

CHAPTER 9

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 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.

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.

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

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

perspective, the return of Elijah would mean that 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

giving *them* to the disciples to set before the people.

17 And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets *full*.

give them something to eat,” with the emphasis on “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 *ichthus*, 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.

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.”

Finally, there is the motivation behind feeding of 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 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.

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."

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 to 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 are *not* following Jesus is not the context for Jesus' statement. The context is clearly focused on *those who choose to follow Jesus*. The follower of Jesus, therefore, is faced with a choice on a daily basis: "Will I invest in the world, or will I invest in the kingdom of God?" "Will I spend my resources on my earthly pleasures, or will I use my resources for the sake of the gospel?" "Do I love the things of the world more than I love the kingdom of God?" The apostle John, in his first letter, will tackle this issue head-on.

Verse 26 carries the suffering and sacrifice teaching into the realm of personal relationships. The simple question is this: "Do I love the words of Jesus more than I love the favor of men?" And, as a corollary to that, "Am I willing to ignore what others may think of me or say about me for the sake of following the words of Jesus?" What others think or say about us can never be more important than what Jesus thinks about us, and He always thinks about us in love. Can we not return the favor of His love?

Another observation is important in verse 26. Note that Jesus uses the phrase, "...when He comes in His glory." When Jesus is on earth, He is not in "His glory." This should have been clear to the disciples: if He really *is* the Son of Man, then why isn't He in His glory? The conclusion is obvious: one Messiah, two comings.

Verse 27 is a foreshadowing of the next event "some of those standing here" will experience.

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

9:28-31 This event is called the transfiguration, based on Matthew's account where he uses the Greek word *metamorphoo*, meaning "to change into another form." It is where we get the word "metamorphosis." It is important to note that the change in Jesus' appearance was not from an outside source, such as a bright light shining down from heaven. The dazzling ("gleaming") light was a brilliant, blinding white glow coming from within Jesus Himself. What the inner three disciples are witnessing is the manifest glory of the Son of God. John writes, "And we saw His glory..." (Jn. 1:14). Note, too, that Jesus possesses His glory *before* His resurrection; divine glory is a part of His nature.

Verse 30 indicates that Moses and Elijah were talking with Him. They represent the Law and the Prophets, respectively. Moses, who was not allowed by God to enter the Promised Land, having died on Mt. Nebo, is now alive and standing in the Promised Land. Elijah, who did not die but was translated directly to heaven, is also alive and standing in the presence of the Lord. Both Moses and Elijah were "appearing in glory" as well, which is proof, not only of the resurrection, but that followers of Jesus will be

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 seizes 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

resurrected into a glorified state. Luke informs the 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

long shall I be with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”

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.

having recently returned from a spectacular evangelistic ministry.

In other words, Jesus’ disciples have lapsed into being no different than the nominal generation in which they live. They have followed, but they have not changed. They have listened, but they have not believed. They have taken the label of a disciple, but they have not been transformed. Does this characterize the church today?

(There are a couple of notes of interest. First, the NASB translation of “perverted” for the Greek word *diastrammene* is a bit strong for today’s reader, as “perverted” tends to suggest sexual deviation. A more relevant translation might be “misled,” “distorted,” or the English Standard Version [ESV] translation, “twisted.”

(Second, the longer version of the encounter Luke describes here can be found in Matthew 17:14-20 and Mark 9:14-29. It is interesting how each gospel writer emphasizes a different perspective on this event. Matthew states that the reason the disciples could not cast the demon out was because of their lack of faith (the mustard seed statement). Mark, on the other hand, emphasizes that the reason the demon could not be cast out was because the disciples failed to pray!

(The three different emphases are not contradictory. The totality of Jesus’ rebuke obviously made a different impression on each disciple, including the one who related the story to Luke.)

9:43b-45 These verses confirm the Father’s rebuke to Peter, James and John: “Listen to Him!” Jesus keeps telling the disciples that He must suffer and be killed. They are not able to grasp this truth. They will eventually understand the significance of these words when Jesus meets with the disciples during the forty days after His resurrection (Luke 24:44-49).

There is a comforting truth for all believers found in these verses. How many times do we hear the word of God, but it just doesn’t sink in? How many times have we read a portion of Scripture, only to discover many years later what it really means, or how we should actually apply it? In regards to the disciples, only those who stayed with Him after the resurrection had their eyes opened to see the truth. The point is this: God does not fully reveal all things to all believers all at once. Only those who stay with Him throughout their lives become enlightened to the deeper truths of God’s word.

9:46-48 After the experience of the transfiguration, the reader could see this coming. It’s quite obvious by now that Jesus has selected Peter, James and John as His inner three disciples. The disciples are still walking in the flesh and not in the Spirit, and jealousy

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.”

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.”

51 When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;

was bound to raise its ugly head. It is not improbable that Satan himself may have been the instigator of this dissension within the ranks.

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).

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.

52 and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.

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.”

9:52-56 The Samaritans were a hybrid race of Jewish 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.

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.”

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 you 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?

The Discipler's Commentary
Fill-in Outline for the Disciple
Luke 9

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.*