound on the same day as His entry into Jerusalem is not stated by Luke, but it would be appropriate if it were. What follows is Luke’s account of Jesus driving out the moneychangers and merchants in the temple. This is not the first time Jesus has done this. The apostle John records Jesus having done this at the beginning of His ministry; Luke records only the incident just prior to Jesus’ crucifixion.

The context for Jesus driving out the moneychangers is this. All male Jews were required to make pilgrimage to the temple three times a year to offer sacrifices: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles. Many pilgrims came from long distances and were unable to bring their animals for sacrifice. Therefore, merchants set up tables and booths for selling animals appropriate for sacrifice. Therefore, pilgrims were at the mercy of the merchants...they had to pay whatever was the going price. The other problem was that Roman coinage was not acceptable in the temple because it bore the image of Caesar. Therefore, Gentile coinage needed to be exchanged for Jewish...
currency. One can see immediately the problem. The
moneychangers and merchants saw a superb
opportunity for profit through price gouging during
Jewish feasts, a commercial situation encouraged by
the temple authorities as a way of filling the temple’s
(and authorities’) pockets.

What is even more ironic—and pathetic—about
this situation is that the moneychangers and
merchants set up their tables and booths in the Court
of the Gentiles. Not only were the moneychangers
and merchants acting like greedy Gentiles oppressing
and taking advantage of God’s people, thus bringing
“the world” into the house of worship, they were
defiling that part of the temple that had been
specifically set aside for Gentile proselytes to
worship.

Jesus’ response is one of great anger. Defiling
the temple by turning the house of prayer into a den
of thieves is the only incidence in which Jesus
displays anger and wrath. It is a lesson that needs to
be taken seriously by pastors and churches today.

In driving out the moneychangers and merchants,
Jesus quotes from two Old Testament sources. The
first is a quote from Isaiah 56:7: “My house will be
called a house of prayer for all the peoples” (italics
mine, as it refers to Gentiles). This emphasizes that
the temple was to be not only a house of prayer for
the Jews, but a gathering place of worship for the
Gentiles as well. The second quote comes from
Jeremiah 7:11: “Has this house, which is called by
My name, become a den of robbers in your sight?”

The significance of Jesus’ action against the
merchants in the temple compound must not be lost
on the reader of God’s word. How many times in the
Gospel of Luke has Jesus taught on the hazards of
money, possessions and greed? How many times has
Jesus warned His disciples about the pitfalls of
money and wealth? How many parables have taught
about the terrible consequences of allowing
possessions, wealth and money to rule one’s life and
determine one’s eternal destiny? The church, and the
leaders of church, must take these teachings
seriously, no matter what kind of rationalizations are
used to justify size, beauty, extravagance, and
relevance. The church that spends more money on
itself than on “the poor, the crippled, the blind and
the lame” will be held accountable to God concerning
“every form of greed.” The temple authorities
probably came up with a multitude of reasons why
bringing money into the institution was a good thing
to do, just as church leaders today, particularly in
America, justify the enormous revenues collected “to
make the church’s ministry more effective and
relevant to the modern culture.” When it comes to the
issue of money, one must be suspicious of all so-
called “megachurches” and their leaders, as well as
47 And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him,
48 and they could not find anything that they might do, for all the people were hanging on to every word He said.

“mega-ministries” and their so-called prophets and healers. In the New Testament, God never used money to build His kingdom. It is the Holy Spirit living inside the true disciple of Jesus Christ—the suffering servant—who builds the kingdom.

19:47-48 Luke now projects the reader into the week leading up the Feast of Passover. Instead of Galilee, where Jesus has done most of His ministry and teaching, He is now in the heart of the opposition, the country of the enemy. Luke immediately describes the hostility directed toward Jesus by those in authority. They are no doubt disturbed by Jesus’ actions against the merchants and moneychangers, and are looking for an opportunity to rid the temple of Jesus. Unfortunately, they can do little, as Jesus consistently gathers multitudes who sit at His feet, listening to every word, anticipating that, at any moment, He will declare Himself King of the Jews and set up His kingdom.

Who wouldn’t want to be a part of the action?
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. What has this chapter taught you about love, God’s love for the lost and God’s love for all people? How did Jesus’ love for the lost compel Him to complete His journey from Jericho to Jerusalem, in spite of full knowledge of what awaited Him that week?

2. How did Zaccheus actively demonstrate “fruits in keeping with repentance”? Is there, or has there ever been an occasion in your past that would require you to bear fruits in keeping with repentance? Did it involve money? Did it involve responsibilities? Did it involve lying or cheating or stealing? Did it involve relationships of some kind? Ask yourself, “Did I simply confess and ask for forgiveness, or did I actually do something that showed I was truly repentant for my actions?”

3. Have you ever come across someone, or heard of someone, who you thought did not deserve forgiveness from God? Why do you think you held onto those feelings?

4. Meditate on Jesus’ parable about the nobleman and his slaves. Do you think the nobleman was unjust to chastise the slave who guarded his mina? How do you relate to this parable concerning your own participation in the kingdom of God? Are you a “slave” who has invested his mina to make ten more, or a Christian who has invested his mina to make five more? Or has your tendency been to become the slave who kept his mina hidden? If you are not living up to your answer about this, what is your specific plan to change the outcome?

5. Review the circumstances behind Jesus’ “triumphal” entry into the Jerusalem. When you think about Jesus’ “entry” into your own life when you were saved, was it a cause for celebration or weeping, or both? Why? How does that play out in your current prayer life? Ask yourself these questions: “Do I celebrate Jesus more than I mourn and weep for the lost?” “Do I grieve over those whom I love when I consider the consequences for not receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior?” “How balanced am I in regard to celebrating versus weeping?”

6. When you look around the evangelical culture today, do you see more celebration, or do you see more brokenness and mourning for the lost? Identify three emotions you think Jesus would have experienced between verses 35 and 48. Are these emotions a part of your Christian experience when it comes to the church or other Christians?

7. When you look around the evangelical community today, do you see any commercialism that you believe is contrary to the kingdom of God? If so, what do you plan on doing about it? Do you know of any so-called Christian leaders who are padding their pockets and living luxurious lifestyles at the expense of other Christians? Do you know of any churches that spend more money on overhead than they do giving to “the poor, the lame, the crippled and the blind”? After you have concluded your answer, ask how you plan to redistribute your tithe and offerings.
19:1-10 – Jesus’ encounter with Zaccheus was a chief tax collector, wealthy and Zaccheus takes actions consistent with fruits in keeping with Zaccheus becomes a true son of

19:11-27 – The parable of the nobleman, his servants, and their Purpose: the people’s belief the kingdom of God was going to appear The parable clearly describes Jesus’ expectations of His For rejecting Christ, there are

19:28-40 – Jesus’ “triumphal” entry into Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was prophesied by Zechariah The people use palm branches (Gospel of John) consistent with a The Pharisees tell Jesus to rebuke His disciples; they are declaring a

19:41-44 – Jesus weeps over Jesus weeps because He knows the consequences His people will face for All of what Jesus warns them about takes place in The temple will be destroyed, never to be raised again until

19:45-48 – Jesus drives out the merchants and moneychangers in the The merchants and moneychangers set up their tables in the Two reasons Jesus is angry: they have abused a place designated for they have turned God’s holiness into
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 19

19:1-10 – Jesus’ encounter with Zaccheus
• The discipler will need to explain somewhat the metropolis that Jericho became in Jesus’ day. Chances are, the disciple may still have old Jericho in mind and envision the town that Joshua captured with the walls falling down. Explain also how Jericho was an important East-West trade route, and that it was an opportune place for the Romans to collect taxes. Then introduce Zaccheus.

Zaccheus was a chief tax collector, wealthy and not popular
• Explain why Zaccheus would have been so unpopular.

Zaccheus takes actions consistent with fruits in keeping with repentance
• When confronted by Jesus, Zaccheus changed his whole life around. Explain how he did that according to the commentary. Make sure the disciple can tie together Zaccheus’s response to Jesus with “fruits in keeping with repentance,” and how that relates back to John the Baptist.

Zaccheus becomes a true son of Abraham
• Explain why Jesus called Zaccheus a “son of Abraham” and what significance that had to Jesus’ statement that “salvation has come to this house.”

19:11-27 – The parable of the nobleman, his servants, and their resources
• See if the disciple can determine why Jesus told the parable of the nobleman who “went to a distant country to receive a kingdom.” (The answer is in verse 11 where the people expected the kingdom of God to appear suddenly.)

Purpose: the people’s belief the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately
• Ensure that the disciple understands what kind of kingdom the people were expecting to appear “immediately.” Emphasize once again the concept of one Messiah, two comings. Make sure the disciple clearly understands the contrast of the two, and why Jesus first has to die on the cross on His first coming. (This is paramount to understanding the core of New Testament teaching—the death of Christ for the forgiveness of sins.)

The parable clearly describes Jesus’ expectations of His church
• Have the disciple make application of the parable to Jesus’ expectations of His church and His followers today. Ensure that the disciple begins thinking in terms of how he is planning on using his “mina.” The discipler may need to help the disciple discover what his or her mina is.

For rejecting Christ, there are severe consequences
• It is important that the disciple understand that there are consequences for failing to take the “nobleman’s” instructions seriously.

19:28-40 – Jesus’ “triumphal” entry into Jerusalem (on Palm Sunday)
• The discipler will want to present some sort of a timeline as to the Jewish festivals. There are many resources on the Internet for annual Jewish festivals. (This can also be found at www.walkwiththeword.org.) Particularly point out the significance of Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which followed. Show where the Feast of Tabernacles is and its prophetic significance. For a greater impact, present these festivals in light of the Exodus (Exod. 12). This may help the disciple pull together the events leading up to Jesus’ crucifixion and His blood being shed on the cross as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was prophesied by Zechariah 500 years earlier
• Have the disciple find Zechariah’s prophecy and see how it foretells Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, and the significance of “mounted on a donkey.”
The people use palm branches (Gospel of John) consistent with a **conquering king**
- This detail is not found in Luke, so have the disciple find it in the Gospel of John (12:13). Clarify for
the disciple the significance of the people’s reaction and how the palm branches demonstrated their
wrong idea of why Jesus was entering into Jerusalem.

The Pharisees tell Jesus to rebuke His disciples; they are declaring a **king of the Jews**
- The discipler may need to explain the two reasons the Pharisees were so upset that the crowd was
declaring Jesus the king of the Jews. Point out the irony here. Jesus really is the king of the Jews, but
not in the way the Jewish crowds were anticipating or even hoping for.

19:41-44 – Jesus weeps over **His people**
- Describe for the disciple the type of weeping Jesus experienced. It wasn’t just a shed tear, but great
grieving. See if the disciple can determine why Jesus wept so severely before proceeding to the next fill-in.

Jesus weeps because He knows the consequences His people will face for **rejecting Him**
- Make sure the disciple understands that Jesus is not weeping for His people just because of what
awaits them in the future, but more importantly, by rejecting Him as Messiah and the Son of God, they
remain in their sins and will experience eternal consequences.
- Ask the disciple if he or she has ever wept over anyone who is rejecting Jesus. (Has the discipler done
so?)

All of what Jesus warns them about takes place in **AD 70**
- Some historical background may be useful here.

The temple will be destroyed, never to be raised again until **the end times**
- The discipler must be careful not to get distracted by going into too much detail about end times
events. It should be sufficient—depending on how much eschatological information the disciple
already has—to inform the disciple that the temple will be rebuilt in the end times. We know that by the
fact that the Antichrist will offer a sacrifice on its altar.

19:45-48 – Jesus drives out the merchants and moneychangers in the **temple**
- The discipler should present some background for the presence of the moneychangers and where in the
temple compound they were operating. Show the disciple on a map, which can easily be downloaded from
the Internet, or may be found at the back of many study Bibles.
- Describe how easily the moneychangers could take advantage of the common Jewish worshipper.
- Point out that the overturning of the tables of the moneychangers is the only time that Jesus expresses
anger. Ask why.
- Ask the disciple how Jesus referred to the temple, and what God intended its main purpose to be. Have the
disciple compare that to today’s evangelical “worship service.” Ask him or her what is missing?

The merchants and moneychangers set up their tables in the **Court of the Gentiles**
- The disciple may wonder why Gentiles were in the temple courtyard. It may need to explained that
there were many Gentiles who were proselytes. That is, these were Gentiles who had converted to
Judaism and were allowed to offer sacrifices in the temple. Their access however was restricted to the
Court of the Gentiles.

Two reasons Jesus is angry: they have abused a place designated for **Gentile worship**
- See above.
- they have turned God’s holiness into **commercialism**
- Ask the disciple how commercialism in the temple is so abhorrent to God. How does the issue of
commercialism compare with Jesus’ other teachings on money, possessions and greed?
- Ask the discipler if he or she can recognize any commercialism in the Christian church today.
CHAPTER 20

Overview of Luke 20
In chapter 20, Luke presents a series of confrontations with the temple authorities, the priests and the scribes. Some of the priests were of the sect of the Pharisees, others were of the sect called Sadducees. The difference between them will be presented in the notes. Luke presents these encounters during the days that Jesus is teaching and preaching in the temple compound, just prior to the Feast of Passover. Though God wanted the temple to be a “house of prayer,” the temple had become home to the enemies of Jesus. Remember that in the previous chapter, Jesus introduced Himself by overturning the tables and carts of the merchants and moneychangers who served as a significant source of income for the temple authorities. The temple authorities will question Jesus about His own authority, and Jesus will respond with a surprising answer. The authorities will also try to trick Jesus by forcing Him to take a political position about taxes, and a theological position concerning the resurrection. During the encounters, Jesus will give a parable that infuriates the authorities, for they realize Jesus is directing the parable toward them.

What to look for in Luke 20
1. As you read each paragraph ask, “What is God teaching me about who Jesus is?”
2. Jesus will be asked a question by the temple authorities about His own authority. Look for the clever way Jesus answers the question of those who wouldn’t believe His answer even if He gave them one.
3. Jesus will give a parable about the Old Testament prophets and about Himself. Look for the relationship between His answer to the scribes and what the crowds shouted when He entered into Jerusalem.
4. Look for Jesus’ important answer to the authorities about Roman taxes, and ask how that teaching can be applied today.
5. Look for an attempt by the Sadducees to get Jesus to deny that there is a resurrection. Look for Jesus’ definitive answer.
6. Seek to understand Jesus’ own question for the scribes concerning David’s offspring, and why His question relates to something Jesus said about the “chief corner stone.”
7. In the last paragraph, look for the subject of love in regards to the scribes. Who do they love, and who do they fail to love?

20:1-8 Jesus has made His entry into Jerusalem and announced His presence by angrily confronting the merchants and moneychangers in the temple. This act was not just a confrontation about commercialism in the temple compound, but it was an indictment on the temple authorities for allowing the practice of taking unfair advantage of those who came to worship, especially the poor.

Verse 1 states that the “chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him….” Most likely, this group was made up of a delegation from the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin, also called the “Council,” was the ruling authority and supreme court for the Jewish nation. It was comprised of
Luke 20

3 Jesus answered and said to them, “I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me:
4 “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from men?”
5 They reasoned among themselves,
saying, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ He will say, ‘Why did you not believe him?’

6 “But if we say, ‘From men,’ all the people will stone us to death, for they are convinced that John was a prophet.”

7 So they answered that they did not know where it came from.

8 And Jesus said to them, “Nor will I tell you by what authority I do these things.”

9 And He began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and

God’s authority, the Sanhedrin could immediately declare Him a blasphemer, something punishable by death. If Jesus said His authority was from men, He would, of course, not be telling the truth. By not answering their question directly, He leaves the representatives of the Sanhedrin with no basis for judging Him a blasphemer and no basis for discrediting Him an imposter. Instead, He asks them a different question that, in essence, addresses the very same issue, only instead of referring to Himself, He refers to John the Baptist. (Ingenious, from a human point of view.)

In verses 5 and 6, one can just imagine the delegation from the Sanhedrin calling a huddle and feverishly debating among themselves. If they had had smart phones, they would have immediately sent a text message to headquarters. Their discussion must have gone something like this: “If we say that John the Baptist’s authority was from God, then the people will wonder why did we not listen to him, be baptized for our sins, and repented as a nation? We would immediately condemn ourselves as being outside the will of God. However, if we say that his authority was from men, the people will rip us to shreds and we’ll lose all power over them because he was martyred, and every Jew believes he was a messenger of God. So, let’s not commit ourselves one way or the other because it is a lose-lose situation for us.” Thus, the representatives of the Sanhedrin chose not to answer Jesus’ question (verse 7).

Jesus’ answer to them in verse 8 leaves the entire exchange hanging in the air. What Jesus chooses not to declare to this unbelieving, skeptical and hostile delegation is that He, by virtue of being the Son of God, is His own authority, yet while on earth He, through His love relationship with the Father, places Himself completely under the authority of His Father in Heaven. (See John 17:1-26 for a thorough explanation by Jesus.) Not only would the delegation not believe this, but they wouldn’t even be able to comprehend it. Just as parables are a method to hide spiritual truth from unbelievers and reveal truth to believers, so, too, is Jesus’ answer designed to hide truth from His detractors. Only His disciples, even at this point in time, understand that Jesus is under God’s authority, not man’s. What they as yet do not understand fully is that, while on earth, Jesus has voluntarily put Himself under the Father’s authority. Following His resurrection, however, Jesus will inform them that “All authority has been given to (Him) in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18; italics mine).

20:9-18 In this follow-up parable to the above confrontation with the delegation from the Sanhedrin, the “man” who plants the vineyard is God, and the
rented it out to vine-growers, and went on a journey for a long time.

10 “At the harvest time he sent a slave to the vine-growers, so that they would give him some of the produce of the vineyard; but the vine-growers beat him and sent him away empty-handed.

11 “And he proceeded to send another slave; and they beat him also and treated him shamefully and sent him away empty-handed.

12 “And he proceeded to send a third; and this one also they wounded and cast out.

13 “The owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’

14 “But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, ‘This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.’

15 “So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?

“vineyard” is the nation of Israel who is supposed to represent the kingdom of God. (It’s quite clear who the owner is.) The “vine-growers” are the leaders of the nation; that is, the religious authorities over the centuries as well as the present-day Sanhedrin. Notice that Jesus gives this parable to “the people” (not just to His disciples), but is clearly directing it toward the delegation from the Sanhedrin. It will therefore serve as a stinging indictment on the Sanhedrin itself.

In Luke’s writing of the parable, there are three slaves (servants) sent to gather fruit (“produce”) from the vineyard. The clear interpretation is that the servants represent the prophets sent by God’s authority over the centuries past. They include Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, and so on. Their purpose was to bring back fruit for the owner of the vineyard. In other words, the prophets were to bring back spiritual fruit in the form of repentance by the nation for its unrighteous behavior. Instead of welcoming and heeding the words of the prophets, the “vine-growers” (the spiritual leaders) rejected the prophets and abused them. Notice that each slave is treated worse than the one before him. In desperation, the owner sends his “beloved son.” The title “beloved son” is meant to remind the reader of the Father’s words at Jesus’ baptism: “You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased” (Luke 3:22). The owner has sent his son because, being the son, he shares the same authority as the owner. He is heir and co-owner of the vineyard. All logic would point to acceptance of the authority of the son by the vine-growers. Unfortunately, that is not the case. Jesus is at this very moment experiencing rejection by the vine-growers.

Notice the reaction of the vine-growers. The first action mentioned is that they “saw him.” They didn’t receive a notice or a letter or a declaration: the son was in their midst, standing right in front of them, clearly visible to their natural eyes. They have no excuse for saying that they never actually encountered the son. Second, “they reasoned with one another….” The word “reasoned” is based on the same root as in verse 5, “they reasoned among themselves.” Jesus is making a play on words here, for the reasoning action of verse 14 means “to reason thoroughly.” In others words, their response to the son was not a mistake given to impulse or a lack of understanding; it was a thoroughly thought out scheme, well planned and menacingly executed. Nor was there only one person responsible—it was a group decision made by collective individuals. Therefore, all the leadership is guilty as charged.

The collective conclusion of the vine-growers also indicates that they knew in their hearts exactly who the son was: “This is the heir….” Their decision,
unbelievably, is to kill him. That Jesus should include this in His parable underscores the fact that He knew He would be killed, a fact He has stated many times to the disciples, and is now quickly becoming reality.

Perhaps the most telling part of this parable is the illogical conclusion on the part of the vine-growers (i.e., the Sanhedrin) as to what they believe will take place after they kill the son: “…so that the inheritance will be ours.” That the vine-growers would come to such a conclusion indicates how removed they were from the knowledge of the owner (God) and how illogical and unrealistic were their expectations. Did they not have the whole history of the Jewish nation, its history of failures and the judgments that followed, from which to gain insight and wisdom? Did they forget the dispersion of the Northern Kingdom by the Assyrians in 722 BC for their apostasy? Had they forgotten the destruction of Jerusalem and Solomon’s temple in 586 BC at the hands of the Babylonians for their unrighteous acts? What possible deceptions were at work to cause them to believe that such a judgment would not follow the killing of the Son? Why would they believe that they could take ownership of the vineyard? The answer is unknown, but this writer believes that they were under the direct influence of Satan who himself wanted to take ownership of the nation. By doing so, Satan believed he could thwart any plans God had for His people, especially in providing the seed line that led to the Messiah.

The three reasons for rejecting the son are typical of all men who reject Jesus Christ today. First, they are comfortable in their present state of existence. The religious leaders were making a good living and enjoying their luxuries. They had plenty of money and wealthy lifestyles. In order to do that, they had compromised with the world, in this case, the Gentile Romans. They had a good life and did not want to give it up. They also had power, power over their own lives and power over the people. They had developed an effective system through religious laws to keep poor people suppressed, rich people content, and their enemies close. In summary, they were comfortable, and they did not want anyone, even God, disturbing their lifestyle.

Second, they ignored truth. The sect of the Sadducees rejected all Old Testament scriptures but the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch. This means that they rejected the writings of the prophets, as well as the historical books such as Kings and Chronicles. For the Pharisees and scribes, who did accept all the Old Testament scriptures, they interpreted the Scriptures only to their own advantage, and only gleaned from them what would be useful to their own agenda. They emphasized scriptures that supported their worldview, and they
ignored scriptures that didn’t. The scribes could quickly quote and abide by the first Great Commandment—“You shall love the Lord your God…”—but were woefully negligent at living out the second—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” They were just as guilty at “selective reading” and “selective obedience” as heretical evangelical preachers are today. They, too, are without excuse.

The third reason the vine-growers wanted to kill the son was because, to accept Him and His word, they would have to admit that they were sinners; that they, too, needed to repent. This was too much for those who prided themselves on keeping the Sabbath laws, tithing, fasting and praying, and assuming the gilded ranks of the religious elite.

The irony of this parable, as stated above, is that the vine-growers deceived themselves into believing that they would gain control of the vineyard and keep the profits for themselves. In following the analogy, the Jewish leaders confronting Jesus somehow believe that there would be no consequences for rejecting the Son. Tragically, they believe they will eventually wrestle the kingdom of Israel back under their own power, out from under the control of the Roman Empire, and that they themselves will miraculously restore Israel to its former glory. They, of course, would remain at the helm of the kingdom and be benefactors of its glory.

Jesus brings His listeners back to reality: “What, then, will the owner of the vineyard do to them?” Verse 16 makes their fate clear. First, “He will come and destroy these vine-growers….” History shows that in AD 70, all the leaders of the Sanhedrin were put to death. After the destruction of Jerusalem and Herod’s temple, the Sanhedrin ceased to exist. Only in the last few years has a new Sanhedrin been formed in Israel, but it has none of the power and prestige that it had in Jesus’ day. Annas and Caiaphas died, the Sadducees and the Pharisees ceased to exist, and only a handful of scribes escaped the carnage by Rome.

Second, the owner—God—will give the vineyard—the kingdom of God—to “others.” This is a clear prophecy concerning the formation of the church which will be composed mostly of Gentiles.

When Jesus’ audience heard these words, they responded with astonishment. It seems pretty clear that Jesus’ listeners understood the parable to some extent. They at least understood that the vineyard, a well-known symbol of Israel, would be taken away and given to another. It would have been impossible for them to visualize the church, but they could have interpreted Jesus’ words as meaning another Gentile nation worse than the Romans. Historically, there had been a precedent; over the centuries, Israel had been
17 But Jesus looked at them and said, “What then is this that is written: ‘The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief cornerstone’?
18 “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.”

Verses 17 and 18 are loaded with irony. Jesus now quotes from the very same psalm as the people shouted during His entry into Jerusalem—Psalm 118. Whereas upon His entry, the people shouted the portion of the psalm which describes the Messiah’s second coming, Jesus now quotes from the portion that describes His first coming. “What then is this that is written…” could be paraphrased, “What then is the meaning of this portion of Psalm 118?” He then quotes Psalm 118:22, a verse that is quoted both by Paul and Peter (Eph. 2:20 and 1 Pet. 2:6, respectively).

A chief cornerstone was the foundation stone for a new building. The cornerstone was the perfect stone by which everything else was measured. Its dimensions had to be exact, as the lines and the remaining structure of the building were positioned according to the foundation stone. In Canaanite times, human sacrifice accompanied the laying of the cornerstone. In this verse, the One who will be sacrificed (rejected) will become the chief cornerstone. There is also a slight play on words here, as the chief cornerstone will be compared to the chief priests. The foundation laid by the chief priests is faulty and the structure will fail. But the stone which the chief priests rejected will, in fact, become the chief cornerstone by which the new building, the church, will be built.

Jesus’ last words concerning His authority are a reference to Isaiah 8:13-15: “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust.” This statement simply means that, for the Jews, proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah will be a stumbling block. Unfortunately, their inability to accept Jesus as their Messiah will result in their nation being “scattered…like dust.” Thus, in AD 70, the greatest dispersion of Jews in their history took place, reaching to all parts of the known world and beyond.

19 The scribes and the chief priests tried to lay hands on Him that very hour, and they feared the people; for they understood that He spoke this parable against them.
20 So they watched Him, and sent spies who pretended to be righteous, in order that they might catch Him in some statement, so that they could deliver Him to the rule and conquered by the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Greeks, and by the Romans. Therefore, the people respond with a local idiom used to express disbelief and foreboding: me genoito, meaning “May it not be so!” (The KJV translates it as “God forbid!” The word “God” is not found in the original text.)

The second confrontation with the Jewish rulers most likely occurs on the same day, which many commentators suggest was Tuesday. The issue raised is a volatile one…taxes. (Aren’t taxes always a volatile issue in any society? However, being imposed by an oppressive, occupying, foreign Gentile government particularly evoked an emotional response from the Jews.)

There are a number of reasons the issue of taxes was so sensitive. First, every Jew had to pay an
the authority of the governor. annual poll tax of one denarius. The denarius was equivalent to one day’s labor for a common worker or for a soldier. One must remember that the poll tax was over and above what Jews were required to pay for commercial endeavors such as trade and transport, buying and selling. Not only that, but the Jews were required by their own religious leaders to offer frequent sacrifices at the temple, as well as pay a tithe to the temple and to the priesthood, according to Levitical law. It is estimated that after everything was added up, taxes and tithes amounted to 40-50% of a person’s annual income.

Second, the taxes were collected by tax collectors who were employed by Rome and who charged extra for collecting the tax. The Romans allowed them to make a commission without imposing any restrictions or limits on that commission. So one denarius often turned into two; one for Rome, the other for the tax collector, which, along with being declared unclean, is one reason tax collectors were hated so much.

The third issue involved the coin itself. The denarius was a Rome-minted silver coin. On one side was an image of Tiberius Caesar with the words, “Tiberius Caesar, son of the Divine Augustus.” (Note the word “divine.”) On the other side of the coin was an image of Pax, the Roman goddess of peace, accompanied by the words, “High Priest.” One can see immediately why this coin was so offensive to the Jews. Conservative Jews such as Pharisees and scribes would see this coin as a violation of the first and second commandments regarding having no gods “before Me” and being in possession of idols (Exod. 20:3,4). Being forced to carry and use such coinage was considered equivalent to imposed idolatry.

Luke introduces this confrontation about taxes with the observation that the religious leaders were looking for a good way to get rid of Jesus; He was just too popular, as well as, from their point of view, systematically turning the people against them. He not only undermined their prestige and authority, He threatened their lavish lifestyles. They also clearly understood that the preceding parable was directed toward them, and that He was well aware of their plans to kill Him. They needed a good reason to arrest Him and take Him to the governor (Pontius Pilate), without causing a riot at the same time. So the scheme forged by the chief priests and the scribes is to catch Him in an act of sedition and have the Romans themselves take the heat.

There is another interesting fact about this confrontation. Matthew indicates that the conniving parties are the Pharisees and the Herodians. Ironically, these two groups hated each other. The Herodians were not a religious sect like the Pharisees and Sadducees. They were a political group who saw
21 They questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, we know that You speak and teach correctly, and You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth.
22 “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?”
23 But He detected their trickery and said to them,
24 “Show Me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?” They said, “Caesar’s.”
25 And He said to them, “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”
26 And they were unable to catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people; and being amazed at His answer, they became silent.

The reader needs to pause when reading verse 21. If one were to take this verse at face value, unaware of who was saying it or their motives, one would note that everything they said was absolutely true. They call Him “Teacher” (or rabbi); this is true. They observe that “You speak and teach correctly.” Again, that is absolutely true. They note that Jesus is “not partial to any”; also true. And they say that He teaches “the way of God in truth.” True. There is therefore a powerful lesson here for the Christian. Not only must the words themselves be discerned, but the person behind the words must be discerned. Words alone mean nothing if the person behind them has selfish motives or evil intent. Some heretical preachers are quite capable of speaking truth, but their hearts are very, very dark. They are deceivers and heretics, misinterpreting and misapplying Scripture, leading undiscerning believers away from the truth. Jesus knew the hearts of the men who spoke the words. Christians today all too often are duped into following a TV evangelist, revivalist, crusader, faith-healer or even pastor without knowing a thing about the heart of the man (or woman). They follow them on TV, they flock to their crusades or churches, they send them money, and they buy all their books and paraphernalia without so much as learning the character of the person to whom they have pledged devotion. The answer? Give nothing and follow no one until you are convinced that the person is truly a man or woman of God, not by their
words alone, but by their deeds, their relationships, their prayer life, their home life, and by the validation of godly people who are not a part of their ministry.

The question posed by the imposters is a very specific one: “Is it lawful for us to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?” Notice that the imposters did not ask, “Should we pay taxes to Caesar?” or “Do you agree (with the Romans) that we should pay taxes?” (The question is literally “Is it permitted...?” What is implied is, “Is it permitted according to the law?”) A “no” answer by Jesus would have meant nothing because no Jew thought they should pay taxes to an occupying Gentile government; Jesus would have just been agreeing with everybody else if He said no. But the instigators asked, “Is it lawful...?” This is a very specific question based on the Ten Commandments; namely, the first and second commandments. In other words, the imposters are more concerned about trapping Jesus into violating Mosaic law than having Him oppose Roman law. The reason? By telling the people that they should acquiesce to Roman law by paying a coin that had an image of Caesar on it would necessarily invalidate His teaching and ministry in front of the people; that is, it would discredit Him, and the religious leaders could openly accuse Him of blaspheme.

Jesus’ answer is equally specific. The first thing Jesus does is to have the instigators answer the obvious: “Whose likeness and inscription (is on the denarius)?” The word translated “likeness” is eikon, meaning “image.” The Jews would immediately associate this Greek word with the Hebrew word pesel meaning “an idol; a carved image; a graven image.” Therefore Jesus is acknowledging that the image on the denarius is indeed a “graven image,” consistent with what the Pharisees were teaching, and therefore not at odds with the law. But the second part of Jesus’ instruction stumps the instigators: “Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s...” The key word here is “render.” The word means to give back what belongs to another; that is, to give back what has been borrowed. The clear implication is one of ownership. Therefore, in essence Jesus is saying, “Give the idol back to the idol maker,” or, “Get rid of the idol in the first place,” an instruction that is certainly in keeping with OT law (e.g., Ezek. 14:6). He then follows that instruction with one the instigators certainly could not disagree with: “…and (render) to God the things that are God’s.” This instruction, of course, would also be in keeping with the law because it supports the teaching of the law on tithing.

Jesus’ answer to the imposters is one that goes far beyond the immediate situation and is in keeping with Jesus’ other teaching that “You cannot serve God and wealth.” Jesus is clearly saying that money
27 Now there came to Him some of the Sadducees (who say that there is no resurrection),
28 and they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLесс, HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER.
29 “Now there were seven brothers; and the first took a wife and died childless;
30 and the second
31 and the third married her; and in the same way all seven died, leaving no children.
32 “Finally the woman died also.
33 “In the resurrection therefore, which one’s wife will she be? For all seven had married her.”

is not something a person should fret or fight over. Paying taxes to the ungodly is not something godly people should be too concerned about. Worldly money belongs to the world; it is not the most important thing in life, and does not comprise “true riches” (Luke 16:11). Money of any kind should not be a source of rebellion nor a cause of idolatry. The imposters concern over the poll tax betrays their consistent rejection of Jesus’ teachings on the trappings of money and possessions, teachings that we have seen so often throughout the gospel (e.g., Luke 12:12-34).

The reason the imposters were not able to “catch Him in a saying in the presence of the people” is because Jesus never said anything they could accuse Him of. He taught nothing in violation of the law of Moses. Not only did He redirect their question, but He made a point that far outweighed the basic question in the first place: “Seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you” (Luke 12:29).

20:27-40 The third confrontation is one initiated by the Sadducees. Luke adds the comment “who say that there is no resurrection” for the sake of his Gentile readers who may not have known the differences in theological viewpoints between the Sadducees and the Pharisees.

Whereas both the Sadducees and the Pharisees were religious sects in Judaism, there were some marked differences both theologically and politically. First, the Sadducees were made up of well-to-do priests; that is, the nobility of the priesthood. Being the more liberal religious sect, and seeing no way out from under the rule of Rome, they promoted compromise with the Romans for political reasons, saying in effect, “Why can’t we all just get along?” They were also inclined to comingle Greek and Roman culture with Judaism (called Hellenism), as a way of making Judaism more relevant to the times. Because of their friendship with Rome, the High Priest, appointed by the governor, was almost always a Sadducee; they were less likely to cause trouble for the occupiers. Whereas all Sadducees were priests, not all priests were Sadducees. The Sadducees were not the people’s party like the Pharisees were, as they routinely kept themselves aloof from the commoner.

In regard to the Scriptures, the Sadducees took issue with the Pharisees. The Pharisees, the more conservative of the two sects, included with the entire Old Testament the “oral traditions.” The oral traditions were extrabiblical writings and sayings developed over the centuries to interpret and expound on the Old Testament. (They were eventually collected and formed into a volume called the Talmud, produced between 200 and 500 AD.) The Pharisees and scribes considered the oral traditions
just as authoritative and binding on all Jews as the entire Old Testament; thus, the many “laws” regarding the Sabbath. Believing that the Pharisees went too far by including the oral traditions with the Scriptures, the Sadducees reacted by taking the position that only the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was authoritative and binding. This means that they ignored all the writings of all the prophets, including Isaiah, Hosea and Ezekiel. Therefore, Israel’s prophetic future was never an important part of their theology. And, without the historical books to guide them, they denied the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul, believing that the soul died along with the body. Their disdain for the Pharisees and scribes was palpable and often resulted in heated debates, each trying to convince one another that the other party was un-Jewish in their theology. The Sadducees therefore considered the scribes’ teachings as antiquated, irrelevant, and parochial. The Sadducees would have scoffed at Jesus’ teaching about the rich man and Lazarus.

One can see immediately that the two religious Jewish sects were at odds with one another in almost every way…except in regard to Jesus, of course. As to being hostile to Jesus and wanting Him out of the way, they were on the same track 100 percent, but for different reasons. The Sadducees wanted Jesus out of the way for political reasons, the Pharisees for religious reasons.

However, for entirely different reasons than the ones presenting themselves earlier in the chapter (religious authority and taxes), the Sadducees formed a plot to use Jesus to undermine the Pharisee’s teaching about resurrection. They put a riddle before Jesus that was undoubtedly used often to stump the Pharisees about their belief in the afterlife. And, quite certainly, the Pharisees bit on it, resulting in hours and hours of theological debate, convincing no one and exhausting everyone.

(One might ask, “What did the Sadducees have to say about the fact that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead?” One must speculate that either they believed the rumors to be false, or that the incident with Lazarus was a grand ruse by the Pharisees to sway the Sadducees to their side. It could also be that, being so far removed from the people, they hadn’t even heard about Lazarus, although this latter scenario seems unlikely.)

So the Sadducees begin by quoting from the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy 25:5 to be exact. It is a law designed to preserve the family (or tribal) name of a Jewish male, and to preserve for the family the land that had been inherited. The law calls for levirate marriage: that is, if a man dies leaving a wife (and possibly children), it is the obligation of the nearest
Jesus said to them, “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage,
but those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from
the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;
for they cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels, and are sons of
God, being sons of the resurrection.

“But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the
burning bush, where he calls the Lord THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC,
AND THE GOD OF JACOB.

“Now He is not the God of the dead but of the living; for all live to Him.”

Some of the scribes answered and said, “Teacher, You have spoken well.”
For they did not have courage to question Him any longer about anything.

The riddle posed by the Sadducees provides an opportunity for Jesus to teach on the
afterlife. Notice that He does not enter into a debate with them, but simply corrects their belief system as well as that of the Pharisees who may have been listening in.

The first issue Jesus addresses is resurrection—He affirms it in no uncertain terms. He does this, not by criticizing the Sadducees, but by helping them see the flaws of their reasoning, a reasoning based on the assumption that marriage, or something equivalent to it, takes place in the afterlife. The term “this age” (v. 34) refers to earthly life, and Jesus states that, yes, in this earthly life, people get married. But that is not true in “that age” (v. 35) which refers to life after death; people do not get married in the afterlife. However, in Jesus explanation, He introduces the concept of resurrection with a condition: “those who are considered worthy….” This statement clearly implies that resurrection after death is dependent upon a declaration by God as to their worthiness. At this point in the teaching, Jesus does not elaborate on what constitutes worthiness.

Not only is there no marriage in the afterlife—Jesus affirms in verse 35—but there is not even any death (v. 36). “They” refers to “the sons of this age,” meaning persons who are or have been alive on earth. “They cannot even die anymore, because they are like angels” and are now “sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (italics mine for emphasis). By using these personal pronouns, Jesus is affirming that individuals still exist after death. In other words, the soul of each individual continues to exist after the person has died physically. If they are “considered worthy,” they exist as “sons of God and sons of the resurrection.” (The use of the definite article here could possibly mean that Jesus is referring to His own resurrection. Therefore, those who are considered worthy are those who are part of His resurrection by faith.) The clear implication here is that those who are not considered worthy are not considered sons of God, even though they still exist. Again, Jesus does not elaborate on the fate of those who are not considered worthy.

In verse 37, Jesus proves the fact of a resurrection by referring to the Pentateuch itself; that
41 Then He said to them, “How is it that they say the Christ is David’s son?
42 “For David himself says in the book of Psalms, ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,
UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.” ‘
43 Therefore David calls Him ‘Lord,’ and how is He his son?”

20:41-44 Jesus now turns the tables on the scribes and Pharisees, still gloating about their victory over the Sadducees concerning the resurrection. He asked them a very simple question that goes something like this: “You scribes teach that the Messiah will be a descendant of David. Yet David himself writes in the book of Psalms, ‘The Lord said to my Lord….’” (Jesus is quoting from Psalm 110:1.)

This question is based on pure logic. The name “LORD” in the Psalms is YHWH; that is, it is the proper name for God, translated as “Jehovah” in the KJV. However, Jesus would have used the word “Adonai” which was substituted for YHWH when saying God’s name aloud. In this verse, David states, “my Lord,” using the same word as the proper name for God. Therefore, Jesus questions the scribes as to how it can be that David would refer to his descendant as “YHWH”? Of course, this stumps the scribes and immediately halts their jubilation over the issue of the resurrection. Point: they don’t know as much as they think they do.

The other important use of the word “YHWH” is that this makes the Messiah equal to God. Therefore, the Messiah was not only referred to as the Son of David, but the Son of God.

What Jesus is informing the scribes in a rather veiled way is that the Messiah will indeed be a descendant of David and that not only will He come in human form, but He will be equal to God. If these
And while all the people were listening, He said to the disciples,

46 “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and chief seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets,

47 who devour widows’ houses, and for appearance’s sake offer long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation.”

experts of the law were to take a good look at the Scriptures, they would quickly realize that the Messiah was standing right in front of them.

There is another twist to Jesus’ use of this verse. Remember the scribes questioning Jesus about His authority at the beginning of the chapter? To bring the scribes back to this, Jesus includes all of Psalm 110:1: “Sit at my right hand…” This phrase refers specifically to the subject of authority. In ancient times, it was beneath the dignity of an emperor or king to make mundane, ordinary decisions concerning his kingdom; that was the responsibility of his “right hand man”; literally, the appointee who was seated at his right hand. (The queen usually sat on the left side of the emperor.) In order for the right hand man to exercise his responsibilities, he also had to be given authority to carry out those decisions. Thus, the phrase “Sit at My right hand” means to take the position of authority over the king’s kingdom. Therefore, Jesus is informing the scribes that not only is He the Lord (and therefore equal to God the Father), but that He is His own authority, for He has been appointed by God the Father to carry out the affairs of the kingdom. Matthew confirms this position by quoting one of the last words Jesus told His disciples before He ascended: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matt. 28:18).

Thus, in this chapter we have come full circle in Jesus’ encounter with the religious leaders. This round of theological jousting with them leads to Jesus warning His disciples and the people about His unscrupulous opponents who were probably still present (verses 45-47).

“The scribes….” The term “beware” means to be on guard as a military sentry would be on guard, on lookout for the enemy.

Sometimes the most loving thing a person can do is to confront someone with the truth, no matter how much it hurts. In warning the people and the disciples about the scribes, Jesus is also warning the scribes themselves.

Jesus provides four examples of pride (the scribes’ greatest sin), one example of a failure to love, and one example of self-deception. All are violations of the Scriptures.

The first four examples involve pride. “They walk around in long robes….” One has to picture a university professor walking around all day long in his graduation attire, complete with velvet tams, velvet panels, piping, full bell sleeves and pocket slips. The scribes and Pharisees took expensive robes and distinguished them with phylacteries and extra long, colored fringes. This made themselves look important and therefore validated their title, Pharisee, which means “one who is separated.” They wore
special clothing to serve as an example to the people that they were to remain separated from the world.

The second condemnation on their pride had to do with greetings. They loved the respect given by the crowd. It is the same problem as the distinguished physician who would prefer you call him “Dr. So-and-So” instead of by his first name. Unfortunately, the respect given the scribes and Pharisees was not on the basis of character or true godliness, but of the most artificial and superficial kind…position.

The third condemnation involved the “chief seats in the synagogues.” These were front-row seats near the sacred scrolls, reserved only for scribes, Pharisees and noblemen. This writer is reminded of churches he has attended where the pastor, associate pastor, and elders sat up on the stage facing the congregation, looking down on the lowly worshippers, dressed to the hilt in expensive three-piece suits, wearing red ties and spit-shined shoes, sitting in large cushioned chairs with armrests.

The fourth point of pride, “places of honor at banquets,” has already been discussed in chapter 14.

All of the gestures cited above point to the need for the religious leaders to exercise authority over others. Their authority was used like a hammer on an anvil, shaping people into conformity with the law as they interpreted it. The irony of their use of authority and coercion by intimidation was that the Romans did the same thing to them, and the scribes and Pharisees hated the Romans for doing it! Instead of swords and spears, the scribes used the law. Instead of threats of imprisonment, the religious leaders used the threat of excommunication by declaring a person a sinner or unclean. Instead of intimidation by force, the scribes used intimidation by legal knowledge few could obtain. And their ability to manipulate others with the law and legal matters led them to take advantage of the weak and vulnerable, the next on their list of sins—taking advantage of widows.

Scribes also served as executors of estates when a death occurred. It is believed many used their expertise and position of authority to manipulate widows into giving their money and inheritance to the temple or for support of the priesthood, not unlike how TV evangelists and faith healers take advantage of seniors and shut-ins today. It is a grave failure of exercising love for one another. Whereas the religious leaders were supposed to look after the widow and the weak, they took advantage of them, and they are without excuse. Those who rejected the Sadducees and took such pride in defending the roll of the prophets of Judah, violated the very Scriptures they defended (e.g., Isa. 1:21-23).

Finally, to make people believe they were zealously hungry for God, they spent long periods in prayer in the temple and in the synagogues.
Unfortunately, these prayers were not from a guiltless and righteous heart... they were from hearts darkened by their own self-deception. They believed that what they were doing was good for the cause, for Judaism, for the Jewish race, for the priesthood, and for the honor or God. There was a glaring blind spot in their belief system, however. They lacked the one thing that would have completely changed how they went about their business as keepers of the truth. They failed to understand and live out the second great commandment: they knew not how to love their neighbors as themselves.

For these scribes and Pharisees, Sadducees and Herodians, Jesus reserves the greatest judgment: “These will receive greater condemnation.” Whereas all men who reject the Messiah are condemned, these who were supposed to know and carry out the Scriptures they so adamantly defended will receive more condemnation. Those who are supposed to live by the First and Second Great Commandments, and who could quote volumes of Scripture, including all of the Pentateuch by memory, will experience a greater judgment. And it is not just an idle threat. The verb “will receive” is future tense... it will happen.

There is an important lesson here: knowledge of God’s word alone does not a righteous person make. God’s word must be accompanied by “fruit in keeping with repentance,” and the sure sign of that fruit is love, loving one another and loving one’s neighbor as oneself.

Period.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. In the very first verse of this chapter, Luke records that Jesus was “teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel.” What do you believe was the gospel that Jesus was teaching? It could not have been our traditional understanding of the gospel, that Jesus died for our sins. So what was it? Also, note that while He was preaching the gospel, He was confronted by opponents. Have you ever been confronted by opponents while preaching the gospel or teaching about the Bible? What was your response? Do you think you could defend your position by asking a question of your own?

2. In the parable of the vine-growers, what is ironic about Jesus’ use of Psalm 118? Has there been any instances in your life when you praised God at one moment and then rejected Him or His will in the next? Have there been times when you rejoiced when God answered a prayer and then were dismayed when He didn’t? How do expectations enter into your relationship with God?

3. Do you struggle with the issue of paying taxes to a government who may not spend your hard-earned dollars wisely? How do you feel about that? How do you think you would feel if 40-50% or your income went to the government and to the church by mandate? How do you cope today with the issue of taxes, and what is your spiritual perspective on the whole issue?

4. The Sadducees looked for ways to trick Jesus into denying there was a resurrection. Most Christians do not have a problem accepting the truth of the resurrection, but we may have difficulty with other truths. For example, do you actually believe that a person is going to hell if they die without having made a commitment to Jesus Christ? Do you believe that everyone on earth will be saved because God is a God of love and wouldn’t let anyone go to hell? Do you believe that all roads (other religions) lead to God?

5. What is the relationship between Jesus’ question to the scribes about David’s descendant being Lord, and Jesus’ quote of Psalm 118 in verse 17 (of Luke 20)? Can you come up with any questions about Jesus, His death, resurrection or teachings that might be used to stump your skeptic? When a person makes a silly statement about God, have you ever thought of asking, “What’s your authority for making that statement?” Or, when a person makes a false statement about the Bible, have you ever thought about asking, “Oh, so you’ve studied the Bible. Can you show me where that passage is?”

6. How did the scribes try to present themselves in front of others? Have you ever attended a church or Christian school where the leaders flaunted their authority, their position or their knowledge? How would you interpret Paul’s statement in 1 Cor. 8:1: “Knowledge makes arrogant, but love edifies”? Do you see a relationship between how the scribes took advantage of widows, and how TV evangelists, faith healers, crusaders and so-called Christian ministries take advantage of seniors and gullible people?

7. If you could come up with a summary statement for this chapter, what would it be? Something having to do with authority? With the resurrection? With apologetics (study of the defense of the faith)? With love? Now that you’ve come up with a theme or summary statement, how would you apply that to your own Christian walk? Is there anything in your life you feel you need to change that would be “fruits in keeping with repentance”?
20:1-8 – Confrontation in the Temple #1: The question about Jesus’ ________________________________

The question is, “Is Jesus acting on His own authority, or ________________________________?”

Jesus answers the question with a question: “Was John the Baptist…own authority, or ___________?”

20:9-18 – The parable of the wicked vine-growers:

In this parable, the “man” is God, the vineyard is Israel, the “slaves” are the prophets, the “son” is Jesus, and the wicked vine-growers are the __________________________________________________________

The motive of the vine-growers is to take control of the vineyard, a type of __________________________

The fate of the vine-growers actually occurs in ________________________________________________

The irony of Jesus’ quote about the “chief corner stone”: It’s from __________________________________

20:19-26 – Confrontation in the Temple #2: The question about ________________________________

The enormity of taxes, the image of Caesar, and the meaning of the word ____________________________

20:27-45 – Confrontation in the Temple #3: The question about ________________________________

The question of the resurrection is raised by the Sadducees to get back at the __________________________

The problem both parties have regarding the resurrection: __________________________________________

Why Jesus answered the question about resurrection from Exod. 3:6: ______________________________

Jesus’ own question to the scribes about David’s descendant: “Why call him _____________________?”

The cause for the warning about the scribes: they are ____________________________________________
20:1-8 – Confrontation in the Temple #1: The question about Jesus’ *authority*

- Identify for the disciple the three main sources of authority for the Jews in Jesus’ time.
- See if the disciple can determine why the issue of authority was so important concerning Jesus’s actions and teachings. How would the issue of authority affect the validity of his teachings and actions?

The question is, “Is Jesus acting on His own authority, or *God’s*?”

- What would be the difference in the response of the Jewish leaders if Jesus said that He was acting on God’s authority or on His own? How would the leaders try to discredit Jesus if He was acting on His own? How would they have responded if He stated that He was acting on God’s authority?
- Make sure that the disciple understands that no matter how Jesus answered the question put to Him by the Jewish leaders, it was a lose-lose situation for Jesus. Why? Because they would not have believed Him if He said that He was acting under God’s authority (which He was).
- The important point of application here is that when we Christians are confronted with hostile skeptics about our beliefs, simply providing the correct answer will not be enough to sway their opinion; their opinion has already been made up, and therefore, it is sometimes best not the attempt to answer their questions at all!

Jesus answers the question with a question: “Was John the Baptist…own authority, or *God’s*?”

- Help the disciple see the how clever Jesus’ answer was to the leaders. Help the disciple follow the logic if the religious leaders had answered one way or the other.
- Help the disciple see the importance of Jesus’ not answering the leaders’ question. He never gave them an answer. Why?
- Teach the disciple this important lesson: when debating disbelievers and skeptics, there is no necessity to defend oneself or beliefs. Would they believe anyway? The disciple needs to learn the lesson that attempting to answer all the skeptics’ questions may not always be the best course of action. Sometimes silence is the better choice.

20:9-18 – The parable of the wicked vine-growers:

- Make sure that the disciple understands that this parable was given to the crowd standing around Jesus, not to the religious leaders, even though it was all about them. Why? Because His ministry was to His followers, not to the religious leaders.

In this parable, the “man” is God, the vineyard is Israel, the “slaves” are the prophets, the “son” is Jesus, and the wicked vine-growers are the *religious leaders*

- It is important that the disciple is able identify all the various characters in the parable.
- Help the disciple see that the job of the vine-growers was to take care of the vineyard (Israel). How well were the vine-growers doing their job? Who were the vine-growers more interested in, the vineyard, the “man” (owner of the vineyard), or themselves?

The motive of the vine-growers is to take control of the vineyard, a type of *religious leaders*

- Make sure the disciple understands the motives of the vine-growers. What kind of “fruit” were they growing? How well were they taking care of the vineyard in the manner the owner thought the vineyard should be taken care of?
- Make sure the disciple understands the political intrigue involved in this parable according to the day.
- See if the disciple can make any comparison to the vine-growers in the church in America, and the vine-growers in the parable. How well are the vine-growers in the church in America doing? How much real spiritual fruit are they producing? Concerning those who are visible on television, who does the disciple believe they are more interested in, themselves and their success and notoriety, or the owner and the vineyard?
The fate of the vine-growers actually occurs in **AD 70**
- If the disciple is not already aware of the events of AD 70, review this. Make sure the disciple understands the effect of AD 70 on the Jewish nation and their religion.
- See if the disciple can determine who the "others" are in verse 16.

The irony of Jesus’ quote about the “chief corner stone”: It’s from **Psalm 118**
- The disciple will need some background into what a “chief cornerstone” was and what an important piece it was in building construction.
- See if the disciple can draw a relationship between Jesus being the chief cornerstone and the future building of the church.
- Make sure the disciple sees the irony of Jesus quoting from Psalm 118 in verse 17. (This will need to be compared to the crowds singing from Psalm 118 as Jesus entered Jerusalem.)

20:19-26 – Confrontation in the Temple #2: The question about **paying taxes to Rome**
- Provide the background for the next confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. What were the leaders motives, and were they being truthful in all that they said? Why was the subject of taxes so important to the Jews?

The enormity of taxes, the image of Caesar, and the meaning of the word “**render**”
- To understand the significance of this confrontation, the disciple will need to know the nature of the coinage (with Caesar’s image on it), the non-use of the coinage in the temple compound, and the so-called “poll tax” imposed by the Romans.
- Make sure the disciple understands the meaning of the word “render” in verse 25.
- Can the disciple make any comparisons to paying taxes in Jesus’ day to paying taxes in this present day? What should be the Christian’s response to paying taxes to an ungodly government?
- What is the ultimate lesson here concerning money? Is it a question of trust and provision? Ensure that the disciple can tie the lessons here to Jesus’ other lessons on money and possessions throughout Luke.

20:27-45 – Confrontation in the Temple #3: The question about **resurrection**
- Once again, some background information will be required for the disciple to clearly understand the issues involved in this third confrontation with the Jewish leaders.

The question of the resurrection is raised by the Sadducees to get back at the **Pharisees**
- Clarify the tension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees over the issue of resurrection.

The problem both parties have regarding the resurrection: **lack of knowledge**
- Show the disciple how both the Pharisees and the Sadducees had it wrong because of insufficient knowledge. How does that relate to debating others over biblical or theological issues?

Why Jesus answered the question about resurrection from Exod. 3:6: **from the Pentateuch**
- Remind the disciple what books of the Old Testament comprised the Pentateuch, and why Jesus answered the question about the Book of Exodus.
- Make sure that the disciple sees the relationship between Jesus’ answering Satan with Scripture during His temptation in the wilderness, and His answering the religious leaders with Scripture. What’s the relationship? (Note that the key relationship is that the religious leaders were Satan’s minions.)

Jesus’ own question to the scribes about David’s descendant: “Why call him **Lord?**” (LORD)
- Help the disciple see the important tactic of disarming the leaders by asking a question of His own.

The cause for the warning about the scribes: they are **predators**
- In what way were the scribes predators? In what way are some of today’s TV evangelists predators?
CHAPTER 21

Overview of Luke 21
Chapter 21 continues Jesus’ teaching in the temple. Having just warned His disciples concerning the indiscretions of the scribes, and how some take advantage of widows, He observes a poor widow presenting her offering in the temple. He recognizes her sacrifice and informs His disciples how her gift is so much more sacrificial than those who are rich. While on the subject of money, some of His followers acknowledge how the offerings given to the temple have resulted in lavish adornment. Jesus warns the disciples not to put much stake in the temple, as before long it will be destroyed. That raises the question of what it will be like in the end, when the Messiah comes as conquering king. The entire rest of the chapter is devoted to this subject.

What to look for in Luke 21
1. As you read this chapter, look for the clues of what a truly sacrificial offering might be.
2. Ask whether a magnificent structure for God’s people is really that important to God.
3. Look for Jesus’ teachings about whether or not Christians will come under persecution.
4. Observe the interplay between prophecy that is near future and that which is far future.
5. Look for one of two key events that must take place before the last days (i.e., the second coming of Christ).
6. Look for examples of false prophets and false teachers, and ask whether or not they exist today.
7. Jesus will give a specific instruction on how to stay “on the alert” regarding the last days. What is that instruction?

1 And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

21:1-4 Chapter 21 continues Jesus’ teaching in the temple during the week leading up to Passover, and His eventual crucifixion.

The Feast of Passover is observed the day before the Feast of Unleavened Bread. It is observed in the Hebrew month of Nisan, around April our time. Passover was held on Nisan 14; the Feast of Unleavened Bread began on Nisan 15 and ended on Nisan 21, seven full days.

Passover is the first and one of the most important feasts of the Hebrew calendar. Passover commemorates God sparing those who covered the doorposts and lintels of their houses with the blood of an unblemished lamb as the angel of death passed through Egypt, bringing death to firstborns. (Details of its observance can be found in Exodus 12 and 13.) Passover, of course, is a foreshadowing of the cross; the two doorposts and the lintel form the shape of a cross, and the blood of an unblemished lamb represents the blood of Jesus. That the angel of death “passes over” those homes covered with the blood of the lamb is a picture of salvation from judgment for those “covered” by the blood of Christ. Jesus Himself will have His blood shed on the Passover.
Immediately following Passover was the Feast of Unleavened Bread which commemorated the exodus of the Hebrews from Egypt. Passover, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, were one of the three yearly feasts Jewish males were required to attend and offer sacrifices, the other two being the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles (aka Feast of Booths).

Passover is explained here because of what follows concerning the poor widow. Jesus has just warned His disciples about the unscrupulous acts of the scribes and Pharisees, and how their pretentious attitudes betray their pride and self-importance (20:46-47). As part of characterizing their hypocrisy, Jesus mentions how some scribes, who also served as executors of estates when a family member died, took advantage of vulnerable and grief-stricken widows by convincing them that they should donate their savings and inheritance to the temple and priesthood. The scribes, in this case, were becoming monetary predators of the weak and vulnerable. Who knows what was promised the widows in return for their life savings. While on that subject, Jesus observes worshippers placing their tithes and offerings in the treasury.

The treasury of the temple was located in the Court of Women. Whereas the Courtyard of the Gentiles was a large open area surrounding the temple (it was also the location where animals were slaughtered, as well as the location of the merchants and moneychangers), the Court of Women was located within the temple itself. Men (but not Gentiles) were allowed in the Court of Women for the purpose of presenting offerings, and for men to enter the Holy Place. The treasury consisted of thirteen trumpet-shaped containers used to collect offerings. Seven of the trumpets were designated for tithes and offerings for the temple and priesthood (the temple tax). The other six trumpets were for freewill offerings, including alms for the poor.

Many (but not all) of the worshippers Jesus observes appear to be wealthy, based on their attire and the amount of the gifts they are offering. But in the mix of the crowd is a widow putting in “two small copper coins” (aka “mites” in KJV; “pennies” in NIV). These coins were the smallest coins in Jewish currency, worth less than a penny today. She may have been one of the widows taken advantage of by the scribes. The Greek words Luke chooses to describe her indicate that this “poor widow” was dirt poor, down to her last two coins, and therefore destitute. She willingly places her two remaining coins in the temple treasury, most likely the freewill offering. It is clearly a case of the poor contributing to the poor. This striking contrast between the rich worshippers and the poor widow provides an opportunity for Jesus to discuss matters of the heart,
3 And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;
4 for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”

and fits perfectly with the subject of Passover. The issue here is, “How much is one willing to sacrifice for the kingdom of God? Everything or just enough? Do I give out of my substance, or do I give out of my excess?”

The key phrase in verse 3 is “put in more.” More what? Certainly not more money. What the poor widow put in was more trust in God. Whatever the widow had in the past to sustain her has failed her. With her last two coins going into the treasury, she now must fully trust God for her care and provision. It is possible that her thoughts were, “Maybe these two coins will have a better chance of helping someone else survive.” It is an ultimate act of love.

With the destitute widow giving her all to the treasury, one is reminded instantly of the rich young ruler who was unwilling to trust Jesus fully, give all his possessions to the poor, and follow Him (18:18-27).

The widow’s donation of all her money is contrasted with the rich who only gave some of their money. In other words, the rich made sure they kept themselves rich and had all they needed to maintain their comfortable lifestyle. Whereas the amount of money they contributed to the treasure may have been a much greater sum, it was not more when it came to trusting God. In fact, Jesus indicates by the word “surplus” that this is leftover money; money that was no part of a real need. The phrase could also be translated “of their abundance” or “of their excess.” This was “extra” money, not an offering that cost them anything in terms of personal sacrifice. And, by giving only their surplus, they did not need to trust God at all. In essence, the rich were giving God their leftovers.

There is another twist to the story of the poor widow’s offering. The rich most likely were giving the majority of their offerings to the temple itself; that is, to the upkeep and maintenance of the lavish ornamentation of the temple, as will be noted in the next few verses. In contrast, the widow probably contributed her “two cent’s worth” to the freewill offering, much of which went to the poor. The irony is that all the money that went toward the temple would become futile in a few years when the temple is torn down stone by stone. However, the money going to the poor was invested in living beings who were worth far more than a mere building.

The lessons that can be learned from these few verses are multiple. First, God does not want our leftovers when it comes to our possessions. He wants us to give to a level that we are forced to choose between needs and wants. Second, God sees and knows about our offerings. He knows the intentions and thoughts behind them, and He knows whether or not they are contributed out of love or out of duty and
And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said,

“As for these things which you are looking at, the days will come in which there will not be left one stone upon another which will not be torn down.”

Luke notes the connection between the offerings in the temple treasury and the admiration by some of the disciples of the beautiful ornamentation on the temple. It is a logical progression, especially in light of the seven trumpets used to collect the temple taxes. The irony found in verse 5 should not be lost on the reader, but will require some explanation.

“Some were talking about the…beautiful stones and votive gifts….,” Herod’s temple and its surrounding courtyard was almost a mile long, and took over forty years to complete. The temple and walls were made of the purest of white marble, expertly quarried to fit perfectly with adjoining stones. The east side of the temple itself was covered with large plates of pure gold. When the sun rose in the morning on a clear day, the reflection of sunlight on the temple’s gold could be seen from the top of Mt. Nebo on the other side of the Jordan River in the east. Also adorning the temple proper, Herod had donated a “votive gift” of huge grape clusters of pure gold, about six feet in height, that hung above the entrance to the Holy of Holies. The Greek word translated “votive gifts” is the word anathemasin. It comes from the classical Greek word anatitheme, and generally refers to a “gift of a good kind.” The common form of the word, however (Koine Greek), is anathema from which we get the word “anathema.” This word is always used in a bad sense in the New Testament (e.g., Gal. 1:8) and is used to refer to a curse. The temple was adorned with many such “votive gifts,” which were gifts donated by wealthy Gentile kings, rulers and princes friendly to Israel. One cannot help but see the irony of the presence of “votive gifts” in the temple and over the Holy of Holies, denoted by worldly rulers, for the temple that was supposed to be a “house of prayer” for God’s people. Whereas the tabernacle built by Moses was constructed entirely through the freewill
7 They questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, when therefore will these things happen? And what will be the sign when these things are about to take place?”

8 And He said, “See to it that you are not misled; for many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am He,’ and, ‘The time is near.’ Do not go after them.

9 “When you hear of wars and disturbances, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”

offerings from God’s people, Herod’s temple was built entirely by taxing the people and relying upon votive gifts from himself (an Idumean; i.e., Edomite) and Gentile kings and rulers. It is not a great leap to see that the temple which was intended for prayer and worship was turned into an extravagant, if not flamboyant monument showing off the wealth and prosperity of a corrupt priesthood. That which was to be holy was transformed into that which was unholy. History would demonstrate that Herod’s great temple would indeed be cursed, as in AD 70, it was literally torn down stone by stone and all the gold ornamentation was plundered by Rome.

21:7 Astonished at Jesus’ statement “the days will come,” the disciples ask a logical question: “When…will these things happen?” The reader needs to keep the context of this question in mind. The disciples are essentially asking when Jesus plans to present Himself as the Messiah and establish His kingdom on the earth, thus conquering the Roman Empire and building His own temple. So the questions “when” and “what will be the sign” in verse 7 (italics mine) are in reference to what His disciples perceive as the immediate future, possibly before the end of the week. The definite article “the” before “sign” indicates the disciples were looking for one specific act or declaration by Jesus, officially announcing Himself as the Messiah.

Jesus answers neither the “when” nor the “what will be the sign,” but instead gives warnings that apply both to the immediate and distant future. The present-day Christian has the advantage of knowing that most of what Jesus presents in the next few verses are in reference to the end times at the end of the church age when He returns as the conquering king.

(Note: The following interpretations of the prophecies spoken here by Jesus are the writer’s opinion, especially regarding “near” versus “far” future events, and none should be taken as dogmatic. The writer requests grace from his readers, especially those who are well versed in end-times prophecy.)

19:8-11 Jesus clarifies the disciples’ misunderstanding by informing them that there will not be just one sign, but many. The first sign also serves as a warning: “many will come in My name…. ” The warning? “Do not go after them.”

It is indeed a mystery why so many seemingly devout, knowledgeable Christians “go after” false prophets and those who, against the admonition of Scripture, calculate a date for the Lord’s return. From Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah Witnesses to radio preachers and TV evangelists, date setters
Then He continued by saying to them, “Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be great earthquakes, and in various places plagues and famines; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. The hope of Jesus’ return becomes fertile soil for deceivers and charlatans. Recent newspaper ads proclaim that Christ has already come and is living in the world today waiting to reveal himself (e.g., “Lord Maitreya”). Such deceivers have been around since the early church and will continue to deceive believers until the day the Lord returns.

The second sign involves “wars and disturbances” and, as Matthew states, “rumors of wars.” Jesus instructs His disciples to “not be terrified.” Why? Because just as in the case of the poor, wars you will always have with you. Some historian has determined that in recorded history, there have only been a handful of years where there wasn’t a war going on somewhere in the world. During World War II, Christians were quite convinced that Hitler was the Antichrist, and had very good reasons to believe so. In spite of the Holocaust, it turned out not to be so. What did occur prophetically immediately after WWII was the establishment of the independent state of Israel in 1948. Thus, “…for these things (wars and disturbances) must take place first, but the end does not follow immediately.”

(It should be noted that some commentators on the end times believe that the events described here are not necessarily worldwide, but involve primarily the nation of Israel, and are therefore local in nature. This writer takes the position that the events are global in nature.)

Jesus continues His teaching concerning His return by broadening the scope of worldwide conflict; this is the third sign. The difference between what Jesus states in verse 10 and the previous verse is one of a global nature. When the disciples thought of wars, they thought locally: Egypt, Babylonia, Rome, Greece, and so forth. However, in the end times, entire continents will be involved, such as we have today: Russia, China, North America, Europe, and the various alliances formed among the powers, such as NATO, EU, the previous Soviet Union, United Nations, and so on. Verse 10 goes beyond the imaginations of the disciples and is more directed to those living in the end times.

The fourth sign involves “earthquakes…plagues and famines.” To be sure, these disasters have been around since the beginning of time. Most scholars believe they will intensify in the end times, and will be more global in nature. The threat of worldwide plague is indeed more possible than ever before due to global travel and the emergence of drug resistant diseases. An increase in the world’s population increases the risk of worldwide famine. Some theorists speculate that a reversal of the earth’s magnetic poles and continental shift could throw the world into complete chaos; secular scientists,
12 “But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name’s sake.  
13 “It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony.
14 “So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves;
15 for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.
16 “But you will be betrayed even by parents and brothers and relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death,
17 and you will be hated by all because of My name.

opportunity to bear testimony about Him and His power to save the lost (verse 13). Paul did this very thing as he testified before Felix in Acts 24. In other words, God purposefully allows Christians to suffer for the very cause Jesus suffered: to allow the lost an opportunity to hear the gospel, repent of sins, and be saved. By experiencing persecution, Christians are allowed the privilege of entering into Christ’s sufferings. That is why Peter and the apostles “went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

It is out of love for the lost that God allows His children to suffer persecution; the Christian must never lose sight of that. Were it not for the persecution of Christians who stand up for biblical values, how would the non-Christian ever see love and forgiveness offered in return? Were it not for Christians being thrown into prison, how would the lost prisoner ever hear the gospel? Today, Christians who are imprisoned in China, North Korea, Iran and a number of other countries have found extraordinary ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ, often resulting in underground churches behind prison walls. The response of Christians to persecution should be the incarnation of John’s statement, “For God so loved the world...” (John 3:16). When the Father sent His Son into the world, He sent Him to suffer and die for the sake of the lost. So, too, should be the purpose by which the Christian is sent into the world by Jesus: to suffer and die for the sake of the lost. Whether it be physical or economic suffering, the suffering that comes from sacrificial giving and service, the suffering that comes from long periods of intercession, or the dying to self that comes from putting aside one’s personal goals, ambitions and aspirations, the Christian is sent out to suffer and die for the sake of the lost. The love of God for the person who is lost should be imitated by Christians out of their love for the lost. Persecution is just part of the package of what it means to follow Jesus.

21:14-19 The entire discussion by Jesus concerning the persecution of His followers must have been a mystery to the disciples. How could they possibly visualize the last days when, at the same time, they are expecting Jesus to establish His kingdom on earth at any moment? It is quite possible that none of what Jesus was teaching was understood by the disciples, much less believed. Just as the disciples had difficulty accepting that Jesus would suffer at the hands of the Romans and be killed (as He had informed them in 18:32-33), they probably doubted that they themselves would ever suffer persecution. None of what Jesus said about the end times was believed until after the resurrection when Jesus met
18 “Yet not a hair of your head will perish. 19 “By your endurance you will gain your lives.

with His disciples over a forty-day period and helped them recall His teachings (see Luke 24:44-45). Regardless of whether the disciples believed Jesus’ words or not, Luke, witnessing persecution of Christians and having the benefit of hindsight, took the opportunity to teach future disciples of Jesus what lay in store. At the same time, he is laying the groundwork for what he will record in the Book of Acts.

Jesus’ instruction to His disciples begins by elaborating on “an opportunity for your testimony.” The word translated “prepare beforehand” is a classical Greek word referring to preparation of a formal speech, that is, an apologetic; they are not to attempt to “defend” themselves with a formal apologetic. Such preparation beforehand would suggest contrivance and conspiracy. They are to speak from the heart in the context of the circumstances in which they find themselves. The disciples are to gain confidence in their testimony by relying upon Jesus Himself to give them utterance. How exactly this happens has already been taught by Jesus in Luke 12:12—it will be the Holy Spirit who gives them utterance. This utterance will be accompanied by spiritual wisdom, wisdom so great that those who oppose the disciples will be unable to argue against them without falsifying the evidence. The very scenario Jesus predicts is written about by Luke in Acts 5:27-39.

The second part of Jesus’ instruction about the last days is that family and friends will turn against them. Some will even betray them to the point of death. There is no record, however, that any of the disciples ever suffered this fate. This suggests that Jesus’ warning here pertains to His followers throughout the church age, and in particular, the last days. Indeed, this very scenario is being seen today in Muslim and Jewish families where one of the members becomes a follower of Jesus Christ. They are not only cast out of the household, they are threatened with, and often experience, death at the hands of family members or local authorities, all because they have called upon the name of Jesus.

Verse 18 seems puzzling if one believes it pertains to one’s earthly life. But this cannot be, as Jesus has just stated in verse 16 that “they will put some of you to death.” Church history indicates that all the apostles but one, John, were martyred. The key to understanding this verse is the word “perish.” The Greek word is *apollumi* and is the word used most often to describe spiritual death (e.g., John 3:16; 10:28). Thus the promise of verse 18 is that even if one suffers physical death, spiritual life awaits them. The phrase “not a hair of your head” is a Hebrew idiom referring to one’s entire being.

Verse 19 is Luke’s version of Matthew’s record, “But the one who endures to the end, he will be
20 “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then recognize that her desolation is near.
21 "Then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains, and those who are in the midst of the city must leave, and those who are in the country must not enter the city;
22 because these are days of vengeance, so that all things which are written will be fulfilled.
23 “Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;
24 and they will fall by the edge of the sword, and will be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

In comparing these versions, one must remember that Jesus never taught anything only once. He may have made this statement dozens of times, even during the week that He was teaching in the temple compound before Passover. The reason is simple: people who wanted to hear Jesus came and went. He probably had groups passing through, and to each group He would teach the same things, not always saying it the same way. Therefore, one must not fret that the gospel writers record Jesus’ statement differently. In Luke’s case, he is simply writing what others told him about Jesus’ last days of teaching.

That these teachings are relevant to church history has been borne out many times. During the persecution of Christians in the reign of Diocletian in the 3rd and 4th centuries, many Christians, especially clergy, renounced their faith under threat of death if they didn’t align themselves with the Roman Imperial cult and burn their Christian books. When Constantine ended Christian persecution in AD 313, many of the clergy who had renounced the faith wanted back into church leadership. This caused quite a bit of controversy, as some in the church believed that the lapsed clergy should not be allowed to resume their ministry because they had renounced their faith, and others felt they should be forgiven and allowed to resume offering the sacraments. This controversy caused a severe schism in the church (particularly North Africa) resulting in what is known today as the Donatist Controversy.

21:20-24 Jesus now turns His attention primarily to the immediate future; that is, not the “last days” but the events that are to take place between AD 68 and 70 when Jerusalem is destroyed by the Roman general Titus. “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies…” refers specifically to these events, as indicated by the pronoun “you.” However, that is not to say that His statement here refers only to the immediate future. It refers to future events as well. Therefore, it is important for the reader to understand this, as similar events will also occur in the last days. Jesus did not know exactly when these events would take place, either the near or the far future, for the time table belongs to God the Father.

Almost all prophecy, therefore, contains both near and far future events. Examples include Isaiah 1:21 – 2:4, Isaiah 61:1-2, and Joel 2:28-32 just to name a few. The same was true in Jesus’ teachings about future prophetic events. One must remember that even though Jesus was God, and therefore omniscient (all-knowing), He willingly limited His omniscience when He was incarnated into human flesh. Although it had been revealed to Jesus what would take place in the future, so as to prepare the
church, He did not always know exactly when they would take place. For example, in Matthew 24:36, Jesus informs His disciples, “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” Again, in Acts 1:7 He states, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”

Jesus’ instructions to His disciples and His crowd of followers are dire warnings about what lay in Jerusalem’s future, both near and far. Notice that Jesus didn’t specify “When you see Jerusalem surrounded by the Roman armies…” It had been revealed to Jesus that Jerusalem would suffer a terrible fate for rejecting Him, but apparently He didn’t know exactly when or by whom. He knows the target of the armies—Judea and Jerusalem. He also refers to these days as “day of vengeance” which most likely refers to God’s vengeance on the Jewish leadership for their corruption and for their rejection of the Messiah. However, these prophecies of Jerusalem’s fate pertain also to the far future during the last days, and all the warnings associated with the near future can be equally applied to the last days.

“…So that all things which are written will be fulfilled” most likely refers to the many Old Testament prophecies concerning God’s judgment on wickedness (e.g., Zeph. 1:14-18; Zech. 14:1-5).

Verse 23 is undoubtedly a message that no mercy will be given by the armies who attack Jerusalem. Pregnant women, as well as nursing mothers and their children, “will fall by the edge of the sword.” The Jewish historian Josephus indeed wrote that these terrible things happened when the Roman army invaded Jerusalem. Other historians indicate that many Christians did indeed flee Jerusalem before the Roman invasion, including the apostle John, taking with him Mary the mother of Jesus, establishing a new home in Ephesus.

Verse 24 is perhaps one of the most important verses in this section of Scripture in regard to the last days. Jesus clearly states, “…and Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” This reference to “the times of the Gentiles” is found only here in Luke. The phrase “trampled under foot” is a metaphor for conquest and occupation. (Paul uses this same metaphor in Ephesians 1:22 when he writes, “And He put all things in subjection under His feet…”) This metaphor refers to subjection of a kingdom or domain by a conquering kingdom. What Jesus is stating here is that Jerusalem will be conquered by a Gentile nation (the Romans, in AD 70) and remain in Gentile hands until “the times of the Gentiles” are fulfilled.” There are two possible interpretations to the fulfillment of the “times of the Gentiles,” however. First, and most likely, the fact that the word
25 “There will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth dismay among nations, in perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves.

26 men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world; for the powers of the heavens will be shaken.

27 “Then they will see THE SON OF MAN COMING IN A CLOUD with power and great glory.

28 “But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

“times” is plural could indicate that there will be a revolving door of Gentile occupation. This indeed has occurred over the centuries, as the Holy Lands have been occupied by the Romans, the Muslims, the Crusaders, the Palestinians, the British, and only since 1948 has been back in the hands of Jews. The other possible interpretation of the fulfillment of the times of the Gentiles could refer to the church itself which is now predominantly Gentile. This second interpretation is less likely due to the fact that “times” is plural; if it were referring to the church, it would most likely be singular.

What is even more noteworthy by the phrase “until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” is that it is one of only two specific events that must happen before the approach of the last days. The other is found in Revelation 6:11 which states, “...rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also.” In other words, the end times will not occur until these two things are complete: the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled, and those Christians destined for death has been completed. As one will notice, there are no dates associated with either of these events, and they are impossible to measure. The completion of these two events, however, will be the trigger for the final days.

21:25-28 Jesus now closes in on the global events that will occur just prior to His second coming. These events will be so terrifying that people will be “fainting from fear.” What signs are in the sun and moon and stars are not specified by Luke, but Matthew indicates that “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky” (Matt. 24:29). Again, this description has caused some theorists to hypothesize that the only way these events could occur is if there were to be a reversal of the earth’s magnetic poles, for what will be witnessed will be seen globally. It is theorized that a reversal of the earth’s magnetic poles could result in continental shift, the triggering of unprecedented volcanic activity, earthquakes without measure in intensity and frequency, and, of course, complete disruption of the economy. Other theorists see the same results from a giant asteroid or comet impacting the earth. Still others predict the eruption of super volcanoes. No one really knows, and no one will know for certain until the events actually occur. That is why the Christian must not listen to every voice of doom that comes along. In most of what Jesus describes regarding the end times, many occur on a daily basis and have occurred throughout history. It’s when all the events come together at the same time on a global level that the end times are
Then He told them a parable: “Behold the fig tree and all the trees; as soon as they put forth leaves, you see it and know for yourselves that summer is now near. So you also, when you see these things happening, recognize that the kingdom of God is near. Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.

Verse 27 describes what will happen after all the future events have taken place: the abomination of desolations (as recorded in Matthew), the tribulation, and the events described above. After all these events, or more likely, at the height of them, the Son of Man will return “with power and great glory.” Jesus therefore doesn’t end His teaching about the last days on a gloomy note. In verse 28, He provides His followers with hope: “…straighten up and lift up your heads, for your redemption is drawing near.”

There are a number of lessons in all these teachings about the end times. First, be vigilant, for only the Father knows when exactly these events will occur. Second, no matter how bad things get, don’t lose faith and don’t give up hope. Jesus is always there for you. Third, be careful who you listen to and follow. Many, many well-intentioned Christians and pastors have predicted the beginning of the end times, and so far, not a single one has been correct. Fourth, when everyone else’s love grows cold, don’t let your love grow cold. Keeping faith until the end means loving one another and loving your neighbor as yourself until the end. Love is the true mark of the disciple of Jesus Christ; not Bible knowledge nor the elaboration of doctrine, not eloquence of preaching nor the ability to build a megachurch, and certainly not lofty theological credentials nor grand ministry accomplishments. What defines a Christian is his or her ability to demonstrate love for others and love toward others, whether that involves everyday relationships, a ministry outreach to the poor, or a passion for lost souls. It is when everyone else’s love grows cold that the Christian is called to shine with love that penetrates the darkest of times and the gloomiest of circumstances.
perseverance. Unlike “men fainting from fear and the expectation of the things which are coming upon the world” (v. 26), followers of Jesus are to rejoice, for “your redemption is drawing near” (v. 28). The reader should note, too, that the word “near” appears five times in this chapter alone. Therefore, the overriding instruction is to be ready at all times, for the events predicted could happen at any time and are indeed “near.”

Verse 32 has been subject to much interpretation. Most conservative scholars take the position that “this generation” is the generation living when the far future events take place; those events that immediately precede the second coming of Christ. Indeed, when these verses are read in Matthew, where he goes into much greater detail, that is probably a correct interpretation. This interpretation begs a question, however: why did Luke omit mention of the abomination of desolations, such an important part of the teaching concerning the last days, and an integral part of “all these things”? Being a traveling companion of the apostle Paul, and certainly familiar with Paul’s writings to the church in Thessalonica, it would seem quite odd that Luke would omit this important event. This writer believes that Luke purposefully omitted the abomination events that clearly pointed to a far future event in favor of focusing on the near future event; that is, the pending destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Luke was a student of history and accompanied Paul to Jerusalem prior to Paul’s being transferred to house arrest in Rome upon his appeal to Caesar. It is possible that Luke could see the handwriting on the wall regarding the Jews rebellious relationship with the Romans. Even though his visit to Jerusalem was 20 to 25 years before the actual destruction of Jerusalem, events may have been unfolding at the time of his writing of the gospel. This would explain why Luke inserts verses 20-25, as his gospel would have been written sometime after his visit, perhaps as much as a decade later. And why would Luke want to focus on the near future events regarding the fall of Jerusalem by the Roman armies? The answer is simple: Luke is attempting to convince his Gentile readers that Jesus is the Son of God, and that if what He predicted about Jerusalem came true, then everything else He said and taught must be true, especially regarding the last days.

All of the above is this writer’s opinion, of course, and should be taken only as food for thought.

The point is this for today’s reader: everything Jesus predicted came true regarding the near future, and therefore, everything Jesus taught about the far future will come true as well. Indeed, His “words will not pass away” regardless of what happens in the near or far future.
“Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;

for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth.

But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”

Jesus ends His teaching on the last days with a warning: don't be lulled into thinking these events could not possibly happen in your lifetime. His examples of a lack of preparedness are those that often accompany a lifestyle of leisure, pleasure, and obsession with personal needs and wants. The words “weighted down” come from an old Greek word meaning “to press down,” as if in carrying a heavy load on one’s back. The word “dissipation” is a medical term that refers to a hangover after one has had too much to drink. “Drunkenness” is from a common Greek word referring to intoxication. Lastly, “the worries of life” refers to cares, anxieties, preoccupation or even obsession with the things of the temporal world to the degree that anything of eternal value is neglected. The warning is as clear as the responsibility: it is the responsibility of the disciple of Jesus Christ to stay alert and to stay on top of things when it comes the matters of the heart and matters of the kingdom of God. Therefore, disciples are to maintain loving relationships and deeply involve themselves in the matters of the kingdom of God.

Verse 35 clearly indicates that these instructions are relevant to all believers everywhere at all times, not just to those who were listening to Him on the Portico of Solomon. The far future events Jesus has described here will be global in nature, and no believer anywhere will not be affected at the time of their appearing.

Verse 36 is Jesus’ instruction on how to “Be on guard” and how to “keep on the alert”—prayer. Prayer is the practice that keeps the believer in a vital, living relationship with the Father. One cannot be hung over and still be effective in prayer. One cannot be drunk and expect prayers to be heard and answered. One cannot be so concerned about his or her own needs, wants, ambitions, aspiration and daily concerns that time and effort isn’t carved out of the daily agenda to spend time praying earnestly, fervently and effectively. Prayer keeps the believer alert because praying for believers everywhere keeps the believer informed of what is happening in the world. Today, all true followers of Jesus Christ should be praying for those brothers and sisters who are experiencing oppression, persecution, imprisonment and even death at the hands of the enemies of Christ. Not to do so is a terrible failure to love one another.

And believers need to pray for themselves as well. No one is beyond the temptation to renounce Christ, especially when suffering is involved. Believers can dis-believe just as quickly and easily as they can believe, given the right circumstances. The apostle Peter thought he would never deny Jesus, but
Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet.

And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.

It is appropriate that Luke ends Jesus’ teaching on the last days by His call to prayer. And it is appropriate that Luke then informs his readers that prayer is exactly what Jesus did when He knew His death was drawing near. When Luke states that Jesus “would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet,” he implies that Jesus went out to pray. It is quite probable that Jesus went alone, although this is not certain. And so there is a pattern: ministry by day, prayer by night. Would that every follower of Jesus Christ abide by such a pattern.

And in the morning, with the sun rising in the east and reflecting brilliantly off the gold doors of the temple, the people streamed to Jesus to hear Him teach on the kingdom of God. Where else could one find such irony? The brilliant light of the rising sun was being overshadowed by the soon to be risen Son of God. The magnificent temple raised up by a debauched royalty and corrupt priesthood, surpassed by a holy temple soon to be raised up from the grave. The temple itself, symbolizing a lost world, grudgingly hosting the only One who could save it from perishing. And the people themselves, hanging on Jesus’ every word, unable to comprehend the gravity of His teachings about the near and far future, listening but not understanding, hearing but not comprehending, sensing something wonderful was about to happen, but totally ignorant about what that wonderful thing might be.

Little did they understand that the greatest Passover of all was just days away.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. This chapter begins where the previous chapter left off: Jesus is teaching in the temple just prior to the Passover. At the end of the previous chapter, He warns His listeners about the unscrupulous behavior of some scribes regarding their interaction with widows. At the start of this chapter, Jesus observes a widow donating “two pennies” to the temple treasury. Explain why Jesus made the statement, “This poor widow put in more than all of them.”

2. Regarding the poor widow’s donation, how does Jesus’ statement affect you in terms of your giving to God’s work? Can you honestly say that you are giving out of your substance rather than out of your abundance? How does this teaching of Jesus mesh with Jesus’ teachings about possession?

3. At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus’ disciples point out that the temple itself is a very magnificent structure. They admire its expensive ornamentation. Take time to compare their awe of the building with church structures you are familiar with. Do not compare only liturgical churches and cathedrals, but evangelical structures with expensive lighting, sound systems, in-house television, family centers, and multimedia. Is there a comparison here?

4. Jesus warns His disciples that they will indeed be persecuted in His name. Do you know of those who is being persecuted as a Christian? If so, are you currently praying for them?

5. Reread Jesus’ warnings about false prophets. Do you know of any, or have you heard of any? What kind of a following do they have? What is wrong about attempting to predict the time of Jesus’ return? What two things must happen before the end times begin?

6. At the end of the chapter, Jesus instructs His disciples how to “be on guard.” What is that instruction? How does your lifestyle fit into His instruction, and how does your lifestyle compare to the negative examples He gave regarding those who are not ready for His return.

7. Can you honestly say that you are ready for Christ’s return? If yes, why? If not, why?
In Luke 21, Jesus continues His teaching in the temple during the week before Passover. He has just warned His listeners concerning the evil practices of the scribes. Scribes were experts in Jewish law, and therefore helped with legal situations. One of their tasks was to serve as executors of estates when someone passed away. Thus, chapter 20 ends with verse 47 where Jesus states, “Beware the scribes…who devour widow’s houses.”

21:1-4 – Jesus observes the “poor widow” putting in __________________________________________________

Application: What is the difference between giving out of “surplus” and giving out of “poverty”?

21:5-6 – Jesus instructs His disciples on their observation of the temple’s ____________________________________________.

21:7-19 – Jesus’ first teaching on
- 8 – The warning against false teachers, false prophets, false ____________________
- 9 – The warning against wars and ____________________
- 10 – The sign of ____________________
- 11 – The sign of ____________________
- 12-13 – The sign of persecution and the opportunity to ____________________
- 14-15 – The instruction on how to prepare for ____________________
- 16-19 – The promise of ____________________

21:20-24 – Jesus’ first teaching on
- 20-24 – Teaching on the utter destruction of Jerusalem and its ____________________
- 24 – The significance of verse 24: “The times of the Gentiles are ____________________”

21:25-28 – Jesus’ second teaching on
- 25-26 – The global observation concerning ____________________
- 27-28 – The appearance of the Son of Man: an event to be ____________________

21:29-33 – The parable of the ____________________
- 29-31 – The signs of the appearance of the Son of Man will be obvious to those ____________________
- 32-33 – The key teaching: Jesus’ words ____________________

21:34-36 – Jesus’ instructions on how to prepare for the coming of the ____________________
- 34-35 – First, ____________________
- 36 – Second, ____________________

21:37-38 – Jesus’ instruction on how to be on guard and how to be alert: ____________________
In Luke 21, Jesus continues His teaching in the temple during the week before Passover. He has just warned His listeners concerning the evil practices of the scribes. Scribes were experts in Jewish law, and therefore helped with legal situations. One of their tasks was to serve as executors of estates when someone passed away. Thus, chapter 20 ends with verse 47 where Jesus states, “Beware the scribes…who devour widow’s houses….”

21:1-4 – Jesus observes the “poor widow” putting in all she had to give
Application: What is the difference between giving out of “surplus” and giving out of “poverty”?  
- Help the disciple discover the relationship between the last verse of the previous chapter and the first part of this chapter, regarding widows.
- This observation by Jesus is capable of providing quite a bit of discussion on giving. Does this verse teach that every person should give all one has? Make sure the discussion stays focused on trusting God for all of one’s needs.

21:5-6 – Jesus instructs His disciples on their observation of the temple’s ornate grandeur.
- There may need to be a discussion on what “votive” gifts are. Help the disciple understand the context in which Jesus’ audience point out the grandeur of the temple, and how it was laden with gold.
- Show the disciple how their observation about the temple leads into Jesus’ discussion concerning the “end times.”

21:7-19 – Jesus’ first teaching on far future events
- Inform the disciple that there are many different interpretations regarding prophecy about the end times immediately preceding the second coming of Christ; that not everyone would agree with the interpretation of “far future” and “near future” events, and that oftentimes the prophecies overlap, so that the differentiation is difficult. Clearly state that this outline is just one person’s opinion…the writer’s.
- Inform the disciple that even Jesus did not know exact dates regarding future events. This is a good place to warn the disciple not to pay attention to anyone who announces they know when Jesus is returning, and that great harm has been done to Christians who listen and pay attention to these deceivers.
- Help the disciple find the most important lessons on these end-times prophecies, such as can be found at the end of the outline, and verses 13-19
- Let the disciple know that liberal scholars believe that all of these words were composed by the Early Church fathers after the fact; that Jesus couldn’t possibly have actually predicted the events of AD 70.
- Inform the disciple that many of the events presented here are always happening throughout history, and that almost every generation of Christians have believed that they were living in the end times.

8 – The warning against false teachers, false prophets, and false messiahs
9 – The warning against wars and rumors of wars
10 – The sign of nation against nation
11 – The sign of worldwide natural disasters
12-13 – The sign of persecution and the opportunity to give testimony about Jesus
14-15 – The instruction on how to prepare for the coming persecution
16-19 – The promise of eternal preservation
- In this section, emphasize verses 13-19, and that is what he or she should be focusing on.

21:20-24 – Jesus’ first teaching on near future events
20-24 – Teaching on the utter destruction of Jerusalem and its inhabitants
20-24 – The event came true in AD 70 by the Roman General Titus
24 – The significance of verse 24: “The times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”
- Inform the disciple that although the writer has labeled these events as “near future,” the lessons taught here by Jesus are also applicable to “far future” events.
21:25-28 – Jesus’ second teaching on *far future events*
25-26 – The global observation concerning *heavenly disturbances*
27-28 – The appearance of the Son of Man: an event to be *hoped for*
- Emphasize to the disciple that the events described here will be global in nature, so that the whole world will be aware of what is happening.
- Even though these global events will cause panic and fear for those who do not have the hope of the second coming, these events should bring great joy and comfort to Christians. Therefore, these events will help determine who is a true believer and who is a nominal Christian.
- It is important that the disciple understands how the true Christian is to act if these events were to take place during his or her lifetime…their love for others will be tested. Whereas the rest of the world will descend into chaos and trying to save oneself, the Christian must stand firm by faith and maintain the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Living out love for others will be as great a testimony to the world as standing up and giving a defense during persecution.

21:29-33 – The parable of the *fig tree*
29-31 – The signs of the appearance of the Son of Man will be obvious to those *who are looking*
32-33 – The key teaching: Jesus’ words *will not pass away (will come true)*
- There may need to be an explanation about verse 32, regarding the words “this generation.” One interpretation is that the word “this” refers to Jesus’ audience as He is giving the prophecy. Therefore, the prophecy applies only to the events that happened in AD 70. Another interpretation is that “this” refers to the generation who will be experiencing the global events immediately prior to His second coming that are described in verse 25. A third interpretation is that “this” can refer to both.
- Inform the disciple that everyone believes their interpretation is the correct one! Therefore, the writer’s opinion is that one should not be too dogmatic in their opinion. While the discipler may have an opinion of his or her own, it is best—and most loving—to recognize that there are other interpretations, and those who support other opinions should be respected.

21:34-36 – Jesus’ instructions on how to prepare for the coming of the *Son of Man*
34-35 – First, *be on your guard*
36 – Second, *be on the alert by staying in prayer!*
- Emphasize to the disciple that these verses are the key to Jesus’ teaching on the above events. The disciple is to be on guard and stay alert.
- Have the disciple read again verse 36. Ask the disciple how he or she plans on being “on guard” and keeping “on the alert.”
- If the disciple does not have an effective prayer life at this point, that should be something the discipler should be teaching!

21:37-38 – Jesus’ instruction on how to be on guard and how to be alert: *pray!*
- See if the disciple can fill in the blank without the discipler giving the answer first.
- Do not let the disciple get carried away by focusing on future prophecies and raising endless questions that probably have no certain answer. Do not let the disciple dismiss the important lessons at the beginning of the chapter in regard to the widow’s sacrificial giving.
- When this chapter is completed, the disciple should walk away with these important principles:
  1. Sacrificial giving is an important indicator of one’s trust in God and love for Jesus’ kingdom.
  2. Jesus is coming back, and that is a great hope for all true Christians.
  3. The true disciple should not fear the future…it is a glorious hope.
  4. The disciple needs to be on the alert and be on guard at all times.
  5. Prayer is the key to giving, trusting, hoping, having courage and staying alert.
CHAPTER 22

Overview of Luke 22
Chapter 22 represents the end of one journey for Jesus and the beginning of another. He has completed His ministry and teaching among the masses, and now will concentrate on His final journey to the cross. We will see that one of Jesus’ disciples, Judas Iscariot, prompted by Satan, formulates a plot to betray Jesus to the religious authorities who have decided to do away with Him. We will see Luke’s account of the Last Supper where Jesus gives final instructions to His disciples, and institutes what we now call the Lord’s Supper (Communion). Jesus will introduce the new covenant during the supper. Because the disciples begin discussing among themselves who will be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, Jesus teaches them an important lesson about having the attitude of a servant. After the supper, Jesus will lead His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane where He will give them an important instruction about prayer. While in the garden, Jesus will be captured by the temple guards and led away to stand trial before the Jewish Council, the Sanhedrin. While Jesus is being abused by the temple guards, Peter will deny Him three times.

What to look for in Luke 22
1. Read Exodus 12 before reading this chapter. It will provide an excellent context for understanding the timing and events that take place in this chapter.
2. Look for the disciple who betrays Jesus, and the entity directing this disciple. Look for the motives behind the betrayal.
3. Look for the key events during what we call the “Lord’s Supper” (aka “Communion” or “Mass”). Determine what the “elements” represent, and which one represents the new covenant.
4. Observe the debate among the disciples concerning who will be greatness in the kingdom. See how Jesus settles the debate.
5. After the supper, Jesus will lead the disciples to the garden of Gethsemane. Look for the important instruction He gives them, and why.
6. Look for Peter’s denial of Jesus. Consider why Peter denies Him, and look for Peter’s rationalization.
7. When Jesus appears before the Council, they will ask only one question. Observe Jesus’ answer and consider how important that answer is today.

1 Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching.
2 The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.

22:1-2 Luke now turns from Jesus’ teaching in the temple to the events surrounding His crucifixion. Luke reminds the reader of the important context of the Passover. The phrase “the Feast of Unleavened Bread” is the only instance this entire phrase is found in the New Testament, as the other gospel writers abbreviate to “Unleavened Bread” or simply “Passover.” It is assumed Luke used the entire phrase for the sake of his Gentile readers. These two events, Passover and Unleavened Bread, are distinguished by what they celebrate; however, the terms are often used interchangeably throughout Scripture. As written earlier, Passover always occurred on Nisan 14 and celebrated the night the angel of death “passed over” those homes in Egypt covered by the
blood of an unblemished lamb. Throughout Egypt, those homes not covered by the blood of the lamb lost the firstborn. It is therefore the night that the firstborn son of Pharaoh was taken. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, however, follows immediately on Nisan 15-21, and celebrates the swift flight from Egypt by the Israelites, the Exodus. Escaping from Egypt happened so quickly that the Israelites were instructed not to put yeast in their bread, for there would be no time for the leaven to rise. Luke notes that the Passover was about to take place.

In verse 2, note that it is the “chief priests and scribes” that are heading up the plot to kill Jesus. Neither Pharisees nor Sadducees are mentioned here, but surely some were in the mix. In the context of killing Jesus, it is important to note that it was the religious leadership and the heads of the nation that were plotting to do away with Him, not an isolated sect of the Sanhedrin. The significance is that they represent Israel, and as they go, so goes the nation. They are the spiritual and cultural representatives of the whole nation of Israel, and as they are to suffer judgment for their rejection of the Messiah, so will the whole nation. In spite of all the confrontations with the religious leaders, verse 2 is also the first mention by Luke that the Jewish leadership wanted to “put Him to death.” Jesus had predicted His death three times before (9:22; 18:33; 20:15), but only now has the leadership itself come to that conclusion. Why?

The writer suspects that the call for Jesus’ death goes back to chapter 20, verses 1-8. The issue is one of authority. The Jewish leadership was well aware that they were losing their hold on the people. Jesus was not only outsmarting and out maneuvering the Jewish leaders, but word was getting around that He was making them look silly in the eyes of the people. Additionally, He was exposing their hypocrisy, their sins, their greed, their evil methods, their pride, and their predatory ways with the people. He was undermining their authority by exposing their mishandling of the Scriptures, and taking away from them their greatest weapon: the oppressive laws regarding the Sabbath. The people were flocking to Jesus and away from the religious authorities, so much so that by now the religious leaders fear loss of control of the people.

Concomitantly, the religious leaders feared Jesus Himself. One must not assume that, as in the case of the people, the religious leaders were hoping for the arrival of the Messiah. They had made a life for themselves apart from the need for a Messiah. Therefore, if Jesus was the Messiah, He would surely destroy all that they had worked so hard for: first, a relatively peaceful coexistence with the Romans who rewarded them for keeping the peace; second, power...
3 And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve.

4 And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them.

5 They were glad and agreed to give him money.

6 So he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the crowd.

over the people who the leaders could always turn over to the Romans if they caused trouble; and third, their luxurious, comfortable lifestyles, made possible by the temple taxes and kickbacks from the Romans. On the other hand, if Jesus was not the Messiah, He would end up causing riots among the people, calling for the overthrow of the Romans, and thus destabilizing the status quo. Such attempts had been made before by men named Theudas and Judas of Galilee, as mentioned by Gamaliel in Acts 5:33-39. They had always failed, but they also had always destabilized the religious government by putting everyone in authority at risk.

Thus, it is consistent with the character of Israel’s religious leaders that they wanted Jesus out of the way. They saw no other option than to kill Him, as all their other attempts to discredit Him had failed. But when? As to the when, it would perhaps have to be sometime after the Feast of Unleavened Bread when the great crowd of pilgrims had left Jerusalem and, therefore, less chance of a riot. And how would they get rid of Him? No doubt, that was the number one item on the agenda at the Council meetings.

Fortunately for them, they had a man on the inside, a traitor by the name Judas Iscariot.

22:3-6 Judas Iscariot was not only a disciple of Jesus, he was one of the twelve men specifically chosen by Jesus to be an apostle. “Iscariot” probably is a shortened form of “Ish Kerioth” meaning “a man from Kerioth, a town in southern Judah. (The name Iscariot is attached to Judas here because there was another one of the twelve also named Judas, “Judas the son of James” [Luke 6:6]. Judas’ name is also distinguished by the phrase, “Judas, who was betraying Him” [Matt. 26:25].)

Luke makes specific mention that Satan entered into Judas. The dynamics of how Satan entered into Judas are beyond the scope of this commentary, but based on other references in Scripture, Satan enters into people through a weakness of the flesh that violates the commands of God. In the case of David, Satan entered through pride and disobedience (1 Chron. 21:1). In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, Satan entered through greed and lying to God (Acts 5:1-11). What motivated Judas to betray Jesus is never completely spelled out in Scripture, but one theory is that Judas actually believed Jesus was the Messiah and was trying to force His hand. If Jesus were to be seized by the authorities, it might force Him to show Himself as the Messiah and thus overthrow the Romans. Another theory is that Judas simply had a weakness of the flesh called greed: he saw the chance to make some money on the side. Judas did indeed have a weakness for money, as the
apostle John points out that Judas, being the keeper of the money box, “used to pilfer what was put into it” (John 12:6).

Satan’s motive, however, was obvious—undermine Jesus’ mission. Luke mentions Satan by name five times in his gospel, and cites Satan as “the devil” an additional five times. There is no question that the gospel writers and the apostles knew Satan to be a real entity, as he is referred to a number of times in the Old Testament (e.g., Job and Zechariah). Satan, by tempting Jesus in the wilderness, has already failed once to thwart His mission, but he hasn’t yet given up. We know from the Matthew’s gospel that Satan entered Peter in an attempt to prevent Jesus from going to the cross and completing His mission (16:23). On the occasion of entering Judas, however, Satan is behind the plot to force Jesus to scuttle God’s plan and declare Himself as Messiah in order to avoid the horrible death that awaits Him. Satan knows, apparently, that if Jesus’ mission is fulfilled, he will lose his control of the people of the earth and many will be saved from his captivity. He also knows that if Jesus declares Himself as Messiah in order to avoid the suffering of the cross, He will have disobeyed the Father and therefore never fulfill God’s plan to redeem mankind. By declaring Himself as Messiah and setting up His kingdom apart from God’s plan for mankind, Jesus would have gained the earth but lost the world. Therefore, Satan, who all along has been using the religious leaders in an attempt to interrupt Jesus’ mission, has now found a way to force Jesus to make a choice: suffer terribly on the cross, or declare Himself Messiah against the will of God.

Note, too, Luke’s careful phrasing. In verse 4, Judas “went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him....” This is reminiscent of verse 2 where Luke writes, “The chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death....” In other words, the priests and scribes were looking for an opportunity, and Judas, under Satan’s influence, joins in on the plot. In order to do that, Judas “went away” from Jesus. What is most disturbing (and sobering) about this scenario is that both the chief priests and Judas believed they were doing the right thing! This scenario raises the issue of self-deception and the price to be paid for going away from Jesus: people can believe they are doing the right thing in the name of God, but be completely out of His will. End-times date-setters believe they are doing the right thing in the name of God, but they are completely outside the clear teaching of Scripture. Liberal scholars believe they are discovering new truths about God’s word, but they are completely outside God’s truth. Health, wealth and prosperity preachers believe they are
teaching people how to claim God’s promises, yet are teaching heretical doctrines that are not part of God’s will, and almost always have to do with money and worldly success. Some pastors may believe they are correctly emphasizing tongues, healings, and other gifts of the Spirit, but are blindly leading believers down a path marked long beforehand by Satan himself to draw them away from experiencing a relationship with God based purely on grace and love. Some evangelical pastors may believe that growing a megachurch is a sign of godly success, that the bigger the church the better the effectiveness of their ministry, and that being the pastor of a megachurch is a sure sign of God’s blessings. In reality, the pastor may be on nothing more than an ego trip, suffering from an inferiority complex and/or delusions of grandeur, and who are enabled by groupies who crave the attention of celebrities. Such pastors are completely deceived by their perception of self-importance. The key to avoid being deceived? The true believer or Christian leader steadfastly stays in an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus through prolonged and persevering prayer, personally applies all the teachings of Jesus with devout honesty and self-reflection, avoids at all cost the trappings of money or success (whether personally or in the name of church growth or ministry outreach), and who views himself as nothing more than a bond-servant who, at any time, is expendable. True leaders will not be deceived by Satan if they abide by Zechariah 4:6: “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit....”

Note, too, in verse 5 that Judas brought great relief to the chief priests and officers: “they were glad....” Judas was exactly what the religious leaders were hoping for—an open door to get rid of Jesus. He is an answer to their prayers. Also note that “they were glad and agreed to give him money.” This means that Judas bargained with them over money. Once again, the issue of money and possessions raises its ugly head. Perhaps it is why Paul writes to Timothy, “For the love of money is a root for all sorts of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10; note that Paul does not write, “money is the root of all evil,” as is often misquoted). And perhaps it is why Jesus clearly taught His disciples, “You cannot serve God and wealth” (Luke 16:13). The seeking of wealth for personal gain is absolutely contrary to Jesus’ instructions to His followers, whether in the name of the church or not.

In verse 6, Judas agrees on a price and now enters into the “seeking” mode of the religious leaders in verse 2. The price agreed on according to Matthew 26:15 was thirty pieces of silver, which, ironically, was the asking price for a slave (Exod. 21:32), and had been prophesied by Zechariah.
Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

And Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, so that we may eat it.”

They said to Him, “Where do You want us to prepare it?”

And He said to them, “When you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters.

And you shall say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?”’

And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there.”

And they left and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

(12:12-13). Like the leaders, Judas is seeking a way to betray Jesus into the hands of the temple guard without the crowds realizing it.

The day is Thursday. Jesus sends Peter and John to gather all the supplies necessary for the Passover meal. Passover begins at 6 p.m. and will extend through 6 p.m. on Friday. According to the law, the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed “at twilight.” (See Exodus 12:1-13 for the instructions regarding preparation of the meal.) The disciples themselves did not sacrifice the lamb, as the preparation of the lamb was quite specific. Lambs were sacrificed in the late afternoon in the Court of the Priests. All the food necessary for the meal, including the “unleavened bread and bitter herbs” would have been prepared beforehand by others and purchased by the disciples. Therefore, there would have been crowds shopping for the supplies necessary for the meal. It is estimated that during Passover, the population in Jerusalem increased from 60,000 to 250,000. Whereas Judeans celebrated the Passover on Friday, Galileans celebrated the meal on Thursday evening.

Verses 9-13 provide the details of the location where Jesus and His disciples will celebrate the Passover meal. Whether these events were prearranged or providential is not stated and irrelevant to the story, although verse 13 seems to indicate some level of surprise on the part of Peter and John. Some commentators have suggested that normally it was a woman who carried water from the wells, but as others have suggested, it could just as well have been the servant of the owner of the inn.

It should be noted that a debate exists amongst some scholars as to whether or not Jesus actually observed the Passover meal, or another meal prior to the Passover. This would mean that the events in this chapter took place on Wednesday evening, which would be the day of the preparation of the Passover, as recorded in John 19:14. The reasons for each position go far beyond the scope of this commentary. For simplicity, the author assumes the more traditional approach that these events are indeed the Passover meal occurring on a Thursday evening, and that His crucifixion takes place on Friday.

And, as a final note to the above observation, does it really make any difference? Were it an important part of the Last Supper narrative, surely the gospels writers would have been more specific and clarified the issue. What matters most about the Last Supper narrative is not the exact time that it occurred, but what Jesus taught His disciples and the institution of the new covenant. Such debates, while interesting, can often take away from the key lessons the gospel writers are sharing.
14 When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him.
15 And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

There is also, of course, a practical lesson here for all Christians. Similar debates have divided Christians throughout church history. Debates such as baptism by immersion or sprinkling, whether salvation comes by predestination or free will, whether there is a pre-tribulation rapture or a mid- or post-tribulation rapture, or even whether there is a rapture at all, do not make for one body unified by love. Let the academic debates abound, for they make for lively discussion. But never, ever, out of love for Christ, let them rule to the point of division and separation. With the exception of heresy, divisions such as these are nothing short of “Satan entered into Judas.”

22:14-23 Luke now moves the narrative forward to the meal itself. Unlike da Vinci’s painting of the Last Supper, the disciples did not sit in chairs at a table Western style, but reclined on pillows at a table much lower to the floor, which was typical of the Middle East during celebratory meals; thus, the meaning of “furnished upper room” in verse 12. Only the twelve are with Jesus.

Obviously, and as John relates in his gospel, Jesus had many, many things to say to the apostles during this last meal with them. Luke presents a synopsis of the most important things which focus on what will eventually be called “Communion”; that is, the passing of the bread and the cup, for “the Lord’s Supper,” as it is also called, will become a regular part of Christian worship in the Gentile world.

The words “I have earnestly desired” indicates that Jesus has been especially looking forward to this event. In one sense, it represents the end of His teaching ministry. The Lord’s Supper represents the transition between the old covenant and the New, the preaching ministry and the cross, the training of disciples and the foundation for the church. It is quite likely that the disciples had no understanding of His words “before I suffer.” Although Jesus has been informing the apostles all along that He will suffer, they have no idea how to put His words into the context of their expectations of a conquering king. That is because they have yet to understand that Jesus Himself will become the Passover lamb; that He Himself will become the sacrificial lamb whose blood protects from the angel of spiritual death by taking away their sin.

It is not unusual for Western evangelicals today to overlook the concept of suffering in their own walk as Christians. The reason is simple: in order to promote church growth and “win souls to Christ” (always a numbers game), the suffering and sacrifice aspects of being a follower of Jesus Christ are rarely if ever taught. It is very easy being a Christian in America. The thought is, “Say this simple prayer,
And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves;

for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.”

and not only will your sins be forgiven and therefore guaranteed a trip to heaven, but your life will get better.” While it is true one’s life will get “better,” the “better” needs to be defined as being more spiritually better but possibly temporally worse. That is why Paul states in the opening of his letter to the Ephesians, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3; italics mine). Unfortunately, “better” is often assumed to be void of the suffering and sacrifice Christians are called to. So, in this regard, Christians today are no different from the apostles reclining at the table with Jesus, wondering what Jesus means when He says, “before I suffer.” Though Jesus has warned them clearly in the previous chapter (21:12-19), they either do not really believe it or they clearly do not understand it. And it may be true as well that the fact of their future suffering was hidden from them by God Himself (Luke 9:45). The lesson for the reader is this: the gospel should never be sugar coated, and the making of disciples should never minimize or even avoid the subjects of suffering and sacrifice. Discipleship should always include that suffering and sacrifice are to be expected of the disciple of Jesus Christ, that “He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” (Matt. 10:39).

Jesus’ words “I shall never again eat until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” is simply a statement of fact that looks ahead to the marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9-10). By bringing these two statements together (verses 15 & 16), Luke has pointed the reader to both the immediate mission of Jesus and to His future ministry at the end of the age.

“Fulfilled in the kingdom of God” should be interpreted in a much broader sense than simply a future event, however. It refers to the completion of all the work of God through Jesus Christ, which extends throughout the church age and into eternity. The kingdom of God is not just a place, such as heaven, but an entire state of existence that supersedes all temporal reality.

Notice in verse 17 that Luke states, “And when He had taken a cup and given thanks…” He does not state, “the cup.” That is because the seder, or Passover meal, called for the passing of four cups of wine, diluted with water to one-half, the first of which was the cup of blessing and thanksgiving. After the first cup had been passed around, bitter herbs dipped in vinegar and water (the charoseth) was taken by the host, a small portion eaten, and the rest distributed to others at the table. After that, the second cup of wine was taken, followed by the singing of Psalms 113 and 114, the first part of the Hallel (aka Hallelujah). The main portion of the
And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.”

And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.
forgiveness” (Heb. 9:22). It is only through the shedding of Christ’s blood, the blood of the sinless unblemished Lamb, that sins can be forgiven. As Paul writes to the Christians in Colossae, it is “through the blood of His cross” that Jesus reconciled “all things to Himself” (Col. 1:20).

It is tempting at this point of the commentary to (1) elaborate on all the benefits and blessings associated with the establishment of the new covenant which will serve as the core doctrine of the church, (2) to discuss the significance and power of the blood, and (3) to elaborate on the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. But there are many, many more commentators far more qualified than this one to elaborate on such magnificent subjects. However, what is on the heart of this writer is the love of Christ behind it all. The very phrases “which is given for you” and “which is poured out for you” carry the most powerful message of love the world has ever known, or ever will know. Why should He who was blameless and beyond reproach, who healed the sick and cast out demons, who raised the dead, who spoke nothing but perfect truth in simple ways that even the poorest person on earth could understand, who stood up to the rich, the arrogant, the proud, the religious elite and the most powerful military in the world…why should He give Himself and pour Himself out for the sake of those who, when threatened with their lives, reject and forsake Him? Why should the King of Heaven give Himself to those of us who have sinned beyond measure in the most heinous of ways and are worthy only of eternal separation from God? Why should the Son of God, the Logos, the Prince of Peace, pour out Himself for the sake of us who are so desperately lost, and, even after accepting His grace, find ourselves so spiritually lackadasical? The answer is His love. It was Jesus’ love for the lost—for us—that drove Him to the suffering of the cross. The question to every reader therefore is, “Can we not so love Him in return?” It is a question that every Christian must face in order to become a true disciple of Jesus Christ, and thus discover all the benefits and blessings that come through Him. And, from what we have learned from Luke, returning love to Jesus—by its very nature—demands suffering and sacrifice. If we are to love Jesus in return, then we are to love Him in the same manner He has loved us—sacrificially. And, if we are to love Jesus in return, we are to love others in the same manner in which He loves others. There is no compromise or rationale to this principle: love is the foundational calling of the disciple of Jesus Christ.

And now, the dark part: there is a traitor in their midst (verses 21-23). The presence of Judas is a fulfillment of Psalm 41:9 which states, “Even my
22 “For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!”

23 And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.

24 And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest.

25 And He said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’

26 “But it is not this way with you, but the one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.

27 “For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.” The other gospel writers provide more detail as to the interaction between Jesus and Judas Iscariot, but Luke chooses to put the details aside in favor of making a point for all readers: “Woe to that man by whom He is betrayed.” The writer believes that Luke is warning all who say they are followers of Jesus that there is a terrible consequence for betraying Him. As a companion of Paul, Luke is well aware of those who have turned against Paul, and therefore the gospel, and therefore Christ. (See 2 Tim. 4:10-16 for examples.)

The verb “betraying” is in the present tense indicating that the betrayal is in process. The awkward phrase “the Son of Man is going as it has been determined” could be translated, “the Son of Man is going away” or “going along the course” that has been determined (by God). (The word “going” is poreuomai in the Greek, meaning “to behave.”) In other words, Jesus is going along the path that has been determined long beforehand by God the Father, and that path leads to the cross at the hands of a traitor.

Of course, the disciples begin discussing who Jesus is referring to.

22:24-27 The debate among the apostles that follows next is almost beyond belief. The conversation of the apostles quickly turns from who is a traitor in their midst to who is greatest. In any other setting but this, a leader would throw up his hands and sigh, “I can’t believe this!” But not Jesus, so concerned was He for the test that was coming for the disciples when He would be crucified, and for the young church that would emerge after His ascension. In regards to the latter, it is one of the most important teachings Jesus ever gave the apostles.

This is not the first time the apostles have engaged in a discussion about personal status and position in the anticipated new kingdom. Matthew records that the mother of James and John had asked Jesus for preferment for her sons just prior to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem; that one son would sit on His right hand and the other on His left when He established His kingdom (Matt. 20:20-28). In that instance, Jesus began teaching on the responsibility of good leaders; obviously, the apostles hadn’t gotten the point. The difference in Luke’s record is in the illustration used; that is, the example of the “Benefactor.”

Authority can be used to hold power over others for good or for evil. The “Benefactors” Jesus is referring to are those who used their power and authority over others for evil. The English title “Benefactor” comes directly from the Latin and is
based on the Greek word *euergetes* which means “good works.” It was a practice in those days for kings, rulers and the rich to do “good works” for the people: build amphitheaters, museums, water works, et cetera, for the sake of gaining esteem and favor among the people. Ironically, most of these kings used oppressive taxes to carry out their deeds, and many were ruthless rulers over the people. These so-called “good works” were also used by those wishing to climb the corporate ladder, so to speak; a way of gaining favor with those in authority and power who could elevate their status. Herod the Great, a great builder in his day, is an example of a “Benefactor.” And, by performing these “good works,” they became a source for “lording” them over the people—their good deeds, however, always came with a condition. The “votive gifts” referred to in the previous chapter was a type of “Benefactor,” only in a religious context. Even today, Western philanthropists who give millions to causes and building projects often do so, not out of pure good will for others, but for the fame associated with it and for tax benefits. In Jesus’ day, however, the term “Benefactor” had a connotation of evil, and the selfish, narcissistic, self-aggrandizing, self-defying use of power and authority that came with it.

It was John Dalberg-Acton who wrote in 1887, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” When the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles at Pentecost, it will be the beginning of the church. The church will grow dramatically in the first century, so much so that a hierarchy of leadership will be required, even the formation of titles and offices (e.g., see 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 2:20; 4:11; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). The apostles will always serve as the primary foundation of the church because they are charged with communicating and preserving the truth about the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the saving grace that comes only by Him and through Him. This is why truth is emphasized so adamantly by the apostles John, Peter and Jude in their latter years. (The word “truth” is used 20 times in John’s epistles alone.) That the apostles will be so esteemed by this sudden influx of new disciples in the church is a temptation beyond measure to exercise power over others. The twelve would be greatly respected, admired and sought after by the growing church, highly esteemed, praised for their miraculous works, seen as the living link with Jesus Himself, celebrities in their own right, and even venerated to the point of worship. Acts 5:15 indicates that the new Christians esteemed Peter so highly that they wanted even his shadow to fall on them. Therefore, the apostles will find themselves in the position of great authority, and with that authority comes potential power over others, and with that power over others comes the
temptation of being great in the eyes of the world. Because they are men of flesh, the esteem they would receive could easily boost their egos, making them think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. But that is not the way of the kingdom of God.

The mention of “Benefactors” would be a background the apostles were familiar with. By using “Benefactors” as an example, Jesus makes one of the most important statements the apostles could ever hear regarding leadership in the church: “But it is not that way with you....” (Italics mine.) It is therefore the most important lesson any church leader can learn, a lesson all too often forgotten in evangelical churches and organizations today. The leader is not to attempt to climb the ladder of success for the purpose of gaining more power and authority in the name of church growth, but to descend the stairs of humility to the servants’ quarters in the name of servant leadership. The pastor is not to become the CEO; he is to become the lowly shepherd. Modern-day evangelicalism has been deceived into adopting a philosophy of ministry believing that church growth depends upon the charisma, personality, intelligence, persuasiveness and methodology of the senior pastor. The evangelical community has employed the world’s technique of elevating the senior pastor to celebrity status. The result is that, in general, celebrity pastors have built churches that are a mile wide and an inch deep in terms of making true disciples. The evangelical climate has made celebrities out of pastors who “started out with 15 people in a home Bible study and grew it to a 15,000 member megachurch.” Christians buy millions of books recognized not for what they actually say, but for the fact that the author’s name is at the top in big, bold letters; a celebrity, therefore, to be read, whether or not their character and moral fiber equals his or her fame. After all, who would buy the book if the culture of celebrity did not accompany it? How many books would be sold if the author’s famous name was not at the top? The celebrity pastor movement has spawned a culture of Christian commercialism, not unlike that which Jesus so vehemently objected to in the temple. Instead of making disciples who pray, sacrifice, love one another, are dedicated to Scripture, share their faith, stand bravely for the truth, demonstrate concern for persecuted Christians and the poor, and seek to rectify the ills of a culture hell-bent on self-destruction, the church has perfected the creation of Christian nominalists who isolate themselves from the world, decorate their mantles with Precious Moments, plaster their car bumpers with fish stickers, cover their Bibles with expensive leather cases, ignore the poor, feed their political anger with conservative talk radio and right-leaning cable TV, and, if it is convenient and there are no
kids’ soccer game scheduled or an NFL playoff game, gather on Sunday mornings to be entertained by professional musicians, glaring multimedia, a charismatic teacher who has given up the idea that there is any relevance in expositional teaching of God’s word, and speak confidently that God’s primary concern for His people is that they are happy, prosperous and successful. Such Christians are born-again in name only. While Christians have ranted and raved against the sins of society, many evangelical and charismatic churches and parachurch organizations in America have completely ignored Jesus’ instruction, “But it is not that way with you....” Jesus told His disciples emphatically, “The one who is the greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the servant.” There is no room in that statement for the celebrity pastor.

This writer suspects that the rationale behind making the pastor or Christian leader a celebrity (author, public speaker, spokesman) is to seek a voice in society that represents the church, and therefore gain greater credibility and favor among the populace. The question is, “How’s it working?” The difficulty with the above rationale is that adopting the ways of the world, and seeking acceptance in the eyes of the world, has resulted in making the church just like the world. Especially in America, adopting the methods of the world has backfired completely and, instead of gaining credibility, the church has actually lost credibility by the fact that so many of these so-called Christian celebrities have had moral failures, all of whom have received great press. The problem, however, is not a liberal government, the secular press, or a godless, hedonistic society. The problem is a disobedient, narcissistic, self-serving church that, in seeking to find acceptance in secular society, has compromised itself to the point that the behavior of the average Christian is indistinguishable from the lifestyle of the secularist. The answer? Pastors should shun the celebrity status and seek first the role of a servant. Those who follow celebrity pastors and leaders should confess their sin of idolatry, reject the celebrity pastor, and seek out churches where the word is taught and the pastor is a humble servant who seeks first “the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” Ministering as loving servants would go a long way to restoring spiritual health in the church today and fulfilling Jesus’ command, “But it is not that way with you....”

Jesus completes His teaching on the subject by asking a rhetorical question: “Who is greater, the one who reclines at the table or the one who serves?” The world’s answer is “The one who reclines.” Jesus’ answer is “the one who serves.” Having instructed the disciples on the fact that the true leader in the kingdom of God is a servant first, Jesus then arises
28 “You are those who have stood by Me in My trials;
29 and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you
30 that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

22:28-30 Here, Jesus affirms His disciples (eleven, with Judas gone, to be replaced eventually by Matthias [Acts 1:26]). He affirms their perseverance and their faithfulness. In spite of all the hardships, testing and doubts they may have faced throughout three years of ministry with Jesus, they have stayed by His side. For that, they will receive a reward, and that reward will be a heavenly one, even though the disciples are still thinking in terms of an earthly reward. Once again, Jesus speaks in terms the apostles would be familiar with. Just as regional appointees would travel to Rome to have their kingdoms conferred on them by Caesar, so, too, will Jesus go to the Father in heaven to have His kingdom conferred on Him. (The word “granted” is a rarely used Greek term meaning to have property assigned in the form of a covenant.) And just as Jesus is granted a kingdom, He has the authority from the Father to delegate His kingdom to others. Jesus is therefore confirming His role as conquering king; He will be king of His kingdom. The offer to “eat and drink at My table in My kingdom” once again confirms His status as king and the apostles’ status as special guests, for special guests were invited to dine at the king’s table (e.g., 2 Sam. 9:7-13). The disciples will also be given specific authority to rule over parts of Jesus’ kingdom. In this case, the Hebrew nation, which is the twelve tribes of Israel. (The Book of Revelation refers to this in chapters 4 and 20.)

All of what Jesus shares with the disciples here is good news, except for one thing— they believe this is all going to take place in the next few days or even hours when Jesus reveals Himself as the conquering king Messiah. They do not know yet that Jesus is referring to a far future event, an event that will not take place within their lifetime.

There is an important lesson here that keeps surfacing: the promises of God will take place, but when they take place is rarely ours to know. God promises that prayers offered in faith will be answered one way or another. But exactly how our prayers are answered or when they are answered is something that is reserved for His knowledge alone. The disciples are going to have to learn this lesson the hard way when Jesus is killed. All their expectations for immediate fulfillment are going to be squashed. It will not be until Jesus contacts them after the resurrection that their eyes will be opened to see that God’s plan is much broader than their expectations for immediate fulfillment. Therefore, the onus is upon all followers of Jesus Christ to attempt to see the broader picture when offering prayer requests. It is not God that must fit into our
31 “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat;
32 but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.”
33 But he said to Him, “Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!”
34 And He said, “I say to you, Peter, the rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

plans, but we who must fit into God’s plan.

22:31-34 Jesus now turns His attention momentarily from the eleven to the one...Simon Peter. That Peter’s Hebrew name is used twice seems to indicate the need to get his attention, almost to the point of warning him of a trial to come. Luke is the only gospel writer to record that “Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat....” The Greek word for “demanded permission” is literally “to beg.” The “you” in verses 31 and the first “you” in verse 32 are both plural. This would indicate that Satan desired to sift all the disciples like wheat. The second “you” (“and you”) in verse 32, however, is singular, referring therefore to Peter. Why Jesus focuses on Peter more so than the other disciples is because it was Simon Peter who was first given the revelation that “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God,” a revelation based entirely on Peter’s faith (Matt. 16:16). Providentially, Jesus knows that Peter will deny Him, and that eventually, Peter will become the leader of the church. That makes Peter exceptional, and probably had something to do with Peter’s inherent ability to believe; that is, to demonstrate faith. After all, it was Peter who leaped out of the boat and began walking on water to meet Jesus (Matt. 14:22-33). However, Satan has been watching Peter the entire time and knows his weaknesses as well as his strengths, and it would not be improbable that Satan comprehends Peter’s position as a leader among the disciples. Therefore, if Satan can discourage Peter or destroy his faith in Jesus, it is possible that the rest of the disciples will follow. Therefore, Peter is the key. That is why Jesus instructs Peter, “once you have turned again, strengthen (the faith of) your brothers” (italics mine for clarification). Satan wants to destroy the disciples’ faith in Jesus, and Peter is the key to either discouraging or strengthening their faith.

The lesson here is an important one: prayer strengthens the faith of others as well as one’s own. That is why believers should be continually praying for Christians all over the world who are undergoing persecution...that their faith would not fail.

Part of the problem with Peter, however, is that he has a tendency to overestimate his faith and underestimate his flesh. Therefore, Peter makes the bold statement, “Lord, with you I am ready to go both to prison and to death!” And, Peter probably meant it and believed it at that time. What Peter did not understand was that given the right circumstances at the right time, he could rationalize away his excuse not to follow through on the very thing he believed he could do. Rationalization, as well as fear, is a powerful enemy of faith.

Peter falls into the trap that many Christians do.
And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.”

And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.

“For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.”

They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.”

We overestimate the strength of our faith and underestimate the weaknesses of our flesh. The strength of our faith is rarely tested to any great degree on a day-to-day basis. We coast along on our faith, rarely if ever having to accelerate our faith into high gear. We learn to navigate through life in spite of the weaknesses of our flesh and hope there will never be a bend in the road that will result in a crash test of our faith. When there is no test, no temptation, no persecution, no threat to our livelihood, it is easy to live by faith and tolerate our weaknesses, so long as we maintain the status quo. It is when the status quo suddenly and unexpectedly turns into non status quo that our faith can be shaken and the weaknesses of our flesh exposed and exploited. The faith part of Peter assumes he can overcome any threat to his status quo. It’s the weakness of Peter’s flesh, an arrogance and pride he is not aware of, that will cause him to fail the crash test and do the very thing he believes he is incapable of.

Jesus, well aware of the weaknesses of Peter’s flesh, informs him of his terrible fall: “The rooster will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me.”

It is interesting that Peter remains silent. Most likely, he believes that Jesus is wrong. Such is the way of pride. And, it will be days before Peter grasps the impact of Jesus’ words in verse 32: “Once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.” The words “turned again” are the same Greek word that means “to repent.” In other words, Jesus is telling Peter, “Once you have repented of your denial, strengthen the faith of those who come into the church after Pentecost.”

The reader should remember that the disciples are expecting Jesus to establish His kingdom within hours. But in these few verses Jesus is clearly identifying what we now call “the church age.” Verse 35 reminds the disciples of what their situation was like when Jesus was with them: they lacked nothing. They needed no money, no extra clothing, and no sword to protect themselves. The key words in verse 36, however, are “But now….” In other words, the situation is going to change. When Jesus ascends into heaven, followed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a brand new era will begin. There will be a partial fulfillment of the kingdom of God on earth; not the establishing of an earthly kingdom, but the formation of the kingdom of God in the hearts of men and women. Jesus will not be physically present, but His body will be reflected in the members of the church. With Jesus not physically present to supply all their needs, they will have to plan accordingly. They will need to have money to purchase food just like everyone else. They
will require extra clothing just like everyone else. And, they will not be automatically protected like they were when they were sent out on their on-the-job training mission (Luke 9:1-6). They will have to protect themselves by deterring attack from the same common criminals everyone else does. (The Greek word for “sword” here is *machairan*, which refers, not to an offensive long sword, but to a defensive weapon that could also be considered a dagger. And, this “sword” was used for everyday chores as well as a weapon. It is the same word used as a metaphor to describe the word of God in Ephesians 6:17.)

There is an important lesson here for followers of Jesus Christ: living by faith does not mean failing to prepare and plan ahead. The pastor should prepare each sermon as if it were his last. The husband and wife should plan their budget and retirement with the understanding that Jesus probably will not return in their lifetime. The business person should make a business plan that fits the projected financial trends. Why? Jesus answers the question in verse 37: His rejection is about to be fulfilled.

Jesus is quoting from Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53 embodies the prophecy concerning the first coming of the Messiah; that is, the suffering servant. It is the suffering the disciples denied and wanted at all cost to avoid. If the reader has never read Isaiah 53, it is a must read. Written over 700 years before Christ, it vividly and shockingly describes Jesus’ rejection by the people, His scourging by the Romans, and His suffering on the cross. The most significant statement of Isaiah 53 is found in verse 6: “But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.” What the disciples could not understand until after the resurrection when Jesus explained it to them was that the Messiah had to first die for the sins of all mankind before He could establish His kingdom of glory on earth. Only a perfect, sinless man and infinite divine being could atone for all the sins of all mankind for all eternity. The disciples did not understand that when Jesus returns as the conquering king and establishes His kingdom on the earth, judgment on all unrighteousness begins. The purpose for delaying His second coming is that all peoples on the earth should have the opportunity to repent of their sins and find salvation in Christ, thus sparing an eternity apart from God. And, God the Father is willing to let the church suffer in order for as many people as possible to find eternal salvation. And just as Jesus “was numbered with the transgressors,” so, too, are those Christians who suffer imprisonment in countries hostile to Christianity. Once again, we are reminded that suffering and sacrifice go hand-in-hand with being called a follower of Jesus Christ and a member of His body.
39 And He came out and proceeded as was His custom to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples also followed Him.

40 When He arrived at the place, He said to them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

41 And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and began to pray,

42 saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.”

43 Now an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him.

44 And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.

45 When He rose from prayer, He came to the disciples and found them sleeping from sorrow,

46 and said to them, “Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.”

22:39-46 Having left the upper room, Jesus now leads His disciples to the Mount of Olives where He will be arrested and handed over to the Sanhedrin. Matthew records that Jesus continues to inform all the disciples that they will “fall away” from following Him, not just Peter (Matt. 26:30-35). And, as expected, all deny that they will. Once again, Peter asserts his loyalty, and once again, Jesus repeats the inevitable.

Upon arrival at the garden, Jesus gives His disciples one last instruction: “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” There are two possible interpretations for this instruction, as the Greek grammar does not indicate one way or the other. First, does Jesus’ instruction mean, “Pray, and by praying, you will not enter into temptation” as in “pray so that you will not enter into temptation”? Or, is Jesus saying, “Pray this specifically: lead me not into temptation.” The first defines the purpose of prayer, the second, the content of prayer. It may be that both are true, and certainly both are relevant to the situation.

It is very important to note that the temptation Jesus is referring to has to do with the warnings of denial in the upper room. The temptation is to deny Jesus, to deny any relationship with Him, and to act as if they care more about their own well being than Jesus’. The temptation is one that every Christian will face at one time or another: denying by our words, behaviors, actions or relationships that we have a relationship with Him, and that relationship is more important to us than our own well-being. All sins committed under peer pressure fall under this genre of temptation. All sins committed in private fall under this temptation. And all behaviors and relationships that are inconsistent with our relationship with Jesus are a form of denying Him. Today, we Christians are no different, and certainly no better than the disciples who abandoned Jesus in the garden. The only advantage we Christians have today is the benefit of the Scriptures themselves, and the examples of others who have failed. Therefore, this writer is convinced that the primary means of overcoming this temptation is prayer…and not just any prayer. Prayer that is personal, thoughtful, fervent and intimate, for only in that level of prayer can a relationship with Jesus be established that is so grounded in love for Him that never would we ever consider abandoning Him or denying Him, whether it be a matter of everyday sin or the threat of death. Therefore, all Christians are to pray, that we may not enter into temptation to deny Jesus. It is to be a daily prayer, and a life-long prayer.

According to Matthew, the subject of denying Jesus was repeated and discussed, not only in the
upper room, but while journeying to the garden as well. Matthew provides more detail into Jesus’ agony in the garden, and the lack of vigilance on the part of the disciples (Matt. 26:36-46). Instead of praying, they will be found sleeping and, as a result of their failure to maintain watchful, vigilant prayer, they will fall to the temptation to abandon Jesus.

When Jesus enters the garden, He instructs His disciples to remain in one location while He separates Himself a few yards away to pray. What Jesus begins to pray should be the goal, if not the hallmark of prayer for all Christians: “Not My will, but Yours be done.” Jesus, being fully human, does not want to go through the torture and suffering that awaits Him. He has witnessed Roman scourging and crucifixion, as would have all young men growing up in Judea and Galilee in those days, and He knows full well the terrible suffering that accompanies it. He is well aware that His friends will abandon Him, and the very nation He came to save will shout “Crucify Him!” Therefore, His human nature cries out in agony, “Remove this cup from Me!” It is His divine nature, however, that overrides the human nature and succumbs to the will of the Father, a will that involves intense suffering and death before the incredible realization of resurrection. So, too, are Jesus’ words the model prayer for all Christians. More so even that the “Lord’s prayer,” this prayer should be the hallmark prayer for all true believers everywhere. All those who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit are therefore capable of earnestly saying this prayer regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the suffering, regardless of the threat of death: “Not my will but Yours be done.” The history and testimony of martyrs means that as it was possible to live and die by those words then, it is possible to live and die by the same words today. Until the Christian can sincerely utter these words regardless of the circumstances, regardless of the suffering, regardless of the threat of death: “Not my will but Yours be done.” The history and testimony of martyrs means that as it was possible to live and die by those words then, it is possible to live and die by the same words today. Until the Christian can sincerely utter these words regardless of the circumstances, there remains much growing in Christ. Such a prayer does not come without brokenness, and such a prayer does not come as the result of casual church attendance or token acknowledgement of God’s word. This kind of prayer comes only with biblical discipleship by the church and a hunger for God and His word by the disciple. Such prayer does not come without the repentance of sin and an earnest desire to walk in the light. It is the end point that all Christians should attain to so that they will be willing to do whatever God asks of them. Had the disciples been praying this prayer instead of nodding off to sleep (though we mustn’t be too hard on the disciples, for we are just like them), it is possible that their response after Jesus’ arrest would have been more favorable.

Luke is the only gospel writer who records that an angel came alongside Jesus to strengthen Him.
We know nothing about the identity of this angel nor how the angel strengthened Jesus. In a similar circumstance, Luke records in Acts 27:23-24 that an angel appeared to the apostle Paul on the way to Rome when his ship was about to sink.

Luke, the physician, is also the only gospel writer to state that Jesus experienced a medical condition called **hematidrosis** (aka **hematohidrosis**), a condition brought about by extreme fear, stress or anxiety. Many cases of **hematidrosis** have been documented in modern medical literature, and is believed to be caused by blood from ruptured capillaries mixing with perspiration. A point that should be made here is that Jesus is not sweating blood just from the anxiety of facing physical pain, but from the knowledge that God the Father will impute upon Him all the sins of all mankind for all time. And, in so doing, for a brief moment in time, God the Father will turn His back on Jesus and abandon Him. Not only is the cross the ultimate symbol of rejection by man, but it becomes the ultimate rejection by God Himself, for God will not allow sin in His presence. This rejection by God will result in Jesus crying out in utter anguish, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?”

Once again, the theme of falling into temptation rears up its ugly head. After praying, Jesus finds the disciples sleeping instead of praying. Luke observes that their sleepiness is the result of their “sorrow” (the only gospel write to note this). The Greek word for sorrow is related to sadness and grief. It is a curious expression indeed. Some commentators indicate that the disciples were exhausted, as Matthew states “their eyes were heavy.” While this may be true, it would seem that Luke would have chosen another word to describe their fatigue, such as **asthenes**, meaning to be weak. The choice of the Greek word **lupes** is very specific, however, indicating that Luke is emphasizing another point. The writer believes the point Luke is making is that their sleepiness and lack of vigilance is not the result of fatigue or exhaustion, but of something else. It is unlikely that the disciples’ sorrow is the result of Jesus’ extreme stress resulting in drops of blood, and that they are identifying with Him. It is also unlikely that the disciples’ sorrow is because they believe their hopes for a new kingdom are being dashed, for there is no indication that they still do not believe that Jesus will manifest Himself as the conquering king Messiah. (They do not even know that He is about to be arrested, and that His crucifixion is but a few hours away.) The writer believes that the disciples are “sleeping from sorrow” because of the discussions about their denying Him. They are sorrowful that He believes they will deny Him and betray Him. It is an extreme affront to their pride,
47 While He was still speaking, behold, a crowd came, and the one called Judas, one of the twelve, was preceding them; and he approached Jesus to kiss Him.

48 But Jesus said to him, “Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?”

49 When those who were around Him saw what was going to happen, they said, “Lord, shall we strike with the sword?”

50 And one of them struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his right ear.

51 But Jesus answered and said, “Stop! No more of this.” And He touched his ear and healed him.

52 Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, “Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?

53 “While I was with you daily in the temple, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours.”

and they are discouraged and disappointed. In other words, their feelings have been hurt. As a result, they are somewhat less inclined to obey Him completely, and in a sense, withdraw.

This is a problem that many Christians struggle with today. Because Jesus has disappointed them by not answering a specific prayer, or because they believe that Jesus has not “been there for them” when they needed Him, they back off from pursuing Him completely. They are less inclined to obey, less inclined to follow, less inclined to suffer and sacrifice on His behalf. This was probably the case with the disciples. Instead of hearing from Jesus, “Pray, for the kingdom of God is about to be realized,” or “Pray, for I am about to establish My kingdom,” all they heard from Him was “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” We Christians often fail to abide by the words of Jesus that we neither want nor are expecting to hear.

22:47-53 After prayer comes crisis. Only Jesus will not enter into temptation. Judas’s scheme, however, has worked. He has caught Jesus apart from the crowds in a secluded location with no more than eleven disciples by His side. One must remember that there were no street lamps or flashlights in those days, therefore lit torches were the only source of light. Of the crowd accompanying him from the temple, only Judas would be able to identify the right man. As was customary in greeting a friend, Judas kissed Jesus’ cheek. But, because Judas’s motives were far from benign, Jesus tells it as it is: “Are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?” A symbol of love and respect has been turned into an act of rejection, mockery and betrayal.

Jesus’ disciples, completely unaware of the big picture, call for a fight. This scene would be humorous if it were not so pathetic. How could these pacifist disciples armed with two daggers possibly overwhelm temple guards and Roman soldiers armed with swords, shields and clubs? Peter (we know from John’s gospel) doesn’t wait for an answer but lashes out at one of the soldiers named Malchus, cutting off his right ear. Luke, the physician, notes that Jesus immediately heals the soldier, unfortunately, the healing didn’t make that much of an impression on the soldier. One would think that he would immediately back off from Jesus and take a good look at himself and his role in Jesus’ arrest. And, as noted by other commentators, this is the only incidence in the gospels where Jesus not only immediately heals an open wound, but heals an enemy, someone who obviously did not have faith in Jesus. There are many practical lessons here.

In verses 52 and 53, Jesus makes it very clear that all that is taking place in the garden of
54 Having arrested Him, they led Him away and brought Him to the house of the high priest; but Peter was following at a distance.

55 After they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and had sat down together, Peter was sitting among them.

56 And a servant-girl, seeing him as he sat in the firelight and looking intently at him, said, “This man was with Him too.”

57 But he denied it, saying, “Woman, I do not know Him.”

58 A little later, another saw him and said, “You are one of them too!” But Peter said, “Man, I am not!”

59 After about an hour had passed, another man began to insist, saying, “Certainly this man also was with Him, for he is a Galilean too.”

60 But Peter said, “Man, I do not know what you are talking about.” Immediately, while he was still speaking, a rooster crowed.

61 The Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had told him, “Before a rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times.”

62 And he went out and wept bitterly.

Gethsemane is by the hand of Satan. God the Father has allowed Satan to have his day (night). Judas, the chief priests, the elders, the temple officials and the soldiers are all acting on behalf of Satan himself. Whereas the leaders of the crowd are ready for resistance and a fight, Jesus willingly allows Himself to be arrested. He is now in the hands of Satan, another cause for Jesus’ great agony in the garden.

22:54-62 What follows next in Luke’s account is Peter’s denial. Note the phrase in verse 54, “but Peter was following at a distance.” On the surface, this would seem like an act of bravery on Peter’s part. Whereas all the other disciples (except possibly John) have scattered and abandoned Jesus altogether, Peter is bound and determined to stand by his leader. There is one problem, however...he is following Jesus “at a distance.” He is apparently close enough to keep track of Jesus, but not so close as to be associated with Him. It is a well calculated position: within sight, but safe. Unfortunately, by not being far enough away to be accused of being a companion of Jesus, and by not being close enough to contribute to Him in any way, he soon finds himself in the vulnerable position of having to declare his relationship with Him. If he were farther away, no one would care. If he were closer, he might experience the same fate as Jesus. In the position that he finds himself, however, he will be challenged on whether he is a true friend of Jesus or not.

The three denials of Peter are recorded here in verses 56-60. The details of denials are not nearly as important as Peter’s rationale behind them. Like most of us, Peter is naïve. Based on his self-perception and how he anticipated events might play out, he cannot see himself as ever denying Jesus. The word did not even seem a part of his vocabulary, and he thought of himself as the kind of person who could never possibly turn against Jesus. That is probably how most Christians think today. But here’s the caveat: given the right circumstances, at the right time, under the right duress, there is not a Christian alive who is not capable of denying Jesus in one way or another. Peter’s denial proves that all of us are capable of denying Jesus. How is that possible? It is because we
are all capable of rationalizing our way out of threat or sacrifice. Peter was probably thinking that if he denies that he is a companion of Jesus, he will be free to hang around and help Him. He may be rationalizing that by denying any relationship with Him, he may be able to get closer and find out what’s really going on. Most probably, Peter’s rationale for denying any association with Jesus is that he will be in a better position to defend Him, protect Him, even follow Him. He may even suspect that at any moment Jesus will reign down on the earth legions of angels to overthrow the government, and if that happens, Peter will be right there, first in line for a seat at Jesus’ side. We have no idea what Peter was thinking, but all we have to do is to look within ourselves and determine why we ourselves have denied Jesus in our everyday lives. By failing to stand up for what is godly and right according to Scripture, we are denying Jesus. By giving into peer pressure or not thanking God in heaven for our daily bread in a public place, we are denying Jesus. By cowering under the intimidations of the government, the organizational policies against proselytizing or demonstrating our faith by such simple things as wearing a cross, we are denying Jesus. Any and all excuses can be used to rationalize our way out of associating ourselves fearlessly with Jesus. Simply said, Peter merely serves as a warning to all Christians: in the most innocent ways, in the most rational ways, we are all capable of denying Jesus.

Peter is a sobering reminder that there is a price to be paid for “following at a distance,” and that price is the potential for denying Jesus.

The terrible record in verses 61 and 62 tells of the price for denying Jesus: “The Lord turned and looked at Peter,” and “he went out and wept bitterly.” What a terrible, gut-wrenching, helpless and hopeless feeling that must have been! O, the agony of gazing at the eyes of the Master when you have just denied Him. And Peter did not merely weep…he wept “bitterly.” The Greek word is pikros meaning “with agony” and with mental suffering. Quite simply, it is emotional torment. Interestingly, this is the same word used to describe “bitter herbs” in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (Exod. 12:8). There is therefore a symbolic relationship between Peter having partaken of the bitter herbs during the last supper and the bitter weeping he expressed after denying Jesus.

This writer can state from experience that it is one thing to experience remorse for sins having been committed before one was a follower of Jesus Christ. It is quite another to experience the bitter weeping and agony that comes with denying Jesus once one has declared himself a faithful follower. The personal disappointment, disillusionment and self-deprecation...
63 Now the men who were holding Jesus in custody were mocking Him and beating Him,
64 and they blindfolded Him and were asking Him, saying, “Prophesy, who is the one who hit You?”
65 And they were saying many other things against Him, blaspheming.

66 When it was day, the Council of elders of the people assembled, both chief priests and scribes, and they led Him away to their council chamber, saying,
67 “If You are the Christ, tell us.” But He said to them, “If I tell you, you will not believe;
68 and if I ask a question, you will not answer.
69 “But from now on THE SON OF MAN WILL BE SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE power of GOD.”
70 And they all said, “Are You the Son of God, then?” And He said to them, “Yes, I am.”
71 Then they said, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth.”

that comes with denying Jesus is beyond description. Whereas in the former experience, grace and forgiveness is received with gratitude for sins committed through ignorance, in the latter, grace is begged for with tears and mourning, fearing retribution and judgment. Fortunately, we followers of Jesus are sought after like stray sheep by a loving Father in heaven who knows our weaknesses, and, like Peter, are given second chances.

22:63-65 No one can possibly imagine the emotional and physical pain summarized in verse 63. Jesus is in the hands of the ruthless and at the mercy of the merciless. These are professional soldiers who took pleasure in watching others suffer. These soldiers had no more regard for Jesus than they did for any other common criminal. There is no regret and no remorse in their treatment. Not only are they beating Him, they are insulting Him. Obviously, they have heard that the people believe He is a prophet, so they use that bit of information to mock Him. Verse 65 concludes with the statement that they are “blaspheming” Him. In Jewish culture, only God can be blasphemed. Therefore, Luke is preparing the reader for the next encounter at the Council where Jesus will be asked if He is the Son of God.

22:66-71 The sequence of events after Jesus’ arrest is as follows: He is taken to Annas, high priest emeritus, who sends Him to Caiaphas the high priest, Annas’ son-in-law. There Jesus is interrogated by Caiaphas and others where a temporary decision was made that He should be put to death. (An official decision needed to be made by the entire Sanhedrin during daylight hours.) Jesus is then led into the courtyard just before sunrise where He is beaten and mocked, and it is apparently at that time that Peter denies Jesus the third time. Jesus is then brought before the Council during which verses 66-71 take place. Jesus will then be sent to Pilate for the purpose of condemning Him to death, as the Jews themselves were prohibited from carrying out capital punishment. Pilate will then send Jesus to Herod Antipas, who in turn sends Him back to Pilate who eventually pronounces judgment and condemns Him to death.

In Luke’s account, the seventy members of the Council have now convened. Among them is a Pharisee named Nicodemus. One would assume this is fairly early in the morning. Most likely, it is Caiaphas the high priest who is orchestrating the inquiry. One must remember that, according to Matthew, Jesus has already met with Caiaphas where a preliminary decision has already been made. In his account, Luke has condensed the two meetings into one, the official meeting of the Council that
condemns Jesus.

There are three titles that are brought up by the Council in order to accuse Jesus of sedition and blasphemy: “Christ” (Messiah, v. 67), “Son of Man” (v. 69), and “Son of God” (v. 70). All three are ascribed to Jesus throughout the gospels. The long-hoped-for Messiah represents Jesus’ fulfillment as King of the Jews; “Son of Man” represents Jesus’ perfect humanity; “Son of God” indicates that Jesus is fully divine and therefore equal to God. That Jesus answers the last question, “Yes, I am” is an unequivocal statement that He is equal to God, and His use of the words “I am” identifies Him with the God of Moses who identified Himself in the burning bush as “I am that I am.” This was all the Council needed to hear: Jesus of Nazareth was declaring Himself to be equal to God and therefore guilty of blasphemy. It is a death sentence for Jesus.

The writer has often heard liberal scholars and skeptics claim that “Jesus never said He was God.” Obviously, they have not read verses 66-71, or if they have, they have explained them away with some sort of liberal rhetoric.

At the end of this chapter, all of Jesus’ disciples have abandoned Him. The religious leaders and spiritual authorities of the Jewish nation have rejected Him. He will be taken and given over to the Gentiles who see no value in His life. Chapter 22 is a fulfillment of John’s statement, “He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). These observations, more than anything, acknowledge the great love God has for a lost world, that He would send His only begotten Son into the world, knowing that those whom He loved would reject Him. One cannot leave this chapter without being reminded of the apostle John’s letter: “By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:10-11).
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. This chapter represents the completion of Jesus’ teaching and healing ministry to the masses. How does Jesus spend His last night, and with whom does He spend it? Why do you think Jesus wanted to spend His last meal with His disciples? Do you think there was perhaps a “passing of the baton”?

2. How did Satan enter Judas Iscariot? Do you believe that could happen to a Christian today? Do you think Judas knew that Satan had entered him? If Judas was not aware that Satan entered him, then what clouded his vision? What was Judas’ weakness? Do you have that same weakness? If so, is it possible that Satan could enter you to do something terrible?

3. Discuss the importance of taking the Lord’s Supper. Is the Lord’s Supper (or Communion) something sacred and important to you? Do you believe that the bread actually turns into Christ’s body and the wine into His blood? If not, then what do the “elements” represent to you? If the elements themselves are not significant, then what is the most important part of taking them?

4. What does Jesus mean by the statement, “This is the new covenant in My blood”? What is the new covenant, and what does that mean to you in terms of your relationship to God the Father? What did Jesus have to do to enable you to become a participant in the new covenant?

5. Follow the theme of Peter’s denial. Why do you think Peter was quite confident that he would follow Jesus even to the point of death? And, why do you think Peter ended up denying Jesus? How did Peter feel after he denied Jesus?

6. When Jesus takes His disciples to the garden of Gethsemane, He gives them an important instruction. What is it? What was the reason He gave His disciples for following His instructions? How did the disciples do? Is that a lesson that you can learn from? The bottom-line question is, “How’s your prayer life today?”

7. When Jesus is taken before the Council for His trial, they ask Him one important question. How does Jesus answer them? If you were to be brought before a judge or group hostile to Christians and, in fact, guilty of killing Christians, how would you answer the question, “Are you a Christian?”
22:1-2 – The desire of the chief priests and the scribes to ________________________________________________

22:3-6 – The plan to betray Jesus by ________________________________________________________________

22:7-13 – Preparations are made for the _____________________________________________________________

22:14-23 – The Passover meal we now call __________________________________________________________

22:24-27 – The dispute among the apostles as to who was _____________________________________________

22:28-30 – The promise to the apostles concerning their heavenly _______________________________________

22:31-34 – The prophecy concerning Simon Peter’s __________________________________________________

22:35-38 – The prophecy concerning hardships in __________________________________________________

22:39-46 – Jesus and the disciples take refuge in the Garden of Gethsemane to _______________________

22:47-53 – Jesus is arrested by the temple guard and Judas betrays Jesus with __________________________

22:54-62 – Jesus is taken to the guard house and Peter denies Him ______________________________________

22:63-65 – Jesus is scorned, mocked and beaten, and Luke calls the men __________________________________

22:1-2 – The desire of the chief priests and the scribes to **put Jesus to death**
- The disciple may need to know about the different feasts, and why the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were so important, especially in regards to Israel’s past (i.e., the Exodus).
- Make sure the disciple associates the Feast of Passover with the death of Jesus on the cross, and why He is “the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.”

22:3-6 – The plan to betray Jesus by **Judas Iscariot**
- Perhaps one of the most important points here is that Judas had no idea “Satan entered into” him, and that he was being directed by Satan. Ask the disciple how this could happen? What was Judas’ weakness of the flesh that allowed Satan to enter him? Ensure that the disciple understands the final result—betrayal.
- What does the disciple think was Judas’ motive for betraying Jesus. If Judas was trying to force Jesus’ hand in order to establish His kingdom, how can a Christian today end up making that same mistake?

22:7-13 – Preparations are made for the **Passover meal (Seder)**
- If the disciple (or the discipler) has never attended a seder, he or she is highly encouraged to do so. There are Jewish Christian organizations available to perform a seder at one’s church.
- Ensure that the disciple associates the phrase “the upper room” with this event.

22:14-23 – The Passover meal we now call **the Lord’s Supper (Communion, Mass)**
- The discipler will want to make sure that the disciple understands that this event described in Scripture is what Christians today call “the Lord’s Supper” or “Communion,” Catholic “Mass,” or liturgical Protestant churches, “Eucharist.”
- Let the disciple know that the Lord’s Supper is one of two “sacraments” (aka “ordinances”) observed by the Protestant Church. The other is baptism. (At least one denomination believes there are three, the third being foot washing.) The Catholic Church teaches there are seven sacraments.
- Make sure the disciple understands that Roman Catholicism teaches that during Mass, the bread and the wine actually turn into the body and blood of Christ. (This is called “Transubstantiation” by the Catholic Church.) Protestants do not believe this.
- Regardless of the theological position, the Lord’s Supper is considered a very sacred and important event. In fact, the apostle Paul teaches that taking Communion “in an unworthy manner” has caused some Christians to become sick and eventually die (1 Cor. 11:30. For Paul’s entire teaching on the Lord’s Supper, include verses 23-32.) For this reason, the Lord’s Supper should be taken seriously.

22:24-27 – The dispute among the apostles as to who was **the greatest**
- Ask the disciple why he or she thinks this dispute takes place. What were the disciples expectations as to what Jesus was about to do in terms of establishing a kingdom on earth. Remind the disciple of “one Messiah, two comings.”
- Have the disciple explain what was Jesus’ response to the disciples regarding their debate. The discipler may need to explain the term “Benefactors.”
- The discipler must not overlook the phrase “But it is not this way with you…” (v. 26). What does that mean to the disciple? What does that mean regarding the church he or she is attending? What is the very important lesson that is being taught here in terms of leadership, and why?

22:28-30 – The promise to the apostles concerning their heavenly **future**
- Ask whether the disciple believes that Jesus is referring to the immediate future, or to a future that happens in heaven after their deaths? (The discipler may want to have the disciple read Revelation 4 & 20.)
- The discipler may want to bring up the subject of “expectations.” What does the disciple expect from Jesus, and how does the disciple expect his or her life will change as a result of following Jesus? How can earthly expectations interfere with heavenly realities, and how can that affect a Christian’s faith?
22:31-34 – The prophecy concerning Simon Peter’s denial of Jesus
- Much discussion and teaching can take place regarding Peter’s denial that he will deny Jesus.
- Ask the disciple how he or she might inadvertently deny that they know Jesus.

22:35-38 – The prophecy concerning hardships in the church age
- Ask the disciple if he or she is aware of any Christians having hardship as a result of being a follower of Jesus Christ. If necessary, refer the disciple to Christians who today are being persecuted for their faith.
- Ask the disciple if he or she can understand what Jesus is referring to here. Is the “church age” will be filled with suffering, sacrifice and hardship. Ask the disciple if he or she is experiencing any of that. If the disciple is not experiencing suffering, are they willing to sacrifice in terms of time, money and work toward furthering the kingdom of God through the church.

22:39-46 – Jesus and the disciples take refuge in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray
- Ask the disciple if he or she can figure out why Jesus took the disciples with Him to the Mount of Olives. What was their purpose for going there, and what warning did Jesus give the disciples? What was His instruction to them, and how did they do? Can this instruction be directed to Christians today?
- What was Jesus’ request from the Father, and how is the Christian to pray that prayer today? What is the powerful truth behind that prayer?
- What does prayer have to do with not entering into temptation? Ask the disciple about his or her prayer life. How is it going?

22:47-53 – Jesus is arrested by the temple guard and Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss
- What was the irony behind Judas betraying Jesus with a kiss?
- The discipler may want to fill in the disciple concerning Peter striking the ear of Malchus.

22:54-62 – Jesus is taken to the guard house and Peter denies Him three times
- The discipler may want to go into some detail about Peter’s denial. What does the disciple believe Peter was thinking when he denied Jesus? Was it, was his rationale for denying Him?
- Again, the subject of denying Jesus may want to be raised. Most Christians believe that they would never deny Jesus, just as Peter did. But what kinds of circumstances may cause us to deny Him, even though we think we never will?
- Ask the disciple if he or she can locate the key phrase that describes why Peter may have denied Jesus. (Hint: he was following at a distance. Have the disciple make application to that regarding Christians today.)

22:63-65 – Jesus is scorned, mocked and beaten, and Luke calls the men blasphemers
- Why does Luke record that those who were beating and mocking Jesus were “blaspheming”? What does it mean to blaspheme? Who, in Scripture, is the only One who can be blasphemed, according to Jewish law?

- Remind the disciple who the Council was.
- Inform the disciple that Luke records only the bare essentials of Jesus’ trial. The entire scenario of going from place to place and person to person may need to be read to the disciple from the commentary.
- Ask the disciple if he or she can determine what is the most important question the Council asks Jesus. How does Jesus answer? How would the disciple answer a liberal skeptic who states that Jesus never said He was the Son of God? If Jesus had not answered as He did, then why would the Council say, “What further need do we have of testimony? For we have heard it ourselves from His own mouth?”
- See if the disciple can see the irony of verses 65 and 70-71. The irony is found in the word “blaspheming.” Those beating Jesus were blaspheming, and Jesus is being accused by the Council of blasphemy by stating that He was the Son of God, therefore making Him equal to God. (cf. John 8:56-59)
CHAPTER 23

Overview of Luke 23
Chapters 23 and 24 record the most significant events in human history—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Chapter 23 records His crucifixion and burial, and chapter 24 His resurrection and ascension. Chapter 23 begins with Jesus’ trials before Pilate and Herod, having already been condemned by the Sanhedrin (aka the “Council”). Pilate exonerates Jesus of any guilt, but the mob, aroused by the chief priests and scribes, demand Jesus’ crucifixion. Luke alone records some words by Jesus while He is carrying His cross, helped by a man named Simon of Cyrene. Luke then records some of the details of Jesus’ crucifixion, focusing only on the essentials of what his Gentile readers need to know. Luke also includes Jesus’ interaction with the two criminals crucified along with Him. After Jesus’ death on the cross, His body is taken down and placed in a tomb at the request of none other than a member of the Council named Joseph of Arimathea, “a righteous man.” Jesus’ burial takes place just before the Sabbath, the day of rest, leaving no time for His body to be prepared with “spices and perfumes” by some of His women followers.

What to look for in Luke 23
1. When Jesus is brought before Pontius Pilate by His accusers, look for the accusations that are true, and those that are not.
2. Look for the number of times Pilate finds “no guilt” in Jesus. How does that correspond to the time Jonah spent in the belly of the fish, to the number of statements Jesus makes while on the cross, and to the number of days Jesus spent in the tomb after His crucifixion?
3. Look for the irony behind the crowd’s demand for the release of a guilty man, and their demand for the punishment of an innocent man.
4. During the crucifixion, find the three statements Jesus makes, and to whom He makes them. Look for the significance of each.
5. Look for the irony of the interaction between Jesus and the two criminals crucified alongside Him.
6. Carefully observe the significance of the veil in the temple being “torn in two” when Jesus dies.
7. Look for the irony of the role of Joseph of Arimathea, and his fulfillment of an important prophecy in Isaiah.

1 Then the whole body of them got up and brought Him before Pilate.

23:1 The “whole body of them” refers to the Sanhedrin (i.e., the Council). The desire of the Council leaders is to get rid of Jesus by putting Him to death. However, only Rome had the authority to carry out capital punishment; Jewish authorities were not allowed to do so on their own. The plot by the Council, therefore, is devious. Whereas the Council could accuse Jesus before the ruling Roman authority without His followers knowing about it, it would have to be Pilate himself who ordered Jesus’ execution. From the Council’s point of view, the crowd who followed Jesus would blame Rome, not the Council, for His execution. One must remember that the crowd would not be privy to all the
2 And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this man misleading our nation and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King.”

3 So Pilate asked Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And He answered him and said, “It is as you say.”

4 Then Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, “I find no guilt in this man.”

5 But they kept on insisting, saying, “He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.”

The accusations against Jesus by the Council in verse 2 are a mixture of truth, misappropriated truth and outright lies. Such are the tactics of Satan and those under Satan’s influence; if you don’t have a good case, make one up by mixing truth with conjectures and falsehoods. The first accusation—“forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar”—is a lie. Luke makes sure his readers understand this by quoting what Jesus actually said in 20:25. The second accusation that “He Himself is Christ” is true; Jesus affirmed this to the Sanhedrin (22:70). The third accusation about being “a King” is a misappropriated truth. He is a king by virtue of being the Son of God, the Messiah, and He acknowledges this to Pilate (v. 3). However, as Jesus clearly informs Pilate in John 18:36: “My kingdom is not of this world.” The point of the Council is to make Jesus appear that His kingdom is of this world and Jesus is someone who is a threat to Rome, and attempting to set up His own earthly kingdom. If this were true, it would result in immediate execution at the hands of the Roman authorities. When Pilate incredulously asks Jesus, “Are You the King of the Jews?” in verse 3, he is comparing Jesus to Herod who is the officially
When Pilate heard it, he asked whether the man was a Galilean.
And when he learned that He belonged to Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who himself also was in Jerusalem at that time.

Pilate discovers a way out of his predicament by learning that Jesus is from Galilee, out of Pilate’s jurisdiction. Whereas Pilate was procurator of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. He therefore has Jesus sent to Herod “who himself also was in Jerusalem at the time.” Pilate’s headquarters was in Caesarea Philippi and Herod spent most of his time at his palace in Sepphoris near Nazareth. Both were in Jerusalem for the Passover in case there was trouble.

As stated earlier in this commentary (3:19-20), the Herod referred to here is Herod Antipas, the same Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded at the request of his stepdaughter, being prompted to do so by her mother, Herodias. (The Jewish historian Josephus identifies Herodias’s daughter as Salome, and is not to be confused with the Salome who was a follower of Jesus [Mark 15:40; 16:1].)
8 Now Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus; for he had wanted to see Him for a long time, because he had been hearing about Him and was hoping to see some sign performed by Him.

9 And he questioned Him at some length; but He answered him nothing.

10 And the chief priests and the scribes were standing there, accusing Him vehemently.

11 And Herod with his soldiers, after treating Him with contempt and mocking Him, dressed Him in a gorgeous robe and sent Him back to Pilate.

12 Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been enemies with each other.

23:8-12 The fact that Herod was “very glad” to see Jesus and “wanted to see Him for a long time” directly contradicts the warning by the Pharisees that Herod wanted to kill Him (13:31). As stated in that section, this was a ploy on the part of the Pharisees to keep Jesus out of Judea. That Herod wanted to “see some sign performed by Him” shows the complete lack of sincere investigation. Herod considered Jesus as no more than a well-known magician who, to get off the hook, might perform a “trick.”

Luke states that Herod “questioned Him at some length,” but that Jesus did not respond to his questions. The simple reason is that it would have been a waste of time and changed nothing. Herod was too depraved a man to have listened to anything Jesus had to say; after all, he hadn’t listened to anything John the Baptist had to say. Also, Herod had no authority to have Jesus crucified, and therefore Herod was merely a distraction from Jesus’ mission to go to the cross. Remember, too, that Herod wasn’t even a Jew...he was an Edomite, a perpetual enemy of the Jews over the centuries. He was a political puppet appointed by Rome by virtue of the dynasty established by his father, Herod the Great.

While Herod wants to see tricks, the chief priests and scribes want to see blood. Luke uses the word “vehemently,” meaning that they kept revving up the accusations against Jesus. Actually, Luke uses a medical term here that means “well-toned,” implying that the chief priests were not only more insistent and eloquent in their accusations, but they were refining them as they went. This scene should remind the reader of Zechariah 3:1-2 where it states, “Then he showed me Joshua the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him....” In Revelation 12:10, Satan is described as “the accuser of our brethren.” That Jesus did not answer Herod and His accusers fulfills Isaiah 53:7: “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth.”

Verse 11 provides little detail as to how Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus “with contempt.” It is doubtful that physical abuse was employed here, and the implication is that the room was filled with laughter, scorn, insults and “mocking” for having been called “the king of the Jews.” This theory is supported by the fact that the soldiers “dressed Him in a gorgeous robe.” The word for “gorgeous” is lampran from which the English word “lamp” comes. It refers to something bright or brilliant. Some commentators suggest that this was a different robe than the one gambled over at the foot of the cross, which Mark calls “purple” and Matthew calls “scarlet,” implying a military robe. Regardless, the point is made: the robe placed on Jesus by Herod was
an expensive robe on any level. There are two great ironies here. The first is that by placing a king’s robe on Jesus, Herod is in effect transferring his kingship onto Jesus. The second irony is that the robe was indeed befitting a king, but the tragedy is that it was donned with scorn, mockery and total disrespect.

Verse 12 interjects that from that moment on, Pilate and Herod “became friends with one another.” The context for this statement was a long-standing distrust and rivalry between Pilate and Herod. Herod, related to the Jewish nation and a son of Herod the Great, had been tetrarch longer than Pilate, who was a Roman citizen. Neither trusted one another until now. Pilate acknowledged Herod’s authority by deferring Jesus to him, and Herod acknowledged Pilate’s authority as the one who was ultimately in control of the nation.

From a theological perspective, however, it was necessary that Jesus be rejected by both the Jewish nation, represented by Herod, and the rest of the world, represented by Pilate. This “double rejection” is summed up nicely by the apostle John in his gospel: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him” (John 1:10-11). So, it was not just the Jews who rejected Jesus, it was the whole world, as it is the whole world today that rejects Jesus, not just the Jewish nation. Therefore, by being rejected by the whole world, Jesus’ death on the cross covers the sins of the whole world, not just the Jewish nation.

13 Pilate summoned the chief priests and the rulers and the people,
14 and said to them, “You brought this man to me as one who incites the people to rebellion, and behold, having examined Him before you, I have found no guilt in this man regarding the charges which you make against Him.
15 “No, nor has Herod, for he sent Him back to us; and behold, nothing deserving death has been done by Him.
16 “Therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”
17 [Now he was obliged to release to them at the feast one prisoner.]
18 But they cried out all together, saying, “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas!”

19 (He was one who had been thrown into prison for an insurrection made in the city, and for murder.)

This custom is well attested (e.g., Mark 15:6). From Pilate’s perspective, following this custom would be a way out from him condemning an innocent man. Unfortunately for Pilate (yet fortunate for us), the mob is unwilling to go along with Pilate’s suggestion.

[Verse 17 is placed in brackets by the NASB editors because it is not found in the earliest manuscripts. Technically, it is called a “gloss”; that is, it may have been written as a marginal note that was later incorporated into the manuscript. It was apparently inserted to (1) help readers understand the context of releasing a prisoner at Passover, and (2) to provide consistency with Matt. 27:15. As with almost all verses like this, it has no bearing on Christian theology or in the authenticity and authority of the gospel, and is intended to explain verse 16; that is, to help the reader understand why Pilate would be inclined to “release Him.”]

23:18-25 Once again, Pilate is caught between a rock and a hard place. His sense of Roman justice is being challenged by his need to keep calm among the people. By this time, a mob has gathered, no doubt being revved up by the chief priests. However, this mob is comprised of more than those simply conspiring with the chief priests. The mob has grown to include those who want revolution. In any oppressed society, there is always an underlying unrest among the people who want to be out from under the oppression, but are held at bay by superior force. It doesn’t take much of a trigger to inflame the passions of the oppressed. The irony here is that Jesus came to set the oppressed free. Now, the oppressed are calling for His death in favor of a man who could never set them free. They shout in unison like a great chant: “Release for us Barabbas!”

Barabbas means “son of abba” (“son of daddy”) and should not be confused with “Barsabbas” in Acts 1:23 and 15:22. All four gospel writers refer to Barabbas by name. Matthew identifies Barabbas as “a notorious prisoner” (27:16), John as a “robber” (18:40), and Luke, an insurrectionist and murderer. Virtually nothing is known of Barabbas other than what is recorded in the gospels. The passion of the people, however, indicate that he was extremely well known and seen as a hero, being the leader of an insurrection. Do you see the irony here? First, Barabbas’s name tells us nothing about the man, and he could be anybody. Therefore, he is a type of mankind who is truly guilty of sin but is delivered from death by virtue of the substitution of the One who is not guilty, Jesus the Messiah. Second, the mob is giving up the true Deliverer for one who in the end, can deliver no one. There is a great lesson here for all followers of Jesus Christ. Jesus, and Jesus alone, can deliver us from our oppressors and from our
20 Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again,
21 but they kept on calling out, saying, “Crucify, crucify Him!”

22 And he said to them the third time, “Why, what evil has this man done? I have found in Him no guilt demanding death; therefore I will punish Him and release Him.”

23 But they were insistent, with loud voices asking that He be crucified. And their voices began to prevail.
24 And Pilate pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.

oppressions, for He alone is the only One who can deliver us from our sins, from the schemes of Satan, and from the woes and wiles of the world. The worldly mob is looking for a worldly answer; they are blinded to the fact that the true answer is in their very midst. The world will do anything to avoid the message of the cross because to face the cross is to face one’s guilt from personal sin. Unfortunately, many churches in America today are bypassing the message of the cross in favor of the gospel of happiness, care-free living, and the avoidance of sacrifice and suffering. Luke’s message that Jesus and Jesus alone delivers us from sin and eternal condemnation is being pushed aside in favor of the feel-good message of Christian self-actualization, happiness and cheap grace. Mobs remains with us today, but instead of shouting, “release for us Barabbas,” the crowd demands “release for us the megastar!”

Pilate, quite frustrated by this time, and having been warned by his wife not to shed innocent blood (Matt. 27:19), addresses the mob a third time. Luke clearly indicates that Pilate wanted to release Jesus. Up until now, Pilate’s sense of justice has prevailed, but is slowly being worn down by the mob. At this point, the crowd not only demands Barabbas be released but, stirred up by the religious leaders, they demand that Jesus be crucified: “Crucify, crucify Him!” The form of the words “calling out” means the mob was continually shouting, as if in a chant. It is unclear how the mob went from exchanging Barabbas’s imprisonment to crucifying Jesus. Certainly, the chief priests and scribes must have had something to do with it, for they did not just want Jesus in prison…they wanted Him dead. By having the mob shout “Crucify Him,” they not only wanted Him dead, but they wanted Him to suffer terribly, as we will see later in the chapter.

The word “crucify” is staurou and comes from a word meaning “to stake,” as one would stake a fence using an upright piece of wood. To crucify someone is to stake him to an upright piece of wood. “Crucify” is the verb form; “crucifixion” is the noun.

Here Pilate attempts to reason with an out-of-control mob, a lose-lose situation at best. Rather than simply declaring Jesus is innocent, he asks an extremely relevant, if not rhetorical question: “What evil has this man done?” The word “evil” is kakon meaning “bad things” or “harm to others.” The phrasing of the question in the Greek indicates that this is both an explanatory and argumentative question combined. That is, he is explaining that there is no evil found in Him, and therefore, what’s their argument for demanding crucifixion? The obvious answer is “None.” This is the third time that Pilate states he can find “no guilt” in Jesus, especially
that warranting crucifixion. So, once again, he attempts to appease the mob by offering to scourge Him. That is not good enough for the mob, for Pilate has included his intent to “release Him.”

Verse 23 indicates that their shouts “began to prevail”; that is, prevail over Pilate’s pleas, prevail over reason, and prevail over any sense of justice.

Pilate now finds himself caught in a web from which he cannot extricate himself. He is caught between condemning to death a man in whom he can find no fault, and setting himself up for more complaints to Rome when he hears the crowd shout, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar” (John 19:12).

It is verse 24, however, that tells the tale. Pilate, against his better judgment, against all sense of Roman justice, and against the dire warnings of his wife, acquiesces to the mob: he “pronounced sentence that their demand be granted.”

“That their demand be granted” is the Achilles heel of all good leaders; that is, to please the crowd at the expense of justice and good judgment. Politicians routinely yield to the demand of the noisy few or the perks of special interest groups for the sake of winning votes and appearing “open to all.” In America today, there is no greater example of this than the government’s yielding to the gay agenda and the demand for same-sex marriage. Politicians proclaim they support it even though in their hearts they are against it; they do not want to be labeled “homophobic.” Today, the “mob” is represented by the liberal media, and the politician is a type of Pilate, acquiescing to the will of the mob, that “their demand be granted.”

Unfortunately, church leaders sometimes fall into this same trap by trying to keep everyone in the congregation happy, rather than defining a biblical standard and sticking to it no matter the cost. There is no greater example of this than the so-called “seeker sensitive” approach to church ministry, which is another way of saying that the church should become more like the world, rather than the world becoming more like Christ. Pastors, instead of expositing and explaining the word have become charismatic entertainers employing expensive multimedia and all the trappings of the entertainment industry. Not satisfied with a body of believers that is an inch wide but a mile deep spiritually, the body of Christ has become a mile wide and an inch deep. Churches have conformed to the demands and whims of the culture rather than to making true disciples, those who are willing to take up their cross, suffer and sacrifice for the sake of Jesus. Studies show that Bible illiteracy among so-called evangelical Christians is at an all-time high. The list could go on and on, but the cause
25 And he released the man they were asking for who had been thrown into prison for insurrection and murder, but he delivered Jesus to their will.

The result of Pilate’s acquiescence? “He released the man they were asking for.” In other words, he chose to please the crowd, something a pastor or church leader must never do. And the cost of that? “He delivered Jesus to their will.” It’s a deliverance of the most evil kind.

There has been no greater degradation of Jesus in the American church today than delivering Him to the will of a Christian culture that is becoming increasingly narcissistic. Christians do not want a suffering Jesus; they want a Jesus who will make them happy. They do not want a Jesus for whom they must sacrifice; they want a Jesus who will bring good feelings and sentiments without sacrifice. Many Christians today do not want a Jesus who demands obedience; they want a Jesus who will cater to their wish-list. They want the Jesus that is fun, non-judgmental, demands little, and costs nothing. In an effort to build large churches, some pastors have sold out to the world and its methodologies for success. Where is the church that teaches its members to pray? Where is the church that explains the word of God in such a way that its members can explain the word to others? Where is the church that sends more money to missionaries than it spends on multimedia, sound systems or stage lighting? Where is the church that holds its members accountable for their sexual sins, and disciplines those who choose a lifestyle that is inconsistent with walking in the Spirit? Where is the church that teaches true biblical love as much as it teaches about social ills or end-times philosophies? Where is the church whose members weep in repentance at the altar for sins past and present? Where is the church that makes disciples instead of mere observers? Where is the church who weeps over Christians who are being persecuted and martyred in Muslim countries? There are churches like that, to be sure, but their numbers are dwindling and their presence is rarely noted, for they are not “on the cutting edge” or “mega.” It is unlikely that a so-called megachurch is making more disciples of Jesus than it is worshippers of the celebrity or rock-star pastor. Yet, like the seven thousand in Elijah’s day who had not bowed their knees to Baal, so, too, does God preserve a remnant. Unfortunately, the remnant is difficult to find.

The lesson here is clear: pastors must not deliver Jesus to the will of the people or the culture. The church is commissioned to deliver the message that will bring people to Jesus Christ, not Jesus to the mob. The church must not become like the world or attempt to please the crowd. The church would do
well, therefore, to direct its attention to the cross, for only there can the true Deliverer be found.

There is a large ellipsis (omission) by Luke between verses 25 and 26, and that involves Jesus’ scourging by the Romans. It is probably omitted because it has already been referred to in the previous verses, and any Gentile reader would automatically know that scourging was a severe punishment administered prior to crucifixion itself. Much has been written about Roman scourging in Christian literature, but little is known about it by the average Christian; therefore, it is mentioned here.

Roman scourging was known for its cruelty and severity. When Jews performed flogging (they never scourged), it was carried out with three leather straps attached to a wooden handle, and by Jewish law, a criminal could receive no more than 40 lashes. In order to avoid violating the law, the principle was “forty save one” meaning 39, thus avoiding the mistake of losing count, giving too many lashes, and thereby breaking the law. But such was not the case with Roman scourging, which carried with it the description of “near death.” Scourging was actually a punishment reserved for criminals. Therefore, crucifixion may or may not have followed scourging. Because scourging was so severe, it was against Roman law to carrying out scourging on one of its own citizens. The victim would be tied by the hand on an upright stake in the standing position, thus exposing the chest and stomach areas as well as the back. The Romans used leather straps attached to a wooden handle as well, but to the leather straps were attached sharp rocks and pieces of metal or bone. These straps were longer than the Jewish flagellum, and instead of simply lashing the back, the straps would whip around the chest and abdominal region, ripping the chest and abdominal wall when they were quickly and forcefully yanked back by the executioner. Often muscles or even internal organs were exposed as a result of the tearing of the skin. And, unlike Jewish flogging, Roman scourging had no limit to the number of times the criminal could be whipped. The scourging Jesus received fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy, “By His scourging we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

Also not mentioned by Luke is the placing of a crown of thorns on Jesus’ head, the cloaking of Jesus with a purple robe, and the demeaning actions by the soldiers who slapped Him and sarcastically mocking Him as the King of the Jews.

According to the John’s gospel, Pilate brought out Jesus to the crowd after His scourging (John 19:1-6). Some commentators suspect Pilate may have been trying to create sympathy for Jesus so that he could release him. Obviously, the plan didn’t work.

(For the other gospel writers’ account of Jesus’
When they led Him away, they seized a man, Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus.

All three synoptic writers mention Simon. He was from Cyrene, a city in North Africa (modern-day Libya), where there was a large Jewish community. It seems likely that he was on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Passover. Acts mentions that Christian Cyrenians were actively involved in the spread of the gospel following Pentecost, and were partly responsible for establishing the church in Antioch (Acts 11:20). Mark mentions that Simon was the father of Alexander and Rufus (15:21). It is probable that the Rufus mentioned by Paul in Romans 16:13 is this same Rufus, as Christian tradition holds that both sons of Simon became missionaries. Some have speculated that Simon was a Gentile proselyte, and that he was black. There is no real evidence for this, and the conjecture is probably more one of political expedience than truth.

The type of cross referred to in verse 26 is unknown. The cross (Latin *crux*, Greek *stauros*) could have been one of two forms. If it were the traditional cross celebrated by Christianity (aka the “Latin cross,” *crux immissa*), it would have weighed between 200 and 300 pounds. Arriving at the site of execution, a hole would have had to be dug if there was not one already. The criminal would have been laid down, nailed to the cross and then the entire cross with the body attached to it would have had to be lifted up by soldiers and dropped into the hole, quite a heavy chore. The other possibility—and the most probable one—is that Jesus was carrying only the crossbar weighing about 30 or 40 pounds (called a *patibulum*) which, after the victim was nailed and tied, was hoisted up and laid atop the upright beam, therefore forming a “T” shape. (This type of cross was called a *crux commissa*, aka “Saint Anthony’s Cross.”) Whether the cross was the traditional one or the “T” shape is unimportant. What is important is that Jesus is demonstrating what it means to be a true citizen of the kingdom of God, and what it will take to follow Him. Notice that verse 26 ends with “and placed on him the cross to carry behind Jesus” (italics mine). Simon is following Jesus. Unbeknownst to Simon, he is fulfilling Jesus’ teaching about the cost of following Him: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me” (Luke 9:23; 14:27). Note, too, that Simon didn’t rush up to the soldiers and volunteer to carry Jesus’ cross. He was “seized”; that is, grabbed at random out of the crowd and forced to carry the cross. Who knows how much Simon knew about Jesus before he was grabbed by the soldiers, but the incident obviously made a lifelong impression on him, if Christian tradition is correct that he became an
27 And following Him was a large crowd of
the people, and of women who were mourning
and lamenting Him.

28 But Jesus turning to them said, “Daughters
of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep
for yourselves and for your children.

29 “For behold, the days are coming when
they will say, ‘Blessed are the barren, and the
wombs that never bore, and the breasts that
never nursed.’

30 “Then they will begin TO SAY TO THE
MOUNTAINS, ‘FALL ON US,’ AND TO THE HILLS,
‘COVER US.’

31 “For if they do these things when the tree
is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

records this most likely because of he has often
emphasized the role and presence of women
throughout Jesus’ ministry. (There are eight specific
references that focus on women.) The large crowd
following Jesus was probably a mix of some of His
disciples, including women disciples such as Mary
Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna, and a group of
professional mourners who commonly accompanied
Jewish prisoners being led to execution. That is why
Jesus does not address them by name, but as
“Daughters of Jerusalem.” Verses 28-31 contain
Jesus’ last prophecy concerning the fate of Jerusalem.
Note that Jesus does not put a date on these events,
but instead reiterates what He has already warned
about before (21:20-24). That Luke includes these
verses demonstrates that Jesus continues to be
concerned about those women who will be victims of
the fall of Jerusalem at the hand of the Romans in AD
70. One further note about women: nowhere in the
gospels does any woman show hostility to Jesus.

The lesson here is clear: Jesus did not ask His
disciples to do anything He was unwilling to do
Himself. Not only was He beaten, He was mocked,
made fun of, treated with scorn, made to suffer, and
eventually died at the hands of ruthless, godless men.
This is the price Jesus says may cost anyone who
chooses to follow Him. This very day, Christians all
over the world are being evicted out of their homes
and businesses, expelled from countries, imprisoned,
beaten and often killed simply for being a follower of
Jesus Christ. Knowing this, the reader of this
commentary, therefore, is now under obligation to
pay attention to the suffering of Christians around the
world and pray for them that their faith may not fail.
And, in the worse case scenario, the reader is now
under obligation to carry his or her own cross,
regardless of the cost, regardless of the suffering,
regardless of the price. We are all called to be Simons
of Cyrene.
32 Two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him.

33 When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.

very words shouted by the mob calling for Jesus’ crucifixion: “Surely now they will say, ‘We have no king, for we do not revere the Lord’” (Hos. 10:3). And, at the end of Hosea 10, he writes: “…When mothers were dashed in pieces with their children, thus it will be done to you at Bethel because of your great wickedness, at dawn the king of Israel will be completely cut off” (10:14-15). (“Bethel” means “house of God.”) This warning by Jesus is clearly an explanation for the destruction of Jerusalem—their rejection of the Messiah.

Verses 31 is a common proverb that means, “If the Romans do these terrible things to the innocent Jesus (“tree is green”), what will happen to the guilty Jews (“dry”)? Or, possibly: “If the Romans treat Israel this way when the Messiah is present, what will happen when He is not present and judgment comes?”

From an eschatological perspective (end times), there is a possible application: If the world is this wicked when the church is present, what will it be like when the church is no longer present (because of the rapture)?

From a very practical perspective that all Christians can relate to today, there is another real application: “If you think life is tough when you have Jesus, think what it would be like if you didn’t have Him to turn to?”

23:32 Luke ensures the reader understands that the two others who were about the be crucified next to Jesus are indeed criminals, getting what they deserve. The clear implication is that Jesus was not a criminal, yet being treated like one, and therefore getting what He does not deserve. This verse prepares the reader for what Luke will record in verses 39-43.

23:33-38 Oh, the volume of significance in this one verse! First, let’s deal with the criminals on either side. The picture is clear: Jesus’ presence divides men spiritually. As we will see, one will find salvation, the other probably not. Why? Because of what they believe about Jesus and who He is. We will go into that in more detail in verses 39-43.

Second, “they came to the place called The Skull.” The name of the hill (probably a mound along a thoroughfare) was called Golgotha, which is an Aramaic word meaning “skull.” (The Latin word for skull is calvarius from which we get the word “Calvary.”) Obviously, this little hill appeared like a skull from a certain perspective, and it was probably a common site for the crucifixion of criminals. There is no certainty today about its exact location.

Third, “they crucified Him.” The very word itself is the epitome of suffering, agony and shame. Invented by the Assyrians, the victims were simply
impaled on a stake by running the pointed end through the rectum and into the chest cavity. Death was almost immediate and, besides punishing the enemy, served as a warning display to passers-by. This cruel act of brutality was picked up by the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, and Egyptians. The Romans, however, devised a method of making crucifixion a slow, agonizing punishment and death that often took days.

There were basically two methods of crucifixion, and sometimes the two were mixed, depending on the circumstances and who was in charge of the execution. In some cases, 3/8 inch nails were driven through the palm of the hands (the traditional portrayal). However, the hand would rip out of the nail when body weight was factored in. Therefore, to prevent this from happening, the upper arms were lashed to the crossbar with a rope. The feet, of course, were nailed onto a small ledge as well. (More about this in a moment.) The advantage of this first method involving where the nails were placed in the hands is that the crucifixion was prolonged by virtue of the ropes holding up the body weight.

The other method involving the hands was exceedingly more painful and damaging to the body. Instead of the nails being driven through the palms, the nails were driven through the wrists (carpal bones) where there are many strong ligaments. This ensured that the hand would not pull free of the nail when the body was lifted up, and therefore, ropes were not necessary. Whereas there are virtually no major nerves or arteries running through the palm of the hand, two major nerves and arteries run through the narrower wrist. Such severe damage to the wrists would probably paralyze the hands permanently (which, therefore, would make it virtually impossible for Jesus to have rolled the stone away from the tomb Himself). This method also increased the suffering of being hung on a cross, for with the body weight pulling on the shoulders, they would eventually dislocate (gleno-humeral joint separation).

Concerning the feet, nails were sometimes placed immediately in front of the Achilles tendon between it and the heel (calcaneus), but this caused the lower extremities to be turned at the hips, therefore making it more difficult to push oneself up for relief on the arms. More commonly, however, a nail was driven directly through the middle of the forefeet (metacarpals) with one foot overlapping the other. The knees were slightly bent so that the victim could use them to push up on the ledge for relief. The nails in the feet (and hands) could be driven without breaking any bones. And in those days, there was no medical terminology distinction between the hand and the wrists. Therefore, when Jesus showed the disciples “His hands” after the resurrection, He could
have actually been showing them His wrists. (We will not know this for sure until we see Him in heaven.)

The purpose for bending the knees when the nails were driven into the feet was to prolong the agony. The pain from the nails in the hands (wrists) would refer to the shoulders and chest muscles (called referred pain), causing them to cramp up and go into spasm, thus interfering with breathing. To take the weight off the arms, therefore, the victim would push up on the feet so as to be able to breathe. This, of course, resulted in more pain the feet, causing the pain to be referred up into the thighs and hips. The muscles in the thigh (quadriceps) and hip (gluteal muscles, to name a few) would therefore go into spasm, eventually weakening to the point that the victim could no longer hold himself up, therefore slumping down again letting all the body weight hang on the arms. Thus, a cycle of agony that could last for days. That is why Roman crucifixion was referred to as “slow death.”

That’s some of the physical aspects of crucifixion. Now let’s look at some of the spiritual aspects. Being hung on a cross was a symbol of being cursed in Jewish tradition, and while Jesus was on the cross, He was under a curse, and indeed, became a curse for us. Paul makes this clear in Galatians 3:13: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’” (Deut. 21:23). The point Paul is making is that those who are under the law are under a curse because no one can ever live up to it—righteousness cannot be obtained through the law. But Jesus fulfilled “all the Law and the Prophets,” yet He took upon Himself the curse that should have been meted out to all of us. Thus, He became a curse for us.

Not only was being treated like a criminal shameful, but hanging on a cross was a symbol of shame, both from the Roman and from the Jewish point of view. (This, of course, is reflected in many Christian hymns, such as “The Old Rugged Cross.”) The writer of Hebrews makes this shame connection clear: “…Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). It is why Peter and John rejoiced after they were flogged and released by Jewish authorities: “So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” (Acts 5:41).

And of course, the cross is the fulfillment of both Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53. (The reader would do well to reread these chapters to look for the prophecies concerning Christ’s crucifixion.)

Luke excludes many of the details of Jesus’ time
34 But Jesus was saying, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves.

27:34 Here again, Luke creates another ellipsis. He records only three of Jesus’ seven statements while on the cross. The first of these, Luke wants his readers to know, contain some of the most important words Jesus ever spoke: “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” It is a prayer of intercession, not just for those nailing Him to the cross, but for the whole world.

God the Father would have had every right to wipe out all of humanity at this very moment in time. His Beloved Son, in Whom He was well pleased, had done nothing to deserve this treatment. All Jesus had done was to bring good news to lost people, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons from the possessed, raise the dead, and speak truth as to how to have a right relationship with God. He had never broken any Mosaic law, and therefore was without sin. He mended the broken-hearted, gave hope to the fainthearted, lifted the spirits of the oppressed, set prisoners free from the bondage of sin, and presented the Father to all people in such a way that they could understand that God loved them and wanted the kingdom of God in their hearts. He had offended only the proud, and chastised only the religious hypocrites. He taught His followers how to pray, how to trust in God for all their needs, how to share the good news, how to forgive others, how to love one another, and how to manifest the kingdom of God to a lost world. For this he was scourged and crucified, all because He did not give the world what it wanted, and only gave it what was needed but refused to accept. God the Father had sent His Son into the world because He love the world, but world had not received Him and instead nailed Him to the cross in the most painful and agonizing way. To be fair and just, God should have wiped out all mankind for what they (we) did to His Son. But He did not. Instead, He heeded the words of His Son, “Father, forgive them....” And God the Father offered the forgiveness of sins for the whole world in the name of His Son. Is this not love? Is this not the kind of love that could only come from the God of love? Is this not a grace that far outdistances anything the world could offer or even comprehend? Instead of judgment, God forgave. Instead of wrath, God held back. Instead of taking vengeance, God took mercy because “they do not know what they are doing.” God knew the consequences for judging mankind at that point in time—all mankind would have spent eternity in hell. All mankind would have been separated from Him and His love forever. So God chose to listen to the intercession of His Son, and forgive, and allow mankind a chance to live forever in His presence.
And the people stood by, looking on. And even the rulers were sneering at Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if this is the Christ of God, His Chosen One.”

36 The soldiers also mocked Him, coming up...
to Him, offering Him sour wine,
37 and saying, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself!”
38 Now there was also an inscription above Him, “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

Verse 35 notes that “even the rulers” were present, mocking Him. These would have been the same rulers of the temple and synagogues. The irony of their statement, “He saved others; let Him save Himself…” is that Jesus could not save Himself and save the whole world. Why? Because the sins of the whole world needed to be atoned for by the shedding of blood, as the writer of Hebrews points out: “…And without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.” (See Hebrews 9:11-28 for the entire context.) And, it should not be forgotten, this was the Passover.

Verse 36 states that the soldiers offered Jesus “sour wine.” This would have been wine that had partially turned to vinegar (*posca*), and carried by Roman soldiers who rarely drank water due to gastrointestinal consequences. Matthew states that Jesus had been offered “sour wine mingled with gall” at the very beginning, but He refused it (Matt. 27:34). The “gall” would have been myrrh mixed in, which is quite bitter to the taste. According to Proverbs 31:6, “strong drink” was given to those who were suffering, as it was considered a form of analgesia. The sour wine still had significant alcohol content. This incident recorded here by Luke was probably the same incident recorded by John just before Jesus died (John 19:28-30).

Concerning the inscription Pilate had written, more detail on this is found in John 19:19-22.

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, “Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!”
40 But the other answered, and rebuking him said, “Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?
41 “And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.”
42 And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!”
43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

23:39-43 Only Luke records in detail Jesus’ interaction with the two criminals crucified with Him. Both Matthew and Mark state that both criminals reviled Jesus (Matt 27:44). The general consensus by commentators is that one of those criminals later repented. Luke would be particularly prone to not overlook the repentant criminal’s request, for the act of repentance is important to Luke’s theme and relates all the way back to the ministry of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3).

“Was hurling” is in the imperfect tense, indicating that the one criminal kept on insisting Jesus save them. The word “hurling abuse” is a strong word which the KJV translates “railing.” The word is *blasphemeo* from which we get the word “blaspheme.” In other words, the criminal was effectively criticizing and rebuking Jesus in an angry manner. Note, too, that his interest is really not in Jesus, but in himself: “Save Yourself and us!” What is interesting in this rebuke is the criminal is actually assuming that Jesus is indeed the Messiah: “Are You
not the Christ?” There is no reason to believe that this
criminal thought otherwise, making his rebuke all the
more serious and poignant. The point is that factually
believing that Jesus is the Christ alone is not
sufficient to find salvation. One must not only believe
that Jesus is the Christ, and that He can save us, but
that we are willing to submit to Him as Lord of our
lives. In short, putting one’s faith and trust in Jesus.

After the ongoing insistence by the first criminal,
nothing has changed. Jesus remains on the cross. The
fate of all of three of them is sealed. The second
criminal apparently comes to his senses (like the
prodigal son) and realizes that death is inevitable, and
that Jesus is going to die just like the rest of them. He
first turns on his fellow criminal and rebukes him
(epitimao, to rebuke or reprove). His rebuke is
poignant as well: “Do you not even fear God…?” The
implication is that this second criminal also realizes
that Jesus is the Messiah. He rebukes the first
criminal because, if he really believes that Jesus is the
Messiah, then to revile Him is to revile God Himself.
He is thus adding to his sins by committing
blasphemy and, as he is already justly sentenced to
death, now is not a good time to be committing
blasphemy. (“Sentence of condemnation” refers to a
legal judgment [krima] issued by a court.)

That the second criminal is repentant comes out
in verse 41: “We indeed are suffering justly, for we
are receiving what we deserve for our deeds.…” The
essence of repentance is acknowledging our sin, not
only against God, but against others. We do not know
exactly what sins these criminals had committed, but
they must have been serious enough to warrant
 crucifixion, and if the Romans considered them
criminals for violating Roman law, then one can
assume that they had broken many of the Ten
Commandments. The second criminal’s acknowledge
of his sin is the essence of repentance. It is the act of
taking an honest look at oneself, at one’s actions,
behaviors and relationships, and comparing them to
God’s standards. Just like this second criminal, we
find that we cannot measure up. Therefore, as the
apostle Paul states, “…for all have sinned and fall
short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). By
acknowledging “we are receiving what we deserve,”
he is confessing what every sinner on earth should
confess—we deserve to die for our sins. He then
acknowledges the contrast: the criminals are getting
what they deserve, but Jesus is getting what He does
not deserve. In summary, verse 41 could read, “We’re
getting what we deserve, but He doesn’t deserve what
He is getting.”

Verse 42 could be called “the sinner’s prayer.”
Having acknowledged his sin, that he deserves to
suffer and die, and that he has little time left on this
earth, he calls for mercy. That the text reads, “he was
saying” indicates that he may have repeated the request a number of times. The first criminal has demanded that Jesus get them down off the cross. That didn’t happen, so the second criminal realizes it is a futile request, and that they are all going to die. In desperation, therefore, and perhaps as a last gasp of hope, he turns to the only option he has left: to request to be included in the kingdom of God. All the elements for being saved are now complete: he acknowledged that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; he acknowledges that he is a sinner and worthy of his judgment; finally, he turns to Jesus for the only escape, which is life after death in the kingdom of God. What exactly the criminal was thinking when he requested “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom” is not known. However, what we do know is that he acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah who will eventually establish His kingdom on earth. There is such irony here! Jesus’ disciples have abandoned Him. Their assumption that Jesus would establish His earthly kingdom is over. Their hopes have been dashed and they are wandering around in confusion and disillusionment, disappointed, discouraged and distraught. They have been unwilling to suffer with Him, and therefore have lost hope in His kingdom to come. But the criminal, who is suffering with Jesus, believes His kingdom is real and is yet to be manifested! Jesus will not let this criminal die without hope: “Today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

There are a number of things that need to be said about verse 43. First, the word “Paradise” is used in only two other places in the New Testament. First, 2 Corinthians 12:4, where Paul describes his journey to “the third heaven” which he describes as Paradise. (It is also found in Rev. 2:7, reading “I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.”) In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament), the word Paradise (παράδεισο) is used to describe the Garden of Eden, and originally meant “an enclosed park” and “pleasure-ground.” In Jewish theology, it was the equivalent of “Abraham’s bosom” (Luke 16:22). But the key phrase here is not “in Paradise,” but “you shall be with Me.” The clear implication is that to be with Jesus is to be in Paradise. Therefore, Paradise is not just a place, it is a state of being with Jesus, close beside Him forever. It is the essence of what the apostle Paul refers to as being “in Christ” (Eph. 1:3) and “with Christ” (Eph. 2:5).

The second observation on verse 43 has to do with interpretation. Seventh-day Adventists, because of their doctrine of “soul sleep” (i.e., after death the soul of the believer does not immediately go to heaven, but “sleeps” until Christ’s return), place a comma after “today” instead of “you,” therefore
44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour,

45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two.

46 And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” Having said this, He breathed His last.

rendering the verse, “I say to you today, you shall be with Me in Paradise.” Not only is this incredulous phrasing, but it is inconsistent with the rest of New Testament teaching regarding eternal life after death. Their phrasing is an excellent example of what is called “eisogesis”; that is, interpreting a verse according to one’s theology, rather than forming theology by properly interpreting Scripture through “exegesis.” Simply put, it is making the Scripture fit the theology rather than the other way around, as it should be in the literal-historical method of exegetical hermeneutics.

O! The evangelistic messages that can be preached on these few verses! By including Jesus’ entire encounter with the criminals while on the cross, Luke is, in effect, evangelizing. His point: anyone, at any time, can turn to Jesus for salvation. No matter the sin, no matter the guilt, no matter the punishment deserved, anyone can find eternal life through Jesus. Even while suffering on the cross, Jesus forgave the man of his sins and granted him the promise of eternal life. Whereas the first criminal died without hope, the repentant criminal died full of hope, and at this very moment in time—over 2,000 years later—still abides “with Christ” in Paradise, and will remain “in Christ” for all eternity.

23:44-46 “It was now about the sixth hour…. This would have been about noon. The “sun was obscured” is misleading, as it could be taken as cloud cover or haze. The darkness described in the gospels that took place for three hours (between noon and three p.m.) can only be taken as a supernatural darkness. It could not have been an solar eclipse, for the moon was full at Passover. Nor was it simply a cloud cover, lest the writers would have stated such. The wording in the Greek is best translated “the sun’s light failing” and should be taken that way—there was less light coming from the sun, as a flashlight grows dim as the batteries weaken. Why would anyone want to seek a naturalistic explanation for the supernatural event of the Son of God dying on the cross? Perhaps only the Western mind has trouble with supernatural phenomena.

Luke also includes what Matthew and Mark relate, that the veil in the temple “was torn in two.” Matthew and Mark include the observation that the veil, which hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, was torn “from top to bottom.” Matthew includes the fact that there was an earthquake at the time Jesus gave up His spirit, and this, indeed, could have been the cause of the veil tearing. However, in the case of an earthquake, it would have been more likely that the veil would have simply fallen to the ground as its moorings came out of the wall, and here is why. According the
Rabbinical literature, the veil was sixty feet long from top to bottom, and a “handbreadth” in thickness. This veil, or curtain, must have been extremely heavy and almost impossible to tear by simply pulling it apart. It would not have torn “in two” in the middle. The better explanation is that this, too, was a supernatural event, and the tearing of the veil “from top to bottom” (Matt. 27:51) is actually the hand of God.

The tearing of the veil in the temple is extremely significant theologically, and is a picture of a number of things. First, the tearing of the veil implies that Jesus has entered in as the high priest to atone for the sins of the people (see Heb. 6:19, 9:3, 10:20 for this relationship). Second, the tearing of the veil represents the completion and fulfillment of the old covenant, which is to be replaced, not by the blood of goats and sheep, but by the blood of Christ. Third, the Holy of Holies is therefore open to all who are in Christ Jesus through faith in Him. Fourth, the tearing of the veil represents the end of the law as a covenant between God and man. The new covenant between God and man is based on grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Fifth, along with the fourth, it signifies that those who are in Christ Jesus are no longer under the law, but under grace. And lastly, it signifies that a right relationship with God and with others is not measured according to the Ten Commandments, but to the new commandments of “love one another” and “love your neighbor as yourself” (Rom. 13:8-10).

(Matthew also includes that as Jesus gave up His spirit, “The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection entered the holy city and appeared to many” [Matt. 27:52-53].)

Verse 46 are Jesus’ last words. He is quoting from Psalm 31:5: “Into Your hand I commit my spirit; You have ransomed me, O Lord, God of truth.” These words should, of course, be the final words of every dying saint. Whereas the prayer of living saints should be, “Not my will, but Yours be done,” the prayer of every dying saint should be, “Into Your hands I commit my spirit.” If nothing else, this should pretty much sum up one’s entire prayer life.

It is significant, too, that Jesus gave up His spirit on the “ninth hour.” This would have been three in the afternoon, and was the same hour that final preparations were being made for the Sabbath, the day of rest. The clear picture here is that when Jesus utters the words, “It is finished,” the old covenant is finished as well, and all those who are in Christ can enter into His rest: “For we who have believed enter that rest…” (Heb. 4:3).

The apostle John mentions that, because the Sabbath was approaching, and it was against Jewish law for crucified Jews to be left hanging on a cross,
47 Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he began praising God, saying, “Certainly this man was innocent.”

48 And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, began to return, beating their breasts.

49 And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things.

23:47-49 Whereas the previous verses focused on Jesus, these few verses focus on Jesus’ executioners and the crowd who witnessed Jesus’ death. It is interesting that each gospel writer has a slightly different take on the response, as anyone would in trying to describe a crowd’s reaction to a horrific event. John was an eyewitness; Matthew and Mark may or may not have been around. Luke got all his information from others, particularly Mary, the mother of Jesus, as well as Mary Magdalene (and of course, other eyewitnesses). All the details of Jesus’ crucifixion and death would probably take an entire book in itself, and as the apostle John writes at the end of his gospel, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written in...
50 And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man
51 (he had not consented to their plan and action), a man from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God;
52 this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.
53 And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain.
54 It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.
55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.

detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). No doubt this was doubly true of the crucifixion.

Luke includes the reaction of “the centurion,” most likely the one in charge of the crucifixion. Luke states that the centurion “began praising God.” To what extent this centurion was praising God is unknown. Both Matthew and Mark state that the centurion, when observing all the events surrounding the crucifixion (darkness, earthquake), stated “Truly this man was the Son of God” (Mark 15:39). One must be careful here, and not assume that the centurion became a believer. The original text does not say “the Son of God”; there is no definite article before the word “Son.” Thus, the correct rendering should be “This man was a son of God,” or “This man was a son of a god.” (Note: This is a translator’s error in interpretation, not a problem with the original text.) And, perhaps this is why Luke made the observation, “…he began praising God”; that is, by declaring Jesus as someone out of the ordinary, and by declaring Jesus innocent and undeserving of His punishment.

Luke is also the only one who mentions that the crowd “began…beating their breasts.” The beating of breasts was literally pounding on one’s chest with their own fists as a sign of anguish and grief. What Luke is implying here is unknown, but it goes hand in hand with the response of the centurion, that, after Jesus was crucified and treated so terribly and unjustly, everyone began to realize how unjust it was and that crucifying Him was a tragic mistake and miscarriage of justice.

23:50-56a There are two figures that emerge as silent heroes: Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea. John alone identifies Nicodemus, and writes extensively of his encounter with Jesus in chapter 3 of his gospel (see also John 7:50 and 19:39). Joseph, on the other hand, is mentioned in all four gospels. John calls Joseph a “secret” disciple, and Luke states in verse 51 that he had not gone along with the Council’s plan to kill Jesus. (It is assumed that Nicodemus didn’t as well.) Whereas most of Jesus’ visible disciples were poor, or had little, Joseph and Nicodemus were both well off. Joseph even had a plot of land where a family tomb had been carved out. (In those days, entire families were placed in one tomb.) That Jesus would be placed in the tomb of a wealthy man fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy in 53:9: “Yet He was with a rich man in His death.” While Joseph is pleading with Pilate for permission to take Jesus’ body down before sunset, Nicodemus is purchasing one hundred pounds of embalming material consisting of “a mixture of myrrh and aloes” (John
56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. 19:39). Most probably, Nicodemus and Joseph, together with their servants, wrapped Jesus’ body in a “linen cloth” and placed Him in the tomb. Unfortunately, there was little time for proper preparation of the body. Likewise, the women who had been following, “saw the tomb and how His body was laid” (v. 55). Luke then notes that they returned to their homes and began preparing “spices and perfumes” to complete preparation of the body, which was to take place on the day after Sabbath (Sunday, our time).

There are a couple of important observations that need to be made about the place of burial. First, Joseph knew exactly where it was. After all, he had purchased the site. Had Mary or the disciples gone to the wrong burial place on the day of resurrection, surely he would have said something. Nicodemus and the “women” were witnesses of the place itself, noting its exact location. It would be doubtful that the women went to the wrong location on the first day of the week, as some skeptics have suggested. Not only that, but someone must have directed the Roman soldiers to the correct location. That person was probably Joseph. Thus there are a number of witnesses to the exact location of Jesus’ burial site.

Second, there is no question that Jesus is dead, and there is no question on anyone’s part that their hopes for a new kingdom have been utterly shattered. Luke notes in verse 51 that Joseph “was waiting for the kingdom of God.” Everyone now believes that the entire adventure has come to a horrific halt: Jesus failed, He died, and that’s the end of it. Note, too, that no disciple is around when it comes time to bury Jesus: only the women were there for Him at the time of His burial.

There is a final point that needs to be made in regard to Joseph and Nicodemus. Though the gospel writers have nothing bad to say about them, and though they were probably a part of the early church (see Acts 15:5 indicating some Pharisees were converted), there is no indication that Jesus ever appeared to them after the resurrection. You would think that Jesus would have included them when He met with the disciples and “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). Wouldn’t you want the experts of the Scripture in on that?

The writer believes there is a reason Jesus never revealed Himself to Joseph and Nicodemus in His resurrected body: they didn’t deserve it. It goes back to John’s statement that Joseph was a “secret” disciple of Jesus. The reason John gives for Joseph and Nicodemus being “secret” disciples was “for fear of the Jews.” In other words, they bowed to peer pressure. (To be more accurate, John only writes that about Joseph, but he makes it very clear that Nicodemus came to Jesus “by night” [John 3:2].) The
And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment.

truth is, there can be no such thing as a “secret disciple” of Jesus in a free and open country. In America, where one will not be immediately executed for following Jesus, and where there is freedom of religion, no Christian should be a “secret” disciple of Jesus out of fear of intimidation by peers, employers, or government officials. Due to a liberal-leaning government and a conspiring press, the days are fast approaching, if not already here, when Christians are portrayed as the source of all social problems. Pro-lifers are already seen as troublemakers, and those who do not agree with the gay agenda and same-sex marriage are vilified as backwards, ignorant, out of touch, and “haters” and “homophobics.” These battles are currently taking place in privately owned businesses, and it will be just a matter of time before churches are threatened to lose their tax-exempt status if they do not adhere to government mandates concerning the hiring of gays and willingness to perform same-sex marriage. The question is “How will the church respond?” And, “Will Christians become ‘secret’ disciples in the workplace for fear of losing their jobs?” This writer is convinced that these issues are no different than taking the mark of the beast. The question, then, is, “Who wants to witness the resurrected Christ?”

23:56b One can imagine that this Sabbath day was probably the worst day Jesus’ followers ever experienced. There would have been great mourning, great discouragement, great disillusionment, and great fear. If only they had remembered Jesus’ words regarding the Son of Man: “…the third day He will rise again” (Luke 18:33).
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. Describe the major events that take place in this chapter. How many times does Pontius Pilate find “no guilt” in Jesus? What is the relationship between Pilate’s declarations, Jonah’s experience in the belly of the fish, and in the number of statements Jesus makes on the cross, as recorded by Luke? How many times did Peter deny Jesus? How many Persons are there in the Trinity?

2. Of the statements by Jesus on the cross (as recorded by Luke), which one stands out the most to you? Why do you believe it is important? How do you plan on applying that statement in your relationship with others?

3. Why do you think Jesus never responded to Herod’s questions in verses 8-11? Do you see a relationship between this encounter and God’s unwillingness to answer prayers? (You might want to refer to James 4:3.)

4. Take a few moments to compare Jesus with Barabbas and the criminals on the cross. Address the issue of getting what you deserve, not getting what you deserve, and getting what you don’t deserve. Take time to comment on this statement: “Justice is getting what you deserve; mercy is not getting what you deserve; grace is getting what you don’t deserve.”

5. Reflect on the elements of crucifixion. Try to imagine how much suffering there was. Now read through the chapter again and find all the ways that Jesus suffered. For whom did He suffer? Can you find love in the crucifixion? What do you suppose could have been God the Father’s just response to mankind when He observed His only Begotten Son suffering so on the cross? What would have been a just reaction of God to all mankind? Why did not God the Father exact judgment on mankind at that very moment? What does that tell you about God’s patience with you, and how you ought to have patience and mercy on others? How do you plan on applying that principle to your daily relationships?

6. How do you plan to implement God’s love in your everyday relationships: in the home, in the workplace, with your fellow church members, with your neighbors, and with those you tend to avoid?

7. How do you plan to “take up your cross daily” and follow Jesus? Give 3 specifics.
The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 23

23:1-5 – The Council (Sanhedrin) brings Jesus before________________________________________________

23:6-7 – Pilate learns that Jesus is a Galilean and transfers Him to __________________________________________

23:8-12 – Herod becomes frustrated with Jesus, sending Him back to Pilate: Jesus is _________________________

23:13-17 – The second time Jesus is before Pilate, and Pilate finds in Him _________________________________

23:18-25 – The third time Pilate finds “no guilt” in Jesus, but because of the crowd, __________________________

23:26-32 – Jesus is sentenced to death on the cross and gives a final _______________________________________

23:33-38 – Jesus is crucified and a placard is attached to His cross: _______________________________________

23:39-43 – Jesus’ interaction with the two _____________________________________________________________

23:44-49 – Jesus’ final words on the cross, the most applicable being, ________________________________

23:50-56 – Jesus is buried by Joseph of Arimathea before _______________________________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler
Luke 23

Luke 23:1-5 – The Council (Sanhedrin) brings Jesus before Pontius Pilate
- If necessary, remind the disciple who Pontius Pilate was and how he was appointed to his position by Caesar.
- Inform the disciple why the Council wanted to (had to) bring Jesus before Pontius Pilate in order to fulfill their plan for Jesus.
- Ensure that the disciple understands how Pontius Pilate responded to Jesus. Emphasize the fact that Pilate found “no guilt” in Jesus. What was the significance (and irony) of Jesus affirming Pilate’s question, “Are You the king of the Jews?”

Luke 23:6-7 – Pilate learns that Jesus is a Galilean and transfers Him to Herod
- If necessary, remind the disciple who Herod was, especially the fact that Herod, called king of the Jews, was not actually Jewish, but an Edomite.
- Remind the disciple that this was the same Herod who had John the Baptist beheaded, and who Jesus referred to as a “fox.”

Luke 23:8-12 – Herod becomes frustrated with Jesus, sending Him back to Pilate: Jesus is silent
- Ask the disciple why Herod was “glad” to finally meet Jesus. What was Herod’s motives, and what was Herod expecting from Jesus? Ask the disciple why Jesus never answered Herod’s questions. Have the disciple observe the accusations by the chief priests and scribes, and what kind of reaction they were displaying.
- How did Herod’s soldiers treat Jesus, and what was Jesus’ response to being treated badly? What is the lesson here for all followers of Jesus Christ?

Luke 23:13-17 – The second time Jesus is before Pilate, and Pilate finds in Him “no guilt”
- Have the disciple reread verse 13. Besides the chief priests, who else is now included in those wanting to put Jesus to death and release Barabbas?
- How many times has it been now that Pilate has found “no guilt” in Jesus? By Pilate’s statement in verse 15, what was the obvious request the scribes and chief priests were making of him?
- Ask the disciple what Pilate was referring to when he stated, “I will punish Him,” and what was Pilate’s intent on first punishing Jesus and then releasing Him? What was the apparent tradition behind Pilate releasing a prisoner at Passover?

Luke 23:18-25 – The third time Pilate finds “no guilt” in Jesus, but because of the crowd, he acquiesces (gives in)
- Have the disciple read verse 18. Then ask the disciple, “What was the crowd’s response that Pilate intended to release Jesus?” Who cried out “Away with this man, and release for us Barabbas”?
- The disciple will then need to learn who Barabbas was and why the chief priests, scribes, rulers and “people” were willing to trade Jesus for Barabbas. Of the Jews, who is left out? What is the irony and the significance of the fact that all of Israel is represented here?
- In verse 22, have the disciple identify the third time that Pilate declares he can find “no guilt” in Jesus. How does finding “no guilt” in Jesus relate to (1) the three days and nights in the tomb, (2) Peter’s three denials, (3) the three temptations of Jesus in the wilderness, and (4) Luke’s record of the three sayings of Jesus on the cross?
- Ask the disciple if he or she can identify Pilate’s fatal flaw in regard to pleasing the crowd. Whose voice, Pilate’s or the mob’s, began to “prevail”?
- See if the disciple can relate Pilate’s response to the mob to politicians and to some church leaders today.
23:26-32 – Jesus is sentenced to death on the cross and gives a final prophecy about Jerusalem.

- Here, the discipler may want to inform the disciple about Simon of Cyrene, where he was from, why he was in Jerusalem, and his history following the crucifixion and resurrection; that is, his role in the early church as recorded in Acts.
- Certainly the discipler will want to explain verses 27 through 31, which are not recorded by the other gospel writers. The discipler may want to point out the number of times Luke refers to woman in his gospel.
- If necessary, the discipler may want to explain the other types of “crosses,” and that no one is exactly certain on which type of cross Jesus was crucified.

23:33-38 – Jesus is crucified and a placard is attached to His cross: “King of the Jews.”

- The discipler will want the disciple to face the suffering involved in crucifixion. Words like “the Skull” will need to be explained, and therefore why Christians put so much emphasis on the word “Calvary” (which may need to be separated in the disciple’s mind from “cavalry”).
- The discipler must ensure that he or she does not underemphasize the suffering endured by Jesus on the cross, and why Christians are therefore allowed to suffer, called to sacrifice, and able to find joy in their suffering in the name of Jesus. If necessary, provide details as to the mechanics of suffering during crucifixion, and why it was called “slow death.”
- Even more importantly, ensure that the disciple identifies Jesus’ suffering on the cross with Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53.
- Have the disciple reread verse 34 and then explain its significance. How does Jesus’ words here related to what the disciple previously learned in Luke 11:4, and reiterated by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:32?
- Have the disciple state the significance (and the irony) of the sign that was hung on Jesus’ cross.

23:39-43 – Jesus’ interaction with the two criminals

- This section about Jesus’ time on the cross is a good place to provide contrast concerning people’s (even Christian’s) response to Jesus. Ensure that the disciple sees the difference between what Jesus can do for someone in this early existence, as opposed to what Jesus can do for someone in a “kingdom” existence. In other words, one criminal wanted Jesus to save him back to an earthly life, but the other wanted Jesus to save him to eternal life. Which is better? Which one does the disciple believe found eternal life?

23:44-49 – Jesus’ final words on the cross, the most applicable being, “forgive them...”

- The “sixth” and “ninth” hours may need to be explained.
- Ensure that the discipler does not assume that the sky became cloudy, or that there was a solar eclipse. This was a supernatural darkness.
- The significance of the temple veil being torn in two (from top to bottom) will need to be explained. Ensure that the discipler relates this event to the end of the Old Testament law and the new covenant, and that the entrance to the Holy of Holies is now accessible to those who are “in Christ.” If time, read from the relevant passages in Hebrews. The discipler may want to read from the commentary the six important features of this event.

23:50-56 – Jesus is buried by Joseph of Arimathea before the Sabbath

- Explain to the disciple who Joseph of Arimathea was, and his position on the Council.
- Explain why the women were not able to prepare Jesus’ body for burial, and what was involved in the process.
- Relate Jesus’ burial with Isaiah 53:9.
- Ask the disciple how he or she would answer the skeptic who claims, “Well, on the morning of the so-called resurrection, the women just went to the wrong location.”
- Ask the disciple if he or she believes Jesus was really dead. How would they know this? What evidence in Luke’s account ensures that Jesus actually died on the cross? (cf. John 19:34).
- Ask the disciple if he or she can determine how Jesus’ followers must have been feeling after Jesus’ death. What were His followers’ expectations of how Jesus’ ministry would end? How were Jesus’ disciples feeling on the next day, the Sabbath?
Overview of Luke 24
Chapter 24 is the last chapter in Luke’s gospel and focuses on the resurrection of Jesus. He records only three of the many post-resurrection appearances of Jesus: the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the disciples gathered together in a room somewhere in Jerusalem, and the disciples and others who watched His ascension into heaven on the Mount of Olives. (The other gospel writers record other post-resurrection appearances, and the apostle Paul sums them up in 1 Corinthians 15.) During His first appearance to all the disciples, Jesus proves that He is not a ghost or spirit by eating in front of them and allowing the disciples to touch Him. Luke ends his gospel by recording important words concerning the Old Testament, and begins to introduce the disciples to the concept of “one Messiah, two comings.” Luke’s final words record the reaction of the disciples to being witnesses of the resurrection, and their willingness to consider Him worthy of their worship.

What to look for in Luke 24
1. Begin by praying and asking what God can tell you personally from this chapter.
2. Observe the reaction of all those who first encountered Jesus after He had risen. Were they glad to see Him, or were they surprised to see Him alive?
3. Observe the reaction of the women and of Peter when they discovered the tomb was empty. How did they find the linens Jesus had been wrapped in?
4. As you read the account of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, carefully observe what Jesus talked about with those disciples.
5. Look for the physical proof that Jesus was not a spirit or a ghost.
6. When Jesus was with the disciples, what did He spend most of His time doing?
7. Look for the message that Jesus wanted His disciples to tell everyone about concerning His death and resurrection. Look also for their response to Jesus having “opened their minds.”

24:1-3 The resurrection of Jesus is the pivotal turning point in human history. Although Elijah raised the widow’s young son from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-34), and Jesus raised many from the dead (e.g., Luke 7:11-17), He is the only one who was raised from the dead directly by the hand of God the Father Himself (e.g., Acts 4:10). The resurrection of Jesus Christ put an eternal stamp of validation on everything He taught, including death, hell and judgment, and more importantly, how we should live and treat one another today. His resurrection eviscerates the power of the law and replaces it with the new commandment to love one another. His resurrection brings with it an end to the sting of death, and serves as a death knell for Satan’s power over those who choose to follow Jesus. It signaled the beginning of the end of Satan’s rule over the world, and guaranteed his final defeat. As the apostle Paul wrote, “If Christ has not been raised…your faith also is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14); that is, Christians have
been horribly deceived, are following the greatest hoax ever perpetrated on mankind, and remain captive to Satan and responsible for sin. But because of Jesus’ resurrection, the promise of the forgiveness of sins becomes a reality. Communion (the Lord’s Supper) is transformed from a mere ritual to an eternal promise. And, as Paul states in Corinthians, those who are “in Christ…will be made alive (1 Cor. 15:22). As a result, God has “raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus…far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph. 2:6 & 1:21). Thus, for those who are in Christ, there is no longer fear of death or eternal judgment…there is only “you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

None of Jesus’s disciples believed any of this on that first day of the week. Nor did the women who rose before dawn to complete Jesus’ burial. The reader must remember that the first day of the week, Sunday, actually began at sunset on Saturday. Therefore, the remaining spices, oils and perfumes necessary for burial preparation were probably purchased the evening before. Thus, by dawn the women were anxious to complete Jesus’ burial, as it wouldn’t take long for His body to begin to decay and smell of death.

There may have been anywhere from five to seven women who traveled together to the tomb. One cannot imagine the emotional upheaval they were in. Their savior, their hoped-for Messiah, was dead. The one whom they loved and had followed for three years was now a victim of outrageous injustice. They had lost all hope. Their only motive for caring for Jesus’ body was out of love for their Messiah and empathy for Jesus’ mother. According to all the gospels, the women named were Mary Magdalene, Joanna (the wife of Clopas, Herod’s steward), Mary the mother of James (the Less), and Salome, the mother of James and John. There were probably others. Some of these women knew that guards had been posted, so there was no need to take men with them to roll away the stone covering the entrance to the tomb (cave). And, because the tomb was officially sealed by Roman authority, none of Jesus’ disciples would have been allowed to open the tomb anyway. Unfortunately, when the women arrived, they found no guards. Matthew records that “an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it,” causing the guards to shake “for fear of him and became like dead men” (Matt. 28:2-4). (Matthew continues to explain that the absentee guards reported what had happened and were bribed by the chief priests to spread the rumor that Jesus’ disciples had stolen the
While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing;

and as the women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living One among the dead? He is not here, but He has risen. Remember how He spoke to you while He was still in Galilee,

saying that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.”

And they remembered His words,

and returned from the tomb and reported all these things to the eleven and to all the rest.

Now they were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James; also the other women with them were telling these things to the apostles.

That this faithful group of women “were perplexed about this” is probably an understatement. In the Greek, the word “perplexed” comes from a root meaning “to lose one’s way”; in other words, they became quite confused, wondering what to do next. None of them suggested that He has actually risen; they probably assumed the guards had taken the body to another location. While puzzling among themselves what was going on, “two men suddenly stood near them in dazzling clothing.” Matthew identifies them as angels. The word for “dazzling” is the same root word for lightning, and is found only here and in the transfiguration (Luke 17:24). In other words, the angels appeared as men but their garments indicated they were angels. That the “two men suddenly stood near them” indicates that they appeared out of nowhere, an instant manifestation from a spiritual dimension to a temporal one. As can be expected, “the women were terrified,” resulting in immediate genuflexion to the ground. One can only imagine how their hearts were racing, becoming nearly breathless out of fear.

One of the angels asks the women a rhetorical question that is full of spiritual meaning: “Why do you seek the living One among the dead?” Luke alone records this question, and John records none of the words the synoptic writers include. Instead, John focuses entirely on Mary Magdalene’s experience. Skeptics of the resurrection will pounce upon these so-called “inconsistencies” as proof that the entire resurrection story was fabricated by the early church, referred to as a “myth” by liberal theologians. The differences in accounts, however, can be easily explained. The reader should remember that only the essential events and words needed to be recorded. Each writer includes the elements of the angelic encounter that he feels are most pertinent to the incident. Note, too, that there are actually no inconsistencies; just additions or subtractions from the encounter, as the gospel writer thought best. Most importantly, all but John include the most important words: “He is not here, but He has risen.” Instead of these words, John records the first appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene, which in itself proves the words.

It is the angels themselves who begin what we now call “Christian education.” They recall
11 But these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them.
12 But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen wrappings only; and he went away to his home, marveling at what had happened.

for the women Jesus’ prior sayings. Luke has carefully placed these in his account (see 9:12, 14; 18:31-33) and, by recording the words of the angels, is reminding the reader what Jesus said earlier. That the women “remembered His words” is a simple matter of recall, and they probably had no idea of the powerful implication of the words “He is risen.” Nor, of course, did the disciples, as Luke will show at the end of his gospel.

24:11-12 Has the reader noticed that in all the records of the resurrection, it is the women who were first told and believed “He is risen”? As verse 11 states, the men put no faith in their report of an empty tomb. There is a wonderful bit of irony here. In Jewish culture, the testimony of a woman was not as valued as the testimony of a man. Women were rarely called upon in Jewish courts as witnesses. Yet it is to the women that the fact of the resurrection is first proclaimed, and it is a woman, Mary Magdalene, to whom Jesus first appears (John 20:11-18). The word translated “nonsense” is found only here in the New Testament, and is a medical term that means “delirium” or “hysteria.” The phrase “would not believe them” is so constructed that the clear implication is that the women kept trying to convince the disciples but the disciples kept refusing to believe their story! (Not an uncommon scenario even today. How many believing wives keep praying for their unbelieving and skeptical husbands?)

Verse 12 is a synopsis of what John records in detail in John 20:2-10. It was John and Peter who first ran to the tomb. John records that he outran Peter, but on arriving at the tomb, it was Peter who first peered in. They observed the tomb to be empty and the linen cloths lying in one piece. That is, unlike Lazarus who came out of his tomb still wrapped, Jesus’ linens were lying there as if the body had just vanished. It is also interesting to note that no angels appeared to Peter and John. Their first encounter would have to be with Jesus Himself.

There is much to be gained from observing the slowness of the disciples—especially Peter—to believe that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. John states that he himself believed quite early (20:8). It is Peter who is having the problem. Later that same day, Jesus Himself will appear to two of the disciples on their way to Emmaus (as we will see in a moment). Peter refuses to believe until Jesus actually appears in the upper room, and he sees Him for himself. Perhaps there is a lesson here on willingness to believe the testimony of others. The women who came to the tomb in the early dawn immediately believed the words of the angels. Mary Magdalene certainly believed, and Jesus Himself appeared to her. In fact, Matthew records that Jesus
And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem.

Mark, who wrote his gospel some years before Luke, records an appearance of Jesus to two disciples “on their way to the country” (Mark 16:12-13). Luke provides details of this incident in verses 13-27. Most
14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 
15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 
16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.

likely, Luke himself met with at least one of these disciples, possibly Cleopas (v. 18), and received a firsthand account, thus the exquisite detail. This incident occurred on Sunday, the day of Jesus resurrection, and is the first of three resurrection appearances recorded by Luke in his gospel. This writer believes that there may have been many more post-resurrection appearances that are not recorded in the gospels.

24:14-16: In reality, the “two of them” may not have been two men. “O foolish men” in verse 25 is actually “O foolish ones” in the original text, indicating that it could have been two men, or it could have been a man and a woman, such as husband and wife. For tradition’s sake, the writer will assume it is two men who may have been returning home from the Passover in Jerusalem. They are traveling to a village named Emmaus which is about 7 miles (11 km) northwest of Jerusalem. Its exact location is unknown, although some believe it is present-day Kubeibeh.

The two men are discussing all the events of the past three days: the crucifixion, and what they had heard early in the morning regarding the empty tomb. There is no indication that the travelers assumed Jesus had been resurrected. They are simply discussing the report of the women, and the women’s report to the eleven. In verse 24, they will confirm that John and Peter had gone to the tomb but did not actually see Jesus alive. In other words, these two are themselves having a hard time believing that Jesus has actually risen from the dead and is alive. Note that these two disciples downplay the testimony of the women by attributing their experience to “a vision” and not an actual sighting of angels.

There’s an important lesson here in these disciples having a difficult time believing that Jesus is alive. There are some people who are willing to believe, but will not believe until they have proof for themselves. That is why God still works today through visions, miracles, signs and wonders. Some people just need a sign of some kind to jump-start their faith.

While they are walking, Jesus comes along beside them, although they do not know it is He. That is because “their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.” This is the third time Luke records that Jesus’ disciples have been prevented by God from understanding Jesus’ words. In 9:45, Luke writes, “But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them....” In 18:34, he writes, “But the disciples understood none of these things, and the meaning of this statement was hidden from them, and they did not comprehend the things
that were said.” The root word in both of these verses is *krupto*, a verb meaning to hide or conceal, and from which we get our English word “cryptology.” And, in all three instances, the subject is the death and resurrection of Jesus...or more specifically, the *significance* of the death and resurrection of Christ.

There is another important lesson here. There are reasons God prevents followers of Jesus from understanding His complete plan. The first is a matter of maturity; we are not ready to comprehend, and therefore accept, His plan. That is why God does not tell believers everything that’s going to happen in our personal lives. If we knew, we might not like it and therefore might try to change it, thus falling out of His will. Additionally, knowing the future negates the need to live by faith, and faith is a stronger measure of love for God than knowledge. Through His word, God tells believers only what we need to know to live day by day in faith, and only living by faith will result in the fulfillment of His promises to us and through us (“But the righteous will live by his faith” [Hab. 2:4].)

The second reason God does not tell us everything is a matter of timing. Notice that the significance of Jesus’ death is hidden from the disciples before the resurrection; it is only after the resurrection that the significance of the crucifixion is revealed. But the main issue of what has been hidden is not the resurrection...it is the crucifixion. It is the fact that Jesus *had to die.* Without the death of Jesus, there is no forgiveness of sins. Without the shedding of the blood of the Lamb, all mankind remains under the curse of sin. Amongst other things, the resurrection puts a stamp of proof on the significance of Jesus’ death. Only now, after the resurrection, does Jesus return and inform His disciples why He had to die. This will be presented by Luke in the latter part of the chapter.

There is one last lesson that can be gleaned from the principle that God “prevents” His people from understanding certain events. This principle can be applied to the end times and the second coming of Christ. God allows us to lay hold of the promise that Jesus is coming back as the conquering king and that He will establish His kingdom on the earth. And, He gives believers enough information to “be alert” for the events when they actually occur. But all the details and dates are hidden. Therefore, theories and theology of the end times should never become an obstacle to Christian love and fellowship. Christians may come to the very opposite conclusions, but they should still love one another and speak of one another in love and respect.
17 And He said to them, “What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?” And they stood still, looking sad.

18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, “Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?”

19 And He said to them, “What things?” And they said to Him, “The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people,

20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him.

21 “But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.

22 “But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning,

23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive.

24 “Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see.”
“amazed us.” The word for “amazed” is exestesan meaning “to knock off balance” or “throw off.” This indicates that something important has happened, but they are unable to put it in context, and certainly not able to conclude that Jesus has been resurrected. The clear implication by Cleopas’s words in verse 23 (“some women” and “seen a vision of angels”) is on the order of, “They are only women who had a moment of hallucination.” In other words, the women were so desperate and hysterical that they reported that Jesus is “alive.” Cleopas even confesses that some of the men (Peter and John, and perhaps a few other disciples) verified the fact that the tomb was empty. (Obviously, only the men could verify the words of the women.) However, because the men “did not see” Him, it is impractical to conclude that Jesus is actually alive. There must be another explanation.

The problem with Cleopas’s failure to conclude that Jesus was resurrected and alive is a common one—wrong expectations. Their first wrong expectation was that Jesus, if He really was the Messiah, wouldn’t allow Himself to be crucified at all. The second wrong expectation is that even if He did, He would immediately rise from the dead and declare Himself king. One can’t be absolutely certain what Cleopas, Peter and the other disciples were expecting should Jesus rise from the dead, but one can assume they believed that Jesus, if He actually rose from the dead, would first appear to them, then present Himself as the conquering king, and immediately manifest Himself in power and glory. Then, accompanied by legions of angels, He would proceed to drive out the Romans, and re-establish the glorious kingdom once attributed to David and Solomon.

The lesson here is powerful in terms of how God reveals His will in our personal lives as well as in interpreting the end times. Many Christians have been led astray or even lost faith because of wrong expectations placed on God. This writer and former pastor has encountered this problem more often than he can count: “If I only have enough faith, faith as a mustard seed, I will...(fill in the blank) be healed / find my soul mate / become prosperous / speak in tongues / find my dream home / become a successful pastor / move that mountain in my life—the list goes on and on. Few believers fill in the blank with expectations like, deny myself more / suffer more for Jesus / experience the joy of persecution / justifiably experience the consequences of my bad choices in life / learn to live by faith / experience the unfathomable riches of God’s grace / be disciplined like a son who is loved by the Father / serve the poor / not be healed but instead die of this disease.
Besides wrong expectations put upon God’s plan concerning our personal lives, there are the wrong expectations regarding the end times: the pre-tribulation rapture, the mid-tribulation rapture, the post-tribulation rapture; that I, of course, will be raptured; that the church will not be present during the tribulation; that the second coming will happen in my lifetime; that the second coming is intrinsically dependent upon what happens in the United States—the list goes on and on. It is one thing to have hope in the second coming of Christ; it is another thing altogether to suppose that our expectations of how it will all pan out are accurate, simply because we are quite certain we have interpreted Scripture correctly. As stated earlier in this commentary, God purposefully hides certain things from our eyes, even the eyes of well-intentioned, well-educated, well-versed believers. There is good reason to believe that God is still in the process of hiding truths from our minds today, especially regarding the end times. Therefore, one can assume that a plethora of firmly believed but wrong expectations abound in the evangelical community today.

So, what is the believer to do? Christians are to live day to day by faith, abide by the word, pray, stay alert, love one another, love one’s neighbor as himself, and participate in good works. It will all work out when God is ready to have it all work out.

24:25-27 Here, Jesus is not calling the two disciples “fools.” There are two Greek words translated fool or foolish. The first can be found in the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus instructs His listeners not to say to another, “You fool…” (Matt. 5:22). The Greek word here is moros, meaning “stupid one.” It is a very derogatory, demeaning and judgmental term. The second word, the word found here and in Galatians 3:1, is anoetos, meaning “without clear and correct thinking” or “not clear minded.” It is not a judgmental or demeaning term.

(As noted earlier, “O foolish men” is an interpretation by the NASB. The more correct rendering is “O foolish ones.”)

There is a slight rebuke by Jesus of the disciples’ failure to fully grasp the Scriptures. They are slow “to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (italics mine). Like most of us, they have seen only what they wanted to see. This is part of the mystery of things hidden: the truths are there in plain sight, but because our eyes have not been opened to see them, they are hidden from our understanding. This principle will be clear to the apostle Paul when it is revealed to him that righteousness comes by faith alone, and that the grafting in of the Gentiles has all along been a part of God’s plan. (E.g., see Romans 2:25-27 And He said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!
26 “Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?”
27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.

Besides wrong expectations put upon God’s plan concerning our personal lives, there are the wrong expectations regarding the end times: the pre-tribulation rapture, the mid-tribulation rapture, the post-tribulation rapture; that I, of course, will be raptured; that the church will not be present during the tribulation; that the second coming will happen in my lifetime; that the second coming is intrinsically dependent upon what happens in the United States—the list goes on and on. It is one thing to have hope in the second coming of Christ; it is another thing altogether to suppose that our expectations of how it will all pan out are accurate, simply because we are quite certain we have interpreted Scripture correctly. As stated earlier in this commentary, God purposefully hides certain things from our eyes, even the eyes of well-intentioned, well-educated, well-versed believers. There is good reason to believe that God is still in the process of hiding truths from our minds today, especially regarding the end times. Therefore, one can assume that a plethora of firmly believed but wrong expectations abound in the evangelical community today.

So, what is the believer to do? Christians are to live day to day by faith, abide by the word, pray, stay alert, love one another, love one’s neighbor as himself, and participate in good works. It will all work out when God is ready to have it all work out.

24:25-27 Here, Jesus is not calling the two disciples “fools.” There are two Greek words translated fool or foolish. The first can be found in the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus instructs His listeners not to say to another, “You fool…” (Matt. 5:22). The Greek word here is moros, meaning “stupid one.” It is a very derogatory, demeaning and judgmental term. The second word, the word found here and in Galatians 3:1, is anoetos, meaning “without clear and correct thinking” or “not clear minded.” It is not a judgmental or demeaning term.

(As noted earlier, “O foolish men” is an interpretation by the NASB. The more correct rendering is “O foolish ones.”)

There is a slight rebuke by Jesus of the disciples’ failure to fully grasp the Scriptures. They are slow “to believe all that the prophets have spoken!” (italics mine). Like most of us, they have seen only what they wanted to see. This is part of the mystery of things hidden: the truths are there in plain sight, but because our eyes have not been opened to see them, they are hidden from our understanding. This principle will be clear to the apostle Paul when it is revealed to him that righteousness comes by faith alone, and that the grafting in of the Gentiles has all along been a part of God’s plan. (E.g., see Romans
And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther.

But they urged Him, saying, “Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over.” So He went in to stay with them.

When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them.

Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”

In the final part of their encounter, the men have reached their destination. The scene is set for an evening meal. The location of the meal (inn vs. house) is not stated. Regardless, the men manage to convince their traveling companion that He should delay His journey and stay for a meal. (Notice that the text does not say He went in to eat with them. It states, “He went in to stay with them,” indicating it may have been one of the men’s home, or if a husband and wife, the couple’s home.)

The meal is prepared, and at the serving, Jesus takes the bread and blesses it, breaks it, and begins passing it. It is at this point that “their eyes were opened and they recognized Him.” It is possible that the two had been present at the feeding of the five thousand (Luke 9:16) or at some other event in which Jesus gave thanks and broke bread. (It was most likely not the Last Supper, as only the twelve were present.) After the two recognize Him, He vanishes before their eyes.
33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them,
34 saying, “The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.”
35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.

36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be to you.”
37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.
38 And He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?
39 “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does

Had Jesus not blessed the bread, broken it and passed it around before He vanished, the men might have assumed they’d seen a vision or had been visited by an angel. It was the breaking of the bread that opened their eyes to Jesus. In this sequence of events, there is a great lesson. As we have seen at other points in the gospel, bread is a symbol of the word and the breaking of bread is a type of giving the word to others. This was the case in the parable of the persistent friend (Luke 11:5-8) and in the feeding of the five thousand. This is confirmed in verse 32: “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was speaking to us…explaining the Scriptures to us?” It is the word of God that opens eyes to Jesus.

The result of the encounter was a hasty return to Jerusalem. They must have traveled at night, for a six-mile walk would have taken about two hours. Upon their return, they locate the eleven apostles and other disciples that have gathered with them.

Verse 34 is a bit confusing. Sometime during the day the Lord revealed Himself to Simon Peter (see 1 Cor. 15:5-8). Apparently the two from Emmaus do not know about this. Verse 34 seems at first glance that it is the two from Emmaus who are “saying, ‘The Lord…has appeared to Simon.’” However, the form of the Greek word “saying” indicates that it is the eleven and the others who are making the statement, “The Lord…has appeared to Simon.” A paraphrase of verses 33 and 34 might read, “And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, and they informed the two from Emmaus, ‘What you are reporting is true. The Lord really has risen from the dead, and Simon has seen Him.’”

Another possible interpretation would be to relocate the NASB’s comma so that it reads thusly: “…and found gather together the eleven, and those who were with them were saying, ‘The Lord really has risen….’”

The two from Emmaus then relate in detail their experience with the stranger and that it was only during the breaking of bread that they “recognized” Him.

24:36-37 This is the third and last of three post-resurrection appearances of Jesus as recorded by Luke in his gospel. Luke goes to great length to describe Jesus’ words concerning His resurrected body. This section of the gospel is full of important theological implications, as we will discover in a moment. To grasp the significance of this passage, one must put oneself in the shoes (sandals) of the disciples. Let’s take this verse by verse to grasp the true significance of this appearance.
not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”
40 And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet.
41 While they still could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”
42 They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; 43 and He took it and ate it before them.

In verse 36, Jesus “Himself stood in their midst.” The clear teaching here by Luke is that Jesus suddenly appeared out of thin air. One second He wasn’t there; the next, He was. His immediate words are for the purpose of defusing whatever anxiety or fear the disciples might have by His sudden appearance: “Peace be to you.” The reaction of the disciples in verse 37 confirms this: “They were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit.” There is no question that other than Peter and the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, no one else in the room had seen Jesus. There is enormous cognitive dissonance here, as they were all quite sure Jesus had died on the cross and been buried. (John includes the fact that Thomas was not present.) So their natural conclusion was to assume they were seeing a ghost. What they were seeing is Jesus in His resurrected body. (Jesus will not assume His glorified body until after the ascension.)

Before going into the theological significance of this encounter, we will finish observing the paragraph. Jesus encourages the disciples to examine His hands and feet, and to touch Him. These were where the nails had penetrated. This writer is very familiar with traumatic injury and required recovery and rehabilitation time; there is no possibility that someone suffering the horrific injuries that Jesus suffered would have been able to walk or use His hands in so short a time. Muscle and nerve damage alone would have made Jesus’ hands and feet useless. It is unlikely that weight could have been borne on the feet, or the hands used for prehensile grasping. So this is an amazing scene: the scars are still there but the injuries are not! (John includes the observation that Jesus also showed them His side where the centurion had thrust the spear. This is another remarkable recovery, as there would surely have been damage to the internal organs, as well as a collapsed lung and tear in the heart itself.) The writer finds this extremely interesting that Jesus’ body has been healed except for the scars. Perhaps this was so to serve as proof to the disciples that who they were seeing was in fact the Lord. Verses 38-40 seem to confirm this observation.

Perhaps one of the most important features of this passage is Jesus’ instruction to the disciples to “touch Me....” The word for “touch” in verse 39 is important. There are other Greek words for touching. This word used by Luke (and John in his first letter) means to touch with the intent to examine its composition. In other words, Jesus is encouraging the disciples to examine Him so that they might know He has “flesh and bones.” Touching Jesus’ body would confirm that they were not imagining Jesus’ presence or that He was merely a spirit or ghost. The apostle
John will confirm this in his first letter: "...What we have looked at and touched with our hands..." (1 John 1:1; the KJV is actually more accurately translated: "...and our hands handled..."). Again, the theological importance of these observations will become evident in a moment.

The final confirmation that Jesus is not a ghost is found in verses 41-43. Jesus took food and “ate it before them.” It is doubtful that Jesus was hungry. Obviously this act was performed to show that He was real and not transparent. He ate just like any other person would eat.

Thus we have two food types mentioned in this chapter. The breaking of bread in front of the disciples in Emmaus represents distribution of the word of God. Bread always symbolizes the word. The fish, on the other hand, will become a symbol in itself, as the Greek word for fish is ichthys, which became an acrostic for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.”

Now, for the theological implications of this passage. At the end of the first century, and peaking in the third, there arose a heresy which is now known as Docetic Gnosticism. The word Docetism comes from the Greek word dokeo, meaning “to seem.” Docetism was just one form of Gnosticism, a dualistic, syncretistic Eastern philosophy that considered the material world evil; only light, and therefore enlightened knowledge, were good. Gnostics aspired to mystical knowledge, or “gnosis,” gained from communication with enlightened spiritual beings called “eons.” The Docetics adopted Gnosticism into their belief about the person of Jesus. Because all matter was evil, Jesus therefore, could not have come in bodily form (flesh being evil), could not have died (it only seemed as if He died), and could not have been resurrected from the dead. What the disciples had seen was a spirit being, not a physical being. That is, Jesus did not really have flesh and bones. This means that God Himself could not be in flesh, as flesh is material, and therefore evil. This background is important in studying the Gospel of John and his letters, as Gnosticism was in its early stages when he wrote.

Both Docetism and Gnosticism remain with us today. Docetism, by denying that God could come in human form (thus denial of the Trinity), and Gnosticism, mostly manifesting itself in the New Age movement, and in the secular world, by the implication that Gnostics writings, such as the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Judas, and the Gospel of Mary, should be considered equally authoritative and accurate as the canonical New Testament. These subversive ideas are plentiful on certain TV channels that specialize in “history,” and always raise doubts
44 Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

46 and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day,

47 and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

48 “You are witnesses of these things.

49 “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

24:44-49 Most likely, verses 44-49 are a brief summary of all the teachings that Jesus gave the disciples over a forty-day period. This writer believes that Jesus met with the disciples on many, many occasions, and explained to them the prophecies of the Old Testament that pointed to His person and His work. (See Acts 1:3 for confirmation.) They can be found in the Law (first five books of the Bible), the prophets (almost all the major and minor prophets that prophesied of the Messiah), and the “Psalms” (which would include the Wisdom literature as well as applicable historical books). Jesus would take these teaching opportunities to remind the disciples of all the sayings, parables, and miracles they had witnessed, and put them in the context of the Old Testament writings. Matthew, particularly, includes an abundance of Old Testament verses when writing his gospel; no doubt, Jesus brought many of these to his mind.

There are six significant statements in verses 44-49. The first is found in verse 44, what has just been mentioned, such as discovering His identity as the Son of David and being the fulfillment of David’s lineage, His birth, His healings, His parables, and the crucifixion. It must have been something to see the disciples begin to put all the pieces together in their minds, and to watch the light bulbs go off. (The right kind of spiritual enlightenment!) The key words in this first statement, verse 44, are “must be fulfilled.” That is, completely fulfilled, and therefore completely fulfilling God’s eternal plan. Such marvelous passages as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 suddenly made sense to the disciples. So it is important to Luke that his readers understand that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, that all of the Old Testament points to the Messiah, and that Jesus is the fulfillment of the hopes and promises of the God of Israel.

The second significant statement is found in verse 45: “Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures…” There is probably a connection between this verse and John’s curious verse in 20:22: “He breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’” Undoubtedly, John 20:22 is pointing toward the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descends upon the disciples. But it is also quite possible that receiving the Holy Spirit is a part of opening their minds to “understand the Scriptures.” Part of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to teach truth from the word of God. How many times has someone who is not a Christian tried to read and understand about the historical accuracy of the gospels. These doubts are fueled by asking such leading questions as “Is it possible, as some scholars believe…?”

4:24-29
the Bible, only to find it incomprehensible? Then, once the person becomes a Christian and receives the Holy Spirit, the word of God suddenly comes to life and makes perfect sense. This writer believes that there is a direct relationship between receiving the Holy Spirit and understanding the Scriptures, and that is illuminated in this passage.

The third significant statement is found in verse 46. Here, Jesus directs the disciples' attention to His death and resurrection. Of course, Jesus had forewarned the disciples about His death on numerous occasions, the most notable being Luke 18:31-33, followed by the parable recorded in Luke 20:9-18. Jesus is introducing the disciples to the concept of one Messiah, two comings; His first coming mandated suffering through scourging and sacrifice on the cross. But there was a God-directed purpose for this, which is the fourth significant statement, found in verse 47: it was all a part of God’s eternal plan so that the forgiveness of sins could be offered to all mankind.

Here we see the love of God manifested in its most magnificent form: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

But note carefully here: the verse states, “and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed....” Without repentance, there can be no forgiveness of sins. An individual must repent to receive the benefit of forgiveness. To repent means to honestly confess one’s sins before God and to begin living in a manner consistent with repentance. This concept points us back to the teaching of John the Baptist: “Therefore bear fruits in keeping with repentance...” (Luke 3:8).

The fifth significant statement is found in verses 47 & 48: it’s God’s plan for the disciples’ lives. They are going to be the proclaimers of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Why? Because they are the witnesses. They will bear witness of the resurrected Christ. And how will they proclaim? They will proclaim the forgiveness of sins—not in Yahweh’s name—but in the name of Jesus Christ. This will be the keystone of Peter’s preaching during Pentecost (Acts 2:32 & 3:17-20). It’s Jesus who saves us from our sins, and one must repent, confess Him as Lord and Savior, and receive the forgiveness of sins.

But there is something else that can be received by those who confess Jesus as Lord and Savior, and it is the sixth significant statement, found in verse 49: “I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you....” The promise is that all those who call upon the Lord can receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

By the time Jesus completes His forty-day
And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven.

And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy,

and were continually in the temple praising God.

50-53 Luke now leaps ahead to Jesus’ ascension into heaven. Bethany is on the Mount of Olives. It is the end of a forty-day period, ten days before the feast of Pentecost. He departs by blessing the disciples. The apostle Paul states that there were more than 500 witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus Christ before His ascension (1 Cor. 15:6). Some early texts do not contain the words “and was carried up into heaven” (v. 51). However, Acts 1:9 states, “He was lifted up while they were looking on…”

What is most significant about verses 50-53 is
that the disciples *worshiped* Him. This is a clear indication that the disciples considered Jesus the Son of God, therefore equal to God in nature and substance, and worthy of their worship. An unbelieving Jew would have considered this an act of blasphemy and a violation of the First Commandment. The result of their worshipping Jesus was “great joy,” for they had witnessed the resurrected Christ, could begin to fit the whole picture of the Messiah together, and knew that their sins were forgiven. For these things, they were “continually in the temple praising God.”

Luke thus ends his gospel concerning the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Next, he will focus his attention on the aftermath of Jesus’ ascension into heaven and the coming of the great promise of God, the Holy Spirit. Whereas his gospel focused on Jesus, his next book, Acts, focuses on the ministry of the Holy Spirit.
Questions for Your Personal or Group Reflection

1. Describe the reaction of the women when they first arrived at Jesus’ tomb and found it empty. What do you believe would have been their first thoughts? What do you believe is the significance that instead of seeing Jesus, they saw two angels? Take a moment to recall the words of the angels. There are many points of practical application that can be made from their question. Can you list some? Can you apply the angels’ question personally?

2. Luke spends the majority of his last chapter describing Jesus’ appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Why do you think he did this, and what is the point that Luke was trying to make for his readers? (Hint: It focuses around the Scriptures.) Now take this finding and apply it to yourself in your personal time with the Lord, and to your church; that is, whether or not your church is carrying out this same ministry for its members.

3. Why do you believe that the two disciples on the road to Emmaus did not recognize Jesus at first? When did they recognize who He was? What do you believe is the significance of this? (Hint: What is the significance of the breaking of bread; that is, what does bread symbolize in they Bible?)

4. When Jesus meets with the disciples, He emphasizes the same point that He made to the two on the road to Emmaus. What is the point that He was making? (Hint: It has to do with suffering.) Why is this important, and what was the lesson the disciples had to learn concerning Jesus’ coming to earth?

5. What happened that allowed the disciples to begin to “understand the Scriptures”? What did Jesus do to enable them to begin to see what the Old Testament had been teaching all along?

6. Why do you think the concept of suffering was so difficult for the disciples to grasp? How did the concept of suffering align with their previous expectations of what Jesus had come to earth to do? How can you apply that concept personally to your own life? How is your church applying what the disciples had to learn?

7. What was the reaction of the disciples after Jesus ascended into heaven? What did their worship of Jesus teach us about who they believed He was? Now ask yourself this question: “Am I worshipping Jesus with ‘great joy’?” and “Does my daily routine include the response of the disciples who were ‘continually in the temple praising God’?” If so, describe it. If not, ask why.
Luke 24

The Discipler’s Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 24

24:1-12 – The resurrection of Jesus; key words are ____________________________

24:13-35 – The appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on ____________________________

24:36-43 – Jesus makes His appearance before ____________________________

24:44-49 – Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that there is ____________________________

24:50-53 – Jesus ascends into heaven after opening the Scriptures to the disciples for ____________________________
The Discipler’s Commentary
Answer Outline for the Discipler

Luke 24

24:1-12 – The resurrection of Jesus; key words are “He is risen.”
- Ask the disciple why the resurrection of Jesus is so important. What did Jesus’ resurrection prove? (See 1 Cor. 15:14).
- Ask, “To whom did the resurrected Jesus first appear…men or women?” Why?
- How did Jesus’ resurrection result in a death knell for Satan and his power on earth?
- What did Jesus’ resurrection prove about everything He taught, and what did it prove about who He claimed to be?
- How did Jesus’ resurrection result in the death of the Law, as presented in the first five books of the Old Testament?
- Have the disciple take the role of a skeptic. What kinds of explanations would a skeptic make up about the resurrection; that is, how would a skeptic attempt to explain away the resurrection? (Come up with ideas like Jesus extricated Himself out of the tomb, or His disciples stole His body, or the women [and later, the men] all went to the wrong tomb.)
- How does the resurrection of Jesus provide hope for all Christians everywhere?
- Ask the disciple what is the significance that all four gospels present slightly different information concerning the resurrection. If there was in fact a conspiracy involved on the part of the gospel writers, wouldn’t they have all told the exact same story?

24:13-35 – The appearance of Jesus to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus
- Ask the disciple why he or she thinks Luke went to such great lengths to describe Jesus’ appearance to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
- What were the two disciples discussing, and did they believe at the time that the reports of Jesus’ resurrection were true?
- Luke writes, “…their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him.” Why would God prevent their eyes from recognizing Jesus? How does this information correspond to other incidences in Luke where certain information about Jesus is “hidden”? See if the disciple can come up with explanations why God would hide information—particularly in regard to their future—from believers. In what area of theology might God’s hiding truth be particularly true? (Hint: end times.) Therefore, if there are so many interpretations of future events, is there any reason Christians, churches or denominations should be divided over the issue?
- What happened that caused the eyes of the two disciples to be opened? What does the breaking of bread symbolize in the gospels? Ask the disciple how his or her studying the Gospel of Luke changed their view of Jesus and their relationship with Him?
- How does the subject of “expectations” affect Cleopas’s perspective on the reports of Jesus’ resurrection? Ask the disciple what are his or her expectations concerning their life as a Christian, or their relationship with Jesus. What expectations are simply hopes, and what expectations are realistic according to Luke’s gospel?
- Ask the disciple to comment on verse 26. What is the significance of Jesus’ statement here, that Christ must “suffer”? What does this mean in terms of the forgiveness of sins? See if the disciple can relate the issue of suffering with other statements Jesus has made, such as taking up one’s cross and following Him.
- Have the disciple focus on the word “explained…the Scriptures” in verse 27. What is the significance of this part of the story, and how should that be applied to Christians today? Ask the disciple if he or she attends a church where the Scriptures are “explained.”
24:36-43 – Jesus makes His appearance before all the disciples

- When Jesus appears before all the disciples, what are His first words, and why? What was the reaction of the disciples when He appeared? Ask the disciple how he or she would react if Jesus (or an angel) suddenly appeared out of nowhere. If such a thing were to happen today, how would the Western world attempt to explain the report?
- When Jesus appears to the disciples, what does He instruct them to do? Ask the disciple what is the significance that Jesus had the disciples touch His hands and feet. What is the significance that Jesus asked for something to eat?
- At this point, it may be necessary for the discipler to introduce the heresy of Gnosticism and what the Gnostics believed about the flesh. How did the Gnostics attempt to explain Jesus’ appearance, both before and after the resurrection? The discipler may want to have the disciple read the opening words of First John. Then see if the disciple can relate any of these heresies to what he or she has seen on TV. Because of questions raised by many TV channels that specialize in “history,” the disciple should be warned against such relentless speculation that raise doubts about the historical accuracy of the gospels.
- Ask the disciple if he or she can describe Jesus’ injuries to His hands and His feet. This is important regarding the skeptics’ theory that Jesus Himself might have rolled away the stone from the tomb. Would that have been possible with those kinds of injuries? And how would Jesus have been able to walk and stand in the midst of the disciples just three days after the crucifixion, not to mention being able to walk on the road to Emmaus? The purpose of going into this detail should be to confirm the disciple’s faith about Jesus’ resurrection and the validity of the gospel accounts.

24:44-49 – Jesus makes it clear to the disciples that there is one Messiah, two comings

- Help the disciple see the importance of verses 44-49. Note that this is the second occasion in chapter 24 where it is stated that the “Christ would suffer.” Help the disciple understand the significance of this statement in relation to what were the disciples’ expectations of the Messiah, and what He would bring to mankind.
- At this point—if it hasn’t been done already—ask the disciple again what his or her expectations are in regards to their relationship with Jesus, and what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. How does the disciple plan to live out his or her calling as a Christian?
- Help the disciple see that verses 44-49 present an outline for the Acts of the Apostles that Luke will later write.
- Ensure that the disciple understands the significance of verse 45. How does a Christian have his or her mind “opened” today, and in what form does that opening take place? (Hint: the Scriptures.) Therefore, if the disciple wants to know more about God and Christ, where does that disciple go? What is the only source for opening one’s mind to the will of God through Jesus Christ?
- Comfort the disciple by informing him or her that not all Christians are called to suffer, but all Christians are called to sacrifice, and especially to sacrifice for those who do suffer. (E.g., Christians in the Middle East.)
- Ask the disciple if he or she can explain the motive behind all of God’s actions through Jesus Christ. Once identified, ask the disciple what should be the motive behind living a life pleasing to God.

24:50-53 – Jesus ascends into heaven after opening the Scriptures to the disciples for forty days

- The disciple should be informed that Jesus appeared to the disciples over a period of forty days before His ascension into heaven. Ask the disciple how much instruction Jesus could have given the disciples concerning the Scriptures and Himself over that forty-day period. Therefore, how does that explain the extreme transformation in Peter’s life between the resurrection and Pentecost?
- Inform the disciple that the Feast of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit empowers the disciples (“the promise” in verse 49), occurred 10 days after Jesus’ ascension. Thus, Pentecost was 50 days after Passover.
- It may also be helpful if the disciple is informed that the Feast of Pentecost is also known as the Feast of First Fruits. How would that relate to the beginning of the church?
- Ask the disciple what is the significance of the fact that the disciples were “worshiping Him.” What does that say about the divinity of Christ?
Conclusion to the Commentary

It may appear to the reader that the writer has been quite negative and critical toward the so-called “church growth movement,” and to megachurches and their leaders. That is because the writer is more concerned about making disciples than growing churches. Blessed be the church that can do both! Unfortunately, that seems like a hard thing to come by. The good news is that ninety percent of all churches (I am told) have less than 100 members. That is good news because 100 or less is a very workable number to make true disciples who have a fervent prayer life, who are well discipled in God’s word, who have been effectively counseled on how to love one another, and who truly live by the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Imagine the staffing and training that would be required to make true disciples of a church with more than two thousand members? That is why this writer is skeptical that a megachurch can make true disciples. The megachurch can have amazing music, state-of-the-art multimedia, a well-paid charismatic celebrity-style pastor, a fantastic venue, but be filled with true disciples of Jesus Christ who are willing to suffer and sacrifice for Jesus Christ? That is a much more daunting task. Perhaps the rationale behind the justification for the megachurch is the belief that saying the “sinner’s prayer” is the equivalent of making a disciple, that having a crowd is the same as having true followers of Jesus, and that meeting in an expensive venue is a sign of God’s blessings. It is a terrible deception that leading a person to Christ is on the same level as making a disciple, much less making a disciple who in turn makes other disciples.

Therefore, the writer wishes to end the commentary with these words of encouragement:
Blessed is the pastor who is more concerned about making disciples than drawing a crowd.
Blessed is the church pastor who prays often, who prays with fervor, passion, and great perseverance, and teaches his disciples to do the same.
Blessed is the pastor who explains God’s word, and makes disciples who can explain God’s word to others.
And blessed is the pastor who seeks to be filled with the Spirit, earnestly desires to be sanctified, who has a hunger for God and for His word, who has a burden for the lost, a compassion for the poor, a genuine love for the flock, and a concern for the persecuted.
Pray that God will preserve His remnant.