

HOPE Youth Corps 2014

The Gospel of Luke

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Day 1: Why Luke?

Luke 1:1-4 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Acts 1:1-2 In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

Luke, the author of both the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, researched his topic extensively to present an orderly, eyewitness account to strengthen the faith of his friend, Theophilus (“lover of God”). He carefully crafted the Gospel of Luke – stories and teachings are not chronological but rather ordered in what Luke considered a logical argument to help Gentiles understand the gospel. Luke wants his readers to understand the facts that validate the truth of the story; the power of the Holy Spirit moving among men; and the personal touch of God “incarnating” – becoming a man to share His good news with men.

Why should we study the Gospel of Luke as we prepare to serve the poor?

Physician (Col 4:10-14) and historian (1:1-4). As a physician, Luke was highly educated and he authored perhaps one of the most well written books in the Bible. As a world-class historian, Luke puts Jesus in historical context, elaborating even more in the book of Acts on the impact of the gospel through the entire world. He recognized that Jesus brought both physical and spiritual healing. Luke understood the power of the Holy Spirit (1:35; 4:14,36; 5:17; 6:19; 8:46; 9:1; 21:17; 24:19,49) through the gospel (“good news” 3:18; 4:18,43; 7:22; 8:1; 9:6; 16:16; 20:1) to not only heal people physically, but to give people salvation, joy, and purpose – spiritual healing. As we serve, pray that we also see the great need for physical and spiritual healing and that we let the Holy Spirit use us to minister to each other and those around us.

The Bible’s only Gentile author. As a Gentile (non-Jew), Luke explains the Jewish customs for those less familiar with them (4:31; 8:26; 21:37; 23:51; 24:13). Because Luke’s audience was Gentile, Luke highlighted the theme of universality – that God included Jews and Gentiles in His plan (2:20-32, 3:6). He even shows how the gospel is for women, Samaritans (mixed-race/religion), poor, rich, outcasts, and “sinners” (not the religious!). The gospel message is universal – for all people in all nations throughout all times. The gospel message is as relevant to the people of India as it was for Jews in Jerusalem! Indians probably have a different worldview

from those of us from other countries. Just as Luke recognized the need to explain the Jewish worldview to Gentiles, we will be much more effective at communicating with our hosts if we understand more about the beliefs, background, language, and religion of the people of southern India.

Paul’s traveling companion. Throughout the Book of Acts, Luke identifies when he was with Paul on his travels by using the pronoun “we” instead of “they” (Acts 16:10-17, 20:5-21; 27:1-18:16). For those of us visiting India from another country, we will experience new customs, sites, smells, sounds, and experiences. Luke provides an example for us of how to present the gospel to a new culture and people.

Luke confronted materialism as he highlighted Jesus’ ministry to the poor. Many of us come from affluent countries. Even those on the HYC who come from India have the means (and heart!) to fund this opportunity to serve. Luke shared how Jesus proclaimed “good news to the poor” (4:18), confronted the rich (6:24), challenged those who store up treasure on earth (12:21ff), disqualified anyone not willing to give up everything (14:33), and reversed any notion of “prosperity” theology (16:1-31). At the same time, Luke illustrated Jesus’ compassion on those in need (4-5, etc.) and showed the power of the gospel through Jesus’ life – a poor Nazarene who changed the entire world. Pray that during this trip God will show you His true treasure and that we will have open hearts that learn from those we serve the meaning of Jesus’ saying, “it is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).

Luke portrays Jesus as the “Son of Man” (25 times). Matthew proclaims Jesus as Messiah/King; Mark emphasizes Jesus’ role as a servant; John depicts Jesus as God in flesh; Luke presents Jesus as the perfect man. The OT used the phrase “son of man” numerous times in Ezekiel and twice in Daniel including one messianic reference (7:13). The phrase “Son of Man” is not meant to diminish Jesus’ deity, but rather to magnify the miracle of “incarnation” – God cared so much about us that He squeezed His Deity into the form of a man to demonstrate His love. Luke, emphasizing Jesus’ humanity more than any other gospel: describes Jesus’ birth in detail; shows him at the temple as a teen; traces Jesus’ lineage back to Adam (Matthew traces back to Abraham); portrays Jesus as tempted in the desert (4) and struggling in the garden (22:39-44); and illustrates the most vivid post-resurrection interactions with the disciples. Luke’s portrayal makes Jesus more accessible to us – He was “tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin” (Heb 4:15).

What is your prayer for your heart in preparation for HYC India?

What are some ways that you believe the gospel of Luke will speak directly to you?

Day 2: Sing with the Angels, Mary, and Zechariah

Read Luke 1 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 1 introduces God's plan to bring the gospel to the earth. The last revelation in the OT came from Malachi, followed by 400 years of silence. Many anticipated the "redemption of Israel," the coming of God's anointed savior ("Messiah" in Hebrew or "Christ" in Greek), to restore hope and dignity to the nation. Many Jews also felt despair and abandonment – God allowed the Romans to take over their nation. Consider the depth of emotion in each character as God, through the angel Gabriel, the "heavenly host," and the Holy Spirit reveals His plan of salvation: a personal visit.

Answered Prayer. v. 5-6 Elizabeth and Zechariah were older, "upright," and "blameless" yet had no children. God is faithful, our "labor in the Lord is never in vain" (1 Cor 15:58).

v.13 God hears our prayers, even if it takes a while!

What are some desires of your heart or prayers that have taken a while for God to answer?

Spirit Filled. v.14-17 The angel Gabriel describes a new concept – John the Baptist would be "filled with the Holy Spirit from birth." In the OT, the HS would come on a person, but not live in them. In the NT we have the "gift of the HS" – God lives inside us. He chose us, adopted us as children, and put His mega-powerful Spirit in us! We are empowered to live as His children.

How do you believe that the Holy Spirit will work in your life?

Presence of God. v. 19,26 Gabriel stood "in the presence of God" and served as God's messenger (angel means messenger) to Zechariah and Mary. The angel respected these godly people and encouraged them that "the Lord is with you" and "you have found favor with God." God's visit brought them encouragement and hope. Luke's message for us to today: "God is with us, we have found favor with Him." ***Do you believe this message applies to you?***

Songs of Praise. v.46-55; 68-79 Consider reading/praying/singing Mary's song of praise and Zechariah's prophecy of praise *out loud* – as Mary and Zechariah would have! Spend some time singing to God in praise.

Day 3: The Incarnation

Read Luke 2 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Imagine God planning to appear in person on the earth. Picture him choosing a nation to bless (Israel), a time in history (Roman Empire), a specific place (Bethlehem in Judea), and even choosing His parents (Mary and Joseph)! Now picture that God continuously selects specific people to be His children and communicate His message to countries/cities/people who know nothing about Him (Acts 17:26). Consider how much thought, concern, love, compassion, care, and hope God pours into us, motivated by His love for His creation. The “incarnation” – God visiting the planet as a human (Jesus) was not only miraculous and extremely personal in the time of Joseph and Mary, but continues to be miraculous and personal when God lives in us to continue to convey His love for His creation through us. The message, the miracle, the investment is all God’s.

Planning the Incarnation. v.1-7 Luke carefully describes the political situation, the circumstances, and the family that he chose to be His parents.

How is God’s choosing you miraculous and personal to you?

Celebrating God’s Visit. v.13-14 The Angels sang, “Gloria in Excelsis Deo” or “glory to God in the highest.” They proclaimed “peace on earth” – describing the peace in our relationship with God ironically at a time when the earth experienced “Pax Romana” – the peace of the Roman Empire across that region that enabled the peace of the gospel to be proclaimed unhindered throughout the known world, under the protection of the Romans.

God in the Temple. v. 22-51 The Temple symbolized God’s presence among his people. Luke 2 describes two times where Jesus (God in the flesh) is presented at the temple.

- As an infant, Simeon took Jesus in his arms and sang another hymn that proclaimed Jesus as God’s “salvation,” a “light for revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people Israel.” Note that Simeon (1) recognized the Messiah, (2) proclaimed that Jesus would be a light to the Gentiles, and (3) that Jesus is the glory of Israel. Anna the Prophet confirmed Simeon’s prophesy.
- As a 12-year old, Jesus amazed the teachers and all who listened with “his understanding and his answers.” When Mary says, “your father and I have been anxiously searching for you,” Jesus answer reveals that he understood his unique relationship with God as his heavenly Father.

Through Jesus, God's presence became even more evident – he wasn't only present in the temple, but physically walked with people. It was this incarnation that inspired the Angels, Simeon, and Anna to sing.

Spend some time thanking God for being your heavenly Father and coming to us in person.

Day 4: God Rules the Nations

Read Luke 3 and consider these devotional thoughts:

God entered a very hostile world in the human body of Jesus. Israel suffered at the hands of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media/Persia, Greece, and now Romans occupied their land. Many Jews despised their captors, led rebellions, and took politics into their own hands. The Zealots, incited by Roman taxes, led multiple revolts culminating in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. They longed for God's rule in their nation, but few listened to God's Son who preached about a new Kingdom of God coming to earth. Into this backdrop, Luke introduces John the Baptist and Jesus preaching fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies.

Luke 3:1-6 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet: “A voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all people will see God’s salvation.’” [Is 40:3-5]

God rules the nations. v.1-6 Luke provides the political background for the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus. Why? God rules the nations (see Psalm 47). As Mary just sang, “He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.” God understands the times, and choose this time in history for His story. “Why do the nations rage?” (Ps 2:1) God is in control. ***God rules the nations. What are the implications to us today?***

John prepares the way. v.7-20 John understood God's timing and plan. He knew that he heralded God's arrival and he looked for the Messiah. It is not clear if he understood that it was his very cousin! John's message was repentance (3:7-19): share, be fair, be content... ***How does John's message of repentance help you make room for God's presence in your life?***

The voice of God. v.21-22 (Note Luke’s emphasis on prayer and the Holy Spirit) *“as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: ‘You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.’”* When God looks at us, he sees Jesus; therefore, he feels the exact same way about us that he feels about Jesus. ***Is this the message you hear from God?***

Son of Man (Adam). v.23-38 As you skim the genealogy, note that Luke traces Jesus’ ancestry all the way to Adam, the son of God – emphasizing Jesus’ humanity.

Day 5: The Spiritual Battle

Read Luke 4 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit: Jesus, “full of the Holy Spirit” was “led by the Spirit” to be tempted in the wilderness (the desert between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea – perhaps the same wilderness that John the Baptist grew up in from 1:80). The Spiritual Battle engages you against the spiritual enemy, Satan. Your only hope is to stack the teams – you need God on your team. God delivers victory through the Holy Spirit in our lives. There is no other way to win the spiritual battle than to be “in the Spirit.”

Temptation is Coming. v.1-13 At the end of 40 days of fasting, Luke introduces the spiritual enemy – Satan. The enemy tests Jesus at his weakest moment with hunger – physical gratification, trust – his need to believe God will still rescue him even as a man, and compromise – a shortcut to regain power over what Satan had become the ruler. Consider what makes you tempted – being hungry, tired, uncomfortable, pushing yourself, out of your element, strange smells, jet lag, inconvenience, trouble, rude people... Satan will look for an opportune time to test you! ***How can you prepare your heart now for the temptations that you will face on HYC?***

The Spirit in me. v.14-30 Jesus came out of the time of temptation “in the power of the Spirit” – ready to start his ministry. Read this same passage that Jesus read out loud, considering God’s calling for your life:

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor. [Is 61:1-2]

How is this personal for you?

To the Battle. v.31-41 The spiritual battle engages the “authority” of Jesus against the demons. Whether studying the Bible to bring truth into a soul who has been enslaved to Satan’s lies or bringing hope to the poverty stricken, the true battle is always spiritual. Satan attempts to discourage us from continuing to fight. The Spirit prompts us to continue to serve and to preach. Luke illustrates Jesus’ example and personal touch, healing each individual: he healed Simon Peter’s mother in law, then all of the sick who came after sunset (at the conclusion of the Sabbath), and touched each person individually (v40). Stirred by these incredible miracles of Jesus, the spiritual battle raged – demons shouted at him, yet Jesus was not afraid of them. ***What fears do you have about serving those in need? How can you fight this spiritual battle?***

Battle Prayer. v.42-43 Note how Jesus viewed his purpose – He understood God’s plan – the incarnation brought God’s good news and God’s kingdom to humanity in a very personal way – through him and now through us. ***Pray to understand the spiritual battle that will be fought in our hearts as we serve.***

Day 6: The Calling and Example

Read Luke 5 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 5 starts with Jesus calling his first disciples and continues as Jesus sets an example for them in physical healing (v12ff), spiritual healing [forgiveness] (v17ff), and dealing with the religious leaders (v30ff). His example continues into Luke 6, culminating with the choosing of the apostles.

I met God! v. 1-11 Each of us has a unique story of how God introduced himself. We may or may not have been seeking a relationship with Him, but God was seeking a relationship with us. One remarkable aspect of God’s plan is how personal it is. He became like us so that we could become like Him. He became a man so that he could introduce himself to Simon. Like us, at first Simon didn’t recognize whom he just met. Once he recognized God in the flesh, the Messiah, he was afraid and knew that he was not worthy to follow. Once Jesus calmed his fears, Simon “left everything and followed him.” ***Looking back on the first time God introduced himself, what was personal about it?***

The Master's Plan. v. 12-26 Immediately after introducing the calling of the first disciples, Luke describes Jesus training strategy for making “fishers of men”: imitation. Consider imitating Jesus in these ways:

- v.13 “Jesus reached out and touched the man.” His impact was not measured by numbers but by personal change brought about by personal interaction.
- v.14 “don’t tell anyone” – His concern for the physical and spiritual sick did not spring from wanting attention or approval from men.
- v.16 “he often prayed” – He relied on God for his strength, staying in close relationship.
- v.17 “the power of the Lord” (the Holy Spirit!) – His healing power was not only physical but also spiritual.

What do you learn from Jesus about his ministry?

I am Sick! v. 27-38 Our ability (or inability) to participate in His ministry is not based on being healthy or righteous, but based on the fact that we are sick and sinners in need of repentance and healing. Luke challenges people focused on being religious to relate to people who are different (tax collectors and sinners), admit their own sinfulness, enjoy His presence (celebrate like a wedding!), and not get stuck in habits and traditions (“old wineskins”). ***How do you see yourself struggling with being religious?***

Day 7: A New Teaching

Read Luke 6 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 6 introduces the Battle Plan. Jesus challenged the Pharisees tradition by breaking their Sabbath rules. He selected his new leadership: the 12 apostles. Then Jesus summarized His spiritual battle plan in the “sermon on the plain” (parallel to the Sermon on the Mount from Matt 5-7). Luke shows Jesus continuing to proclaim the gospel, contrasting the “good news” with the often legalistic and twisted motivation demonstrated by the traditions and practices of the Pharisees. If the material is familiar to you, you may miss the dramatic contrast between Jesus gospel and the religious interpretation of the OT. This devotional will highlight on the radical difference between Jesus’ teaching and the common religion.

I am Holy? v.1-11 Jesus confronted the “religious” teachings of “holy days, holy places, holy things, and holy men.” In the new covenant every day is holy (Col 2:16, Gal 4:9-11). Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19). God’s presence is not restricted to a sanctuary or a temple, so every place is holy (Acts 17:24). Every Christian is called a “saint” or “holy person” (Eph 1:1, Phil 1:1, Col 1:2) so there is no need to be enamored by religious figures. Religion limits God’s presence to specific events, places, or people. People act different at church or in front of religious leaders or on holidays. The gospel transforms us into God-people – with the Holy Spirit inside us, God’s presence is in everything we do, every place we visit, and even every thought within us. *How does this understanding of the gospel change your view of “everyday” life?*

I am Chosen. v.12-16 Jesus prayed all night before selecting the apostles. It is amazing to think about how much thought God puts into his interactions with people – then and now. Imagine Jesus and the Father having a discussion about each disciple (not just the apostles! Eph 4:11-13) and their role in bringing the gospel to the world. One aspect of the “new teaching” (new covenant) is that God is not just thinking about the destiny of the nation Israel (physical or spiritual); God designed a destiny for each individual; God chose you. *What do you think is God’s destiny (your role in bringing the gospel to the world) for you?*

I imitate God. v.17-49 Luke describes Jesus’ ministry: “the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him.” Picture the scene: thousands gathered from the surrounding area – the sick, demon possessed, troubled, and curious; all pressing on Jesus to touch him to connect with that power. Picture this spiritually today as every morning millions of troubled, desperate people approach God with prayers, requests, anguish, and fears.

Jesus’ answer for helping connect us with this power is found in the Sermon on the Plain. Jesus commanded people to evaluate their lives and re-orient their behaviors, priorities, and expectations. We tend to think we need make a few adjustments; Jesus expected total transformation. A disciple doesn’t just think about God, or admire him. A disciple imitates God.

- 20-23 What qualities help you receive God’s power – the kingdom of God, be satisfied, laugh, joy?
 - 24-26 What could keep you from receiving God’s power?
-

- 27-36 How can you apply this radical love to situations in your life?
- 37-42 What annoys you about others? How do you see the same sins in your life?
- 43-45 What does your mouth (speech) reveal about your heart?
- 46-49 It is challenging to compare how much teaching we receive to how much we apply. What is one thing you learned from Luke 6 that you want to apply today?

Day 8: Encounters with Jesus

Read Luke 7 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke describes Jesus' impact on a range of people. The centurion, obviously a Gentile, desperately sent to Jesus for help then amazed Jesus with his faith. A large crowd saw Jesus raise a widow's son then recognized him as a great prophet. John's disciples questioned Jesus then relayed to John the miracles of the Messiah: blind see, lame walk, lepers are cleansed, deaf hear, dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor. A "sinful woman" touched by Jesus' love then demonstrated love for Jesus in the presence of a Pharisee's house guests.

Great Faith. v. 1-10 Jesus found "great faith" in the centurion. *How would you describe great faith?*

Positive Perspective. v. 11-28 Jesus' heart went out to the widow; he touched the coffin (risking uncleanness). His compassion was personal and accessible. In response to John's doubts, Jesus provided immediate, extensive proof (at that very time Jesus cured many). Then Jesus turned to the crowd to explain exactly who John the Baptist was: "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he." *What do you notice about how positive Jesus' perspective was on everyone from the centurion to his cousin?*

God's Purpose. v. 29-35 Luke adds this parenthetical interpretation of the events: "(All the people, even the tax collectors, when they heard Jesus' words, acknowledged that God's way was

right, because they had been baptized by John. But the Pharisees and the experts in the law rejected God's purpose for themselves, because they had not been baptized by John.)" ***What was Jesus' perspective on those who rejected John's (or his) message?***

She Loved Much. v. 36-50 This story dramatically describes an extravagant outpouring of love. Remarkably, the one most like God in the story is a "sinful woman" – who cares little about the material value of her sacrifice but instead exhibited a depth of understanding God's acceptance and forgiveness then demonstrated prodigal (definition: wastefully extravagant) love. If you are like me, I cringe when someone gives a gift that I consider a "wasteful" expression. In a spiritual way, God's forgiveness of this sinful woman can only be described as prodigal: "over the top," "extreme," "lavish," and even "reckless." ***How is God's love for you extravagant?***

Day 9: Heart Preparation

Read Luke 8 and consider these devotional thoughts:

In Luke 8, Jesus prepared the hearts of the apostles for their first evangelistic send-off. Jesus described four types of hearts in the parable of the soils, providing instruction on how to have fruitful heart. The subsequent sections illustrate the ministry of integrity (v.17), spiritual family (v.21), authority (v.23), transformation (v.34), healing (v.48), and resurrection (v.55).

Industrious Women. v.1-3 Jesus and the apostles could have provided for themselves miraculously. ***Why do you think they instead relied on the generosity of these women supporters?***

Heart Examination. v.4-15 Considering that one goal of the parable of the sower was to prepare the apostles' hearts for his ministry (evangelistically and to the poor), how is your heart hardened like the path, shallow like the rocky soil, choked by the world, yet (by God's grace and power) able to multiply in impact (yes, in some ways we reflect all four types of soil)?

Ministry of Integrity. v.16-18 Jesus' concern was not just for the hearts of the apostles. ***Knowing that their impact would soon be multiplied, what character issues does Jesus want to purify?***

Spiritual Family. v.19-21 Imagine God in the flesh teaching his new disciples that they are his true family. *How does being Jesus' brother or sister affect your view of your position in Christ?*

Anchor for the Soul. v.22-25 It is not clear if Jesus purposely led his disciples into “storms” but Jesus definitely used the storms of life to train the disciples to have faith. *How have the storms in your life helped you to have faith in the One who “commands the winds and the water”?*

The First Halloween. v. 26-39 Jesus led his disciples into a Gentile region to face one of the scariest ministry challenges—a naked Gentile man possessed by a legion of demons, living among the tombs. As the demon in the man screamed at him, Jesus personalized the conversation, treating the man with common courtesy by asking, “What is your name?” Perhaps this was the most revealing question he could ask since the man’s ability to see himself clearly was so altered by the demons that the demons answered the question instead of the man. Satan’s power over people starts in their minds as he confuses their thinking. The Gentile crowds who gathered were terrified by Jesus’ display of power. The healed man became a regional evangelist to the Gentiles. The disciples were silent through the whole encounter. *What do you think the disciples learned from this event?*

Learning from Physical Healing. v. 39-56 Back in the Jewish regions, Luke continues to describe Jesus’ training of the disciples, now facing two overwhelming situations – a dying child and an incurable chronic condition. Consider how unbearable these situations were for the individuals. No parent should have to bury a child, yet it happens. No one should have to live with a chronic disease, yet it happens. Jesus’ brings hope and healing into the darkest situations of life. In this situation, Jesus physically healed the hopeless. We don’t know why Jesus healed some and not others or how long they lived after they were healed. We don’t know if those physically healed experienced spiritual healing and eventually made it to heaven. We do know that Jesus used these situations to demonstrate his power over the physical challenges of life and we know that he brought an even greater power over the spiritual challenges of life. *What do you think the disciples learned from these healings?*

Day 10: Introduction to the Mission

Read Luke 9 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 9 describes the apostles' first attempt at living out Jesus' mission: preaching, teaching, and healing. After their mission, Jesus took them with him to continue their training. Jesus demonstrated God's provision by feeding 5000, revealed God's Messianic promise fulfilled through himself, prepared them for the coming tragedy by predicting his suffering, revealed God's (and his own) glory at the transfiguration, provided instruction for dealing with opposition, and helped them start to count the costs of following him.

The First Commission. v.1-17 Jesus prayerfully selected the twelve (6:12) and spent time with them demonstrating his mission methodology (Luke 7-8). Next Jesus empowered them with the authority to perform the same miracles he performed, verifying the authority of their message as they preached the gospel of the kingdom of God around Galilee. Perhaps as a premonition of the Great Commission, the apostles mission integrated evangelism and healing as they moved from village to village. On their return, Jesus withdrew with the disciples to Bethsaida but crowds followed. Jesus never ceased to serve, elaborating his teaching on the kingdom and continuing to heal. *What do you think Jesus was trying to teach the disciples about the kingdom of God by feeding the 5000?*

The Revelation. v.18-36 As spokesman for the apostles, Peter concluded that Jesus was the promised Messiah. Jesus then explained that suffering, death, and resurrection were also part of the Messianic plan. Now that the apostles accepted and participated in his mission, Jesus introduced the cost of discipleship: "whoever loses their life for me will save it" – this is the most frequently repeated phrase in the gospels, appearing seven times (9:25, 14:26-27, 17:33; Mt 10:38-39, 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Jn 12:25). A week later, Jesus took Peter, James, and John (the "three") up to the mountain to pray and see his glory, beside Jewish heroes Moses and Elijah. As Jesus explained more about "his departure" (31), a cloud (God's glory) covered them, and the Father himself repeated what He proclaimed at Jesus' baptism: "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." Imagine being on that mountain. *What would it mean to you to hear these words directly from God?*

The Opposition. v.37-56 Apparently, the other 9 apostles failed to heal the demon-possessed boy, even after successfully completing their "first commission." Jesus stepped in, rebuked their lack of faith, rebuked the demon, healed the boy, amazed the crowds, and reminded the disciples that he was about to be delivered to his death. In the midst of the apostles' failure and Jesus success, the disciples started arguing about who will be the greatest. Perhaps the "three" baited the other nine about their opportunity to experience Jesus' glory while the nine were unable to heal the boy. Jesus corrected their thinking, teaching them to be "the least" rather than the

greatest. They continued to argue about some other group who “drove out demons in your name” and Jesus corrected them with the phrase, “whoever is not against you is for you.” At this point, Luke tied in Jesus’ drive to go to Jerusalem. Jesus traveled through Samaria rather than taking the “normal” Jewish route that avoided contact with the hostile Samaritans. The “sons of thunder” were ready to pull an Elijah (2 Ki 1:9-16) on the Samaritans who refused them hospitality. ***What do you learn from these passages about dealing with “opposition” from spiritual forces, fellow Christians, competing religious groups, or even other hostiles?***

The Determination. v.57-62 Luke finished the chapter with a call to discipleship. Jesus’ training and preparation frequently included a reminder that this spiritual calling and mission must take precedence over our excuses, distractions, and even comforts. ***As we prepare to serve in India, spend some time praying about your readiness for the mission.***

Day 11: Multiplication

Read Luke 10 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Only the Gospel of Luke records the sending out of the 72. The NIV Study Bible equates the sending out of the 12 with the mission to the 12 tribes of Israel and the sending of the 72 with the mission to the (70 tribes of) Gentiles (Gen 10:2). The math indicates multiplication – the 12 went out 2 by 2; now those 6 pairs of 2 have become 36 pairs of 2 (each original pair has now become 12). The 12 saturated Galilee (northern Israel) with Jesus’ message; the 72 preached all over Judea (central Israel around Jerusalem). This successful expanded missionary force returned to share powerful moments with Jesus (v.17-24). The final two stories of Luke 10 deliver two of the most memorable sections: The Good Samaritan and Mary’s intimate relationship with Jesus.

The Seventy-Two is You. v.1-24 Jesus’ instructions to these 72 anonymous missionaries started with the “prayer” for workers (Matt 9:35-38). God answered the prayer for workers by identifying the 72 (the ones listening to the prayer!). These 72 preached the gospel message, “the kingdom of God has come near,” whether people listened or failed to listen. Jesus pronounced judgment on the Galilean towns that rejected him, warning the Judeans to accept the gospel. The 72 had Jesus’ full authority: the message of the gospel, the power to drive out demons, and the delegation of his approval: “whoever listens to you, listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me.” They shared their success with Jesus, who reminded them of the spiritual battle (v.20) and opened his heart with some of the more intimate words in the Bible (v.21-24). v. 24 is the central passage in this chapter: all of history has waited for this moment when God would visit the earth, yet on a daily basis it is easy for each of us to miss seeing God, *even when he appears in the flesh. Reading Jesus’ prayer and encouragement (v.21-24), how is the mission of Jesus personal to you?*

Who is My Neighbor? v.25-37 If we don't understand the cultural background, it is easy to miss the power of the parable of the Good Samaritan. Jews hated Samaritans so much that during their pilgrimage to Jerusalem, they avoided going through Samaria, even though the alternate route through the Jewish of Perea involved an extra travel day. The Samaritans refused to provide shelter (hotel) to the pilgrims (9:53). The rivalry traced back to the split of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel (1 Ki 12), aggravated when the Northern Kingdom rejected the temple and established a substitute altar (calf worship) under Jeroboam, and further exacerbated by Samaritan claims that they were the true descendants of Israel. All this to say that the relationship between Jews and Samaritans was highly volatile, perhaps like the Jews and Palestinians of today. To get the point of the parable, consider replacing the priest with anyone you know in the full-time ministry, the Levite as any disciple, and the Samaritan with an atheist (communist?) or a Muslim. Jesus told the parable to answer the question, "who is my neighbor?" Jews traditionally limited their definition of a "neighbor" to exclude enemies (i.e., Romans or Samaritans) because of their prejudice. *Thinking back to v.24, think about how easy it is for us to not see God right in front of us, even when he appears in the flesh. How do you limit your compassion and concern for people?*

Only One Thing is Necessary. v.38-42 Most people have a tendency to either imitate Mary or Martha. Martha focused on all of the details. She was the person you want to plan your trip to India because she meticulously addressed every potential scenario. In contrast, Mary focused on relationships. Most likely, Mary missed some of the details. Maybe she didn't remember everything that needed to be taken care of, and even ran a little late to appointments, but she took care of the people. Neither of these personalities is inherently better, but each of us needs to know our tendencies so that we can compensate for our weakness. (Ultimately, even Mary will hurt her relationships if she keeps showing up late to appointments or forgets to do something for someone else.) However, in this story Jesus has "only one" point. Imagine having a quiet time but forgetting that you are with Jesus. Now consider forgetting that Jesus is "with us always to the very end of the age." *Thinking back to v.24, remember again how easy it is for us to not see God right in front of us, even when he appears in the flesh. How can you make sure that you personalize your relationship with Jesus and make sure that you recognize his presence in your life?*

Day 12: Heart Check

Read Luke 11 and consider these devotional thoughts:

As Luke continues to unfold the gospel story, Luke 11 illustrates a few of the heart checks for the disciples. Jesus challenged the disciples to "ask, seek, knock" believing in a Heavenly Father

who is eager to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Then Jesus engaged the demons in a spiritual battle and challenged the disciples to not only drive out the impure spirits but to fill up with the Holy Spirit, otherwise “the final condition is worse than the first.” Jesus confronted the wickedness of his generation, explaining that his message and his people are the true signs and miracles of God. Reclining at a Pharisees’ house for a meal, Jesus exposed and condemned the religious leaders’ hypocrisy, stirring up wrath with the truth.

Prayer. v.1-13 Jesus redefined man’s relationship with God. Jesus’ model prayer illustrated a framework that is God-focused (not self-focused), humble (not self-aggrandizing), vulnerable (not boasting), and relational (not religious). Jesus taught them “shameless audacity” in approaching a Heavenly Father who is eager to bless his children, reminding them that despite our “evil” hearts, God is eager to give the greatest gift—His Presence, the Holy Spirit. ***How does it help your prayer life to know that God’s greatest desire is to be with you and care for you as a father?***

Spiritual War. v.14-28 The crowds accused Jesus of working with the devil. Jesus exposed the contradiction in their thinking, challenging them to choose spiritual sides: “whoever is not with me is against me.” Jesus debunked any notion of neutrality, illustrating that if you drive out the impure spirits but don’t fill up with God’s Holy Spirit, you’ve only created a more inviting home for a whole gang of impure spirits who will gladly return to live your heart. Just in case they misunderstood that the Holy Spirit was some creative spontaneous spiritual feeling, Jesus identifies relationship with God by obedience to God’s word. ***How does Luke’s focus on the Holy Spirit’s role in our lives help you better understand your relationship with God?***

You are the Miracle. v.29-36 Crowds demanded miracles from Jesus. Sometimes we think, “If I only witnessed a miracle, it would increase my faith.” The Bible actually disproves this theory. Although God used miracles to prove the authority and truth of his messengers and his message (Moses, Elijah, Jesus), those easily impressed by these miracles frequently were the same people who quickly turned against the messenger when something else impressed them more (like their wicked desires). Jesus illustrated how *the messenger is the true sign from God* (a sign points people to something/someone else)—Solomon pointed the Queen of Sheba (1 Ki 10) to God; Jonah pointed the Ninevites to God (Jonah 3); and we are a lamp that points people to the true light (Jesus). God’s messengers, through his message, are the true signs and miracles that clearly point people to his truth. Imagine that your job is to hold up the sign that helps people find their way to God. Your life and words reveal the message and meaning of that sign. ***How does this perspective help you in sharing your faith?***

Not Afraid of Truth? v.37-54 We could spend some time discrediting the Pharisees, but wouldn’t that be equivalent to praying, “God, I’m glad I’m not like those Pharisees” (Luke

18:9)? The Pharisees came from a heroic religious tradition. They were the conservative Jewish religious leaders who helped preserve respect for the Word of God, the Presence of God, and consistency of religious practice. The Bible highlights several highly respected Pharisees such as Nicodemus and Gamaliel, who both demonstrated courage and honored God.

Rather than criticize the Jewish religious leaders we can appreciate their zeal, knowledge of the Word, and sincerity (Rom 10:2) and relate to their struggles. We are like them in many ways: we believe that we have “the true religion,” we zealously share our beliefs, and we vigorously argue about our interpretations of scripture. We are also flawed men, who react (and over-react) to perceived false teachings and false practices. Consider how Jesus’ exposes our sin while he confronts the Pharisees:

- 39-41 We appear outwardly religious, yet inside we struggle with greed and materialism
- 42-44 We check off our religious deeds, but don’t always have the right motivation
- 45-46 We preach a high standard of discipleship, but fall short in our own lives
- 47-51 We honor the prophets, but fail to imitate their lives
- 52-54 Our hypocrisy can cost people’s salvation

Praise God for grace and truth! ***How does applying this to your life help you appreciate God’s grace?***

Day 13: Treasure

Read Luke 12 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 12 assembles many of the most challenging and difficult to understand teachings of Jesus, centered on the theme of treasure:¹ “where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Although we can be deceived into thinking our treasure is in heaven, Jesus provides specific challenges to help us objectively evaluate the contents of our treasure. Jesus denounces hidden life secrets (3), fear of men (4), greed (15), worry (22), procrastination (35-40), comfort-seeking (v.49-53), ignoring spiritual crisis (54-56), and delaying reconciliation (57-59). Instead, Jesus preaches a message of spiritual revival: acknowledge God’s presence in Jesus and the Holy Spirit (8-10), store up spiritual treasure (21), trust a loving God who gives you His kingdom (32), long for Jesus’ return (43-44), recognize God’s presence (56), and work diligently toward unity (58).

As we strive to treasure God’s presence and kingdom, consider the following questions:

Nothing Hidden. v.1-3 ***How can I be more open about the challenges I feel in my heart?***

¹ If you read a “red letter” version, 98% of this chapter is red (Jesus’ words).

I Represent God. v.4-12 *How can I more actively put my trust in God and acknowledge Him before men?*

Rich Toward God. v.13-21 Our priorities and activities reveal our true treasure. *How can I more actively become “rich toward God”?*

Consider God. v.22-34 Jesus commands us to “consider” – to stop and think about God’s provision. Pray over this passage and remind yourself how actively God provides for His creation and for you.

Eager for God’s Return. v.35-59 Those who are eager for God’s presence in their life today will be eager for His return. This may mean being a good steward of what God has given you now (42-43), being aware of the spiritual war (56), or reconciling quickly with another disciple. *Write down what you can do to “be ready for service... ready for the master to return.”*

Day 14: The Fruit of the Kingdom

Read Luke 13 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 13 describes the expected impact of the fruit of the kingdom. Everyone is expected to repent, and that repentance should produce fruit. Jesus set a woman free from her infirmity even in violation of the Sabbath tradition. Like a mustard seed blooming into a tree or yeast working through the dough, the few who enter the kingdom’s narrow door produce tangible fruit. Jesus longed to gather everyone together and to be treated as his own dearly loved children. Yet knowing their rejection, he wept over the city that was about to crucify him.

Is God Fair? v.1-9 Our understanding of God is often clouded by our preconceived ideas of how he should work. We expect the guilty to suffer and the religious to prosper. Job’s friends illustrate our confused theology (read Eliphaz’ argument in Job 22 and see if you can’t relate). Just as God exposed Job’s friends teaching as false, Jesus exposed false theology. Rain falls on the righteous and the unrighteous. If God were to always protect the righteous from calamity, wouldn’t that violate free will and lead to people following him out of false motives? Repentance is not supposed to be linked to an expectation that “from now on, God will bless me because I repented.” If you ever feel tempted to complain to God that he isn’t treating you fairly, perhaps it stems from this false theology. *How do you relate to that feeling of “God isn’t fair to me?”*

Do I see my hypocrisy? v.10-17 Luke highlights Jesus’ attempts to expose hypocrisy (12:54, 13:15). The crowds and the religious leaders alike were more interested in preserving their own lives than truly seeking a relationship with God (9:24). Whenever we get disturbed, frustrated, or

worked up about something in the church, we should always check our own hearts first (6:42). ***Can you think of a recent time when you were upset – what was the motive behind it? Was this the fruit of Jesus’ kingdom, or the fruit of frustration and self-preservation?***

Fruit Multiplied. v.18-21 There is some debate on the interpretation of the mustard seed and the yeast. On one hand, if taken as a positive, the kingdom of God multiplies with immeasurable impact. The other interpretation is that the yeast represents the spreading prevalence of evil – just as the synagogue ruler just rejected Jesus, many will follow him in rejecting God’s Messiah. Either way, this passage illustrates the magnification of our response – for good or evil. ***How does knowing that your decisions will impact others affect your desire to follow Jesus?***

The Pain of the Narrow Road. v.22-35 This passage represents a transition in Luke’s emphasis. The coming chapters (13:22-17:10) illustrate the exclusivity of God’s kingdom. Jesus mourned over Israel’s rejection of God’s kingdom and time after time illustrated the choice set before each individual. One of the followers asks, “Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?” Jesus’ first response was to describe the narrow door and the reversal in expectation – many “who are last will be first and first will be last” – Israelites assumed their heritage would guarantee their salvation, setting themselves up to be surprised and mortified on the last day. Jesus rejected their religious tradition – “I don’t know you or where you come from” explaining that the Gentiles (people from the east and west and north and south) would “take their places.” Although Jesus clearly identified people as lost and saved, he even more earnestly pleaded with the people of Jerusalem out of extreme compassion and concern. ***How can you balance the truth of judgment day with the compassion of Jesus?***

Day 15: Lessons about the Great Banquet

Read Luke 14 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Jews commonly incorporated feasts into their religious festivals. OT prophets criticized the Jews for feasting for themselves (Is 1:14, Zech 7:6). Isaiah promised a great feast (Is 25:6) and the Jews envisioned a coming Messianic feast at God’s table (13:29). Revelation 19:9 describes the “wedding supper of the Lamb.” In Luke 14 Jesus exposed people’s tendency to compete for personal recognition (14:8), earn favor from the attendees (14:12), attend only on their own terms (14:18), or prioritize their relationships, possessions, or comfort higher than the Kingdom (14:25-22).

The Occasion. v.1-14 Jesus tells the parable of the Great Banquet while attending a banquet on the Sabbath at a Pharisees house. Jesus was a man of the people – he made himself available even to his enemies. His first order of business was to heal the man with Dropsy, breaking the

Pharisee's interpretation of the Sabbath. Next, he questioned the worldly positioning at the banquet. He even challenged them to examine their motive for selecting whom they invited on the basis of expecting them to return a favor. We all have opportunities to participate in public events or to host traditional holiday meals. Our real challenge is to always remember that Christianity is a banquet of living and feasting in God's presence. ***While we are in India, we have a unique opportunity to put Jesus teachings into practice. Pray that your heart will reflect God's – sharing his presence with everyone with great joy and celebration.***

The Final Occasion. v.14-24 God envisions our reunion with him as a great party – a “wedding feast” (Rev 19:9). The Jews understood and took pride in their invitation to the “feast in the kingdom of God.” They even boasted in their status as the people of God. Somehow, their religion became all about them and not about God. ***How can we as Christians appreciate the special calling of God and still understand that God wants His kingdom feast to be celebrated by all?***

Another Occasion. v.25-33 Right after the banquet stories, Luke includes Jesus' teaching from “another occasion.” Jesus ministry experienced apparent “success” – “large crowds” recognized Jesus deity and desired to be part of the kingdom feast. Somehow Jesus never measured success by numbers. Jesus' carefully crafted description of discipleship includes the challenge of unhindered loyalty balanced with the calculation of full commitment. Perhaps Luke put these two sections side-by-side to highlight the specialness of God's invitation to the kingdom feast along with the true nature of that commitment. ***How does reflecting on heaven's glorious kingdom feast help you remember that total discipleship is worth it?***

Day 16: The Lost

Read Luke 15 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 15 begins with the Pharisees criticizing Jesus for welcoming “sinners.” Jesus responds with three parables, unique to the Gospel of Luke, dramatically contrasting God's love for the individual to the Pharisees exclusivity. The shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep; the woman sweeps the whole house clean until she finds her one lost silver coin; the father sits by his window waiting for the return of his one lost son. Jesus illustrates the joy of restoring the lost through the image of “rejoicing in heaven” “in the presence of the angels of God” and the lavish celebratory feast the father throws upon his son's return. Jesus' point seems to be that God rejoices when outcasts (a sinner, not a wandering “righteous” person) repent.

Operation Rescue. v.1-7 The parable tells of a shepherd who risked the safety of the 99 to rescue one sheep who was not in the fold. The Pharisees judged wandering “sinners” unworthy of any rescue attempt. In contrast, Jesus illustrated God’s concern for those who are outside the “fellowship” – the lost sheep represented either a wandering believer or, more likely, one of the “sinners” Jesus associated with. *How do you see yourself “pre-judging” (prejudice) people who are “sinful” rather than sharing God’s love with them?*

God Rejoices. v.8-10 Houses in Israel typically had no windows and only dirt floors. The woman searched intently for a coin worth a day’s wages (\$100-\$300 in US). Jesus emphasized the extent of the search: God’s concern is much deeper than a casual or general love for everyone; He works intensely to save that one soul. Read closely how Jesus describes the response: “rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God.” *Who is rejoicing if it is not the angels?*

Prodigal God. v.11-32 The parable of the lost (“prodigal²”) son illustrates the responses of three characters. The younger son, representing the “sinners” that Jesus associated with, brashly demands his father’s inheritance (“I’m not waiting until you die”), spurns his entire family, indulges in every worldly pleasure he can find, crashes, and returns to the father a broken man. The father, representing God, lets his younger son exercise his (foolish) free will, never loses hope in his return, and celebrates the younger son’s homecoming with a great banquet where he even elevated the son to a new position – illustrated by the robe, ring, and sandals. *How do you relate to the younger son?*

The older brother, representing the Pharisees, refused to celebrate the return of this profligate (rather than acknowledge him as a brother, he called him “this son of yours”), and exposed his bitter heart toward his father. All this time, living in God’s presence, the older son failed to appreciate his blessings. *How do you relate to the older son?*

Disciples take comfort in this portrayal of God’s patience, hope, and recklessly wasteful (“prodigal”) celebration of His relationship with us. At the same time, God challenges our tendency to feel entitled and take our status with God as His children for granted. *What characteristic of God most inspires you in this parable?*

2 “Prodigal,” which means “wastefully lavish,” could be used to describe both the son (in a selfish way) and the father (God) in the way he lavished his love recklessly on his son. See Timothy Keller’s book, “The Prodigal God”

Day 17: Worldly Treasure

Read Luke 16 and consider these devotional thoughts:

The Pharisees loved money (16:14). Who doesn't appreciate material "blessings"? Doesn't "God help those who help themselves"? (sorry, this phrase is not in the Bible). Don't we feel blessed when God gives us wealth and cursed when circumstances take it away? (warning: this is a false view of God). Could it be that there is something wrong with our perception of God's view of money? Luke 16 delivers some of Jesus' strangest and strongest condemnations of greed. "You cannot serve both God and money" (13). "What people value highly is detestable in God's sight" (15). "The rich man died and was buried. In Hades, where he was in torment..." (22-23). Be prepared to re-evaluate your treasure as you read this chapter!

A Good Lesson from a Bad Example. v.1-13 The parable of the shrewd manager makes most people uncomfortable. Jesus teaches the disciples three lessons from a manipulative thief!

1. *"The people of the light" should be shrewd and use worldly wealth to gain future (spiritual) benefit.* Wealth should be a disciple's servant, not the other way around. Rather than accumulate wealth for ourselves, Jesus instructs disciples to use worldly wealth to make friends with the goal of saving people ("welcomed into eternal dwellings").
2. *Faithfulness with little things (worldly wealth) trains us to be faithful with eternal things (true riches).* Wealth should be viewed as a training tool, helping us understand how to value even more important things.
3. *Warning: "No one can serve two masters... you cannot serve both God and money."* As Paul instructs Timothy, *"Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Tim 6:9-10)*

What is one practical way that you can use money to win people, become more faithful, and avoid the trap of greed?

A Good Lesson from a Bad Example (Part 2) v.14-18 Turning from teaching the disciples, Jesus illustrates to the Pharisees how *they* justify themselves but *God* judges their hearts. The Pharisees sneered at Jesus, potentially because he was a poor itinerant preacher and according to their theology, God's blessings should be evidenced by wealth. They missed a clear teaching about the Kingdom of God: God uses things (wealth) to love people, not using people to love things! Jesus also points out the inconsistency of their practice of divorce as an example of how they justify themselves in the eyes of men. Rather than thinking about how glad we are that we are not like these Pharisees, perhaps we should examine the trap of justifying ourselves. ***In what ways do you see that you justify yourself to value money more than you should?***

The Rich Man and Lazarus. v.19-31 Jesus directs this parable to the Pharisees, who loved money. The Rich Man had everything he wanted yet never showed concern for anyone else until he sat in torment – only then did he start thinking about his brothers. Though the parable doesn't say much about why Lazarus was considered righteous, his name means "God, the helper" indicating that he trusted in God (he wasn't righteous just because he was poor!). When interpreting any parable, the key is to understand the overall point to the specific audience rather than trying to extract extraneous lessons from the various specific details. Verse 31 summarizes the lesson Jesus directed to the Pharisees, "if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead." The parable continues to contrast our attitude toward worldly wealth compared to eternal riches. *What do you want to pray about as you take these lessons into your opportunity to serve in HYC?*

Day 18: Kingdom Mindsets

Read Luke 17 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God challenged the prevailing interpretation of the Kingdom held by the Pharisees and most Israelites. They looked for restored political power, yet the kingdom of God is not about politics. They desired materialistic reward, yet Jesus rebuked their greed (Luke 16). In Luke 17, Jesus describes this "Kingdom Mindset" to the disciples in the areas of sin, forgiveness, faith, humility, gratitude, recognition, and preparedness.

Sin. v.1-2 What sin is Jesus warning the disciples about? Just as Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for a lack of faith in believing Jesus was the Messiah (11:52), Jesus warns the disciples not to stumble in their faith and cause others to stumble. *Consider the depth of your faith – in what ways do you inspire others to believe in the Messiah or in what ways could you cause some to stumble in unbelief?*

Forgiveness, Faith, and Humility. v.3-10 The Kingdom Mindset includes a fountain of perpetual forgiveness. God continuously cleanses you from sins and expects you to also be a source of forgiveness. Challenged in their faith, Jesus encourages the apostles that even small faith can be powerful. He illustrates an act of faithfulness through the story of the servant who continues to serve even after a long day, giving first to the master. The servant's Kingdom Mindset overflows with humility: "we are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty." *How can this scripture help you maintain the Kingdom Mindset, whether to forgive, believe, or serve humbly?*

Gratitude. v.11-19 Jesus resumed his travel towards Jerusalem, once again choosing the more direct route through Samaria (9:51). The 10 lepers he met were actually a mixture of Jews and

Samaritans. Interesting to note that living with this terrible disease united people who traditionally hated each other. When we recognize our spiritual condition (disease) it similarly destroys prejudice and social barriers, uniting us with all disciples from every background, even those we previously avoided. Luke highlights the appreciation of the “foreigner” (Samaritan) and the ingratitude of the other nine Jews. Jesus indicates that the Samaritan’s gratitude combined with faith to not only heal him physically, but also bring salvation (v.19). ***How does gratitude open opportunities for us as disciples?***

Recognition and Preparedness: God’s Presence. v.20-37 The Pharisees were looking for the kingdom of God (20). Yet Jesus points out that the kingdom is already “in their midst.” They failed to recognize God, even when he appeared to them in person. Jesus turned to the disciples to help them understand a few principles about the kingdom:

- People will tell rumors about the kingdom, but Jesus will make the kingdom as obvious as a lightning storm
- Jesus must suffer and be rejected before this happens
- People will get so caught up in the world that they will miss the kingdom
- There are grave eternal consequences to being casual, distracted, or unprepared

Jesus could challenge us today that God is “in your midst” or “within you” through the Holy Spirit. We may be too casual, distracted, or unprepared and miss the implications of God’s presence in our lives. ***How can you change your mindset to be sure to recognize God’s presence in your life through the Holy Spirit today?***

Day 19: Kingdom Perspectives

Read Luke 18 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Real life is hard. Situations and circumstances deal unfair blows even to those trying to do the right thing. On top of that, our own pride gets in the way of us connecting with God and people. Even when everything seems to be going right, God challenges us to stop worshipping comfort. In addition to addressing each of these situations specifically, Jesus offers two attitude-adjustment perspectives: 1) receive the kingdom of God as a child and 2) “situations” and “circumstances” took Jesus life, yet even the “worst possible” fate can be overcome by an eternal God who performs miracles.

Help for the Helpless. v.1-8 Luke explains the purpose of the parable of the persistent widow: “to show them that they should always pray and never give up.” A widow’s vulnerability in ancient times was magnified because men dominated society. She came to the judge (God) with a

request that no one else could meet. Imagine God’s perspective on prayer—with literally billions of people asking for all types of favors, whom will he listen to? Will he answer the prayer of the competitive (let my team win), apathetic (I kind of hope for this), generic (bless me Lord), self-reliant (I could do this myself), the entitled (I deserve this), or the desperate (I have no one else)? Luke provides a clue at the end of the parable: “when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” ***How can I pray prayers of helpless faith?***

Me, a Sinner. v.9-17 Imagine God listening to the Pharisee’s prayer. His self-righteousness saturated his prayer, leaving no room for praise and no reason to ask God for anything. Psychologist may have a field day with this one, but Jesus explicitly praises the prayer of low self-esteem. Maybe you struggle with low self-esteem. Perhaps what Jesus wants us to have is a healthy “God esteem” rather than a high self-esteem (the Pharisee). Biblical humility magnifies God in our lives to the point where he is “Lord” and “King” and we serve him. This ties into Jesus’ comment about receiving the kingdom of God like a little child. In a child’s eyes, his father is a hero who hears his cries, comforts him, and delivers him. ***What does it mean to you to humble yourself by magnifying God like a child would?***

No Needs. v.18-30 In contrast to the widow, who was in extreme need, Jesus meets a rich man who seems to have everything going his way – he is religious, wealthy, and quite confident. Yet something must have been missing because even he asked Jesus what he needed to do to inherit eternal life. From an evangelistic viewpoint, everyone – including those who have it all together – need Jesus. The parable explicitly defies the materialistic concept that God’s blessing can be measured by wealth. The call of discipleship challenges those of us who are “rich” – whether rich in our religion (20-21 – no significant sin), rich in circumstances (no troubles), or comfortable in our wealth. Jesus “impossible” call of discipleship exposes everyone’s need for God and challenges the “successful” to relinquish every area to God. ***What “successful” area of your life is most difficult to give up?***

Recognizing the Messiah. v.31-42 Immediately after the discipleship challenge, Jesus pulls aside the twelve and reminds them that he, too, will give up even his life. Continuing his determined journey to Jerusalem, Jesus approached Jericho where a blind man recognizes the coming of the Messiah (“son of David”) and begs for mercy. The blind man’s response illustrates how the nation of Israel should have responded to the Messiah. Instead, those in front tried to quiet him, just as the religious leaders tried to silence Jesus and his followers. Jesus praises the man’s faith in the Messiah. Oh, that we would recognize Jesus’ presence in our lives everyday to allow him to work through us! ***How can you recognize the presence of the Messiah today?***

Day 20: The King Has Come

Read Luke 19 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Jesus continues his mission as the Son of Man: to bring the presence of God to people. Most commentators consider Luke 19:10 to be the central passage in the Gospel of Luke: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” The closer Jesus came to Jerusalem, the greater the anticipation that “the kingdom of God was going to appear at once” (11). Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey colt as royalty (1 Ki 1:33) and Messiah (Zech 9:9) to the sound of the crowds’ overwhelming praise. Then God incarnate cleared the temple; returning to the temple everyday to teach as “people hung on his words.”

Salvation in the House. v.1-10 Luke provides another illustration of how Israel should have accepted the coming Messiah, contrasting Zacchaeus to the leaders and multitudes who rejected him. Zacchaeus recognized Jesus as “Lord” and demonstrated full repentance through his financial reconciliation (the law required thieves to pay back “four times the amount” Ex 22:1, 1 Sa 12:6). Jesus recognized Zacchaeus as a “true son of Abraham” – one who not only has the lineage but the faith of Abraham. Jesus brought the potential for salvation to every house he visited, but many lacked the faith response of Zacchaeus. *What do you appreciate about Zacchaeus response?*

Accept or Reject the King. v.11-27 In this parable, Jesus used a few facts from Jewish history to illustrate the choice to reject or accept him as king. Herod was appointed as king of the Jews in a very similar manner to what Jesus described. Josephus (*Wars* and *Antiquities*) also described the time Archelaus sent a delegation to reject the king just 30 years before Jesus. In Jesus’ parable the king is appointed then had to return home, paralleling Jesus being coming to earth to be appointed king, leaving for a while (returning to heaven), and then returning to earth as Lord. In the parable, Jesus entrusted ten servants with 2.5 years worth of wages (>\$100,000) to be put to work for his kingdom. This huge act of trust resulted in finding two worthy managers whom he put them in charge of multiple cities. One servant’s fearful response revealed that he was actually a skeptic – though to the king’s face, the man feigned support, his actions revealed that he also rejected the king. The king treated the skeptic accordingly, along with everyone else who rejected him as king. The parable parallels Jesus ministry – where a few are entrusted with much in the midst of many skeptics. *How are you tempted to doubt Jesus – either that he will return or that he will bless your faithful stewardship?*

Recognize the King. v.28-44 The king rode a donkey into town – fulfilling the role of King and Messiah (Zech 9:9) – to the praise of his disciples. The Pharisees tried to quiet the disciples, but Jesus warns him the “stones will cry out” if the disciples don’t! Praise was inevitable! Jesus wept as he considered what was about to happen. Although the Son of Man was in the process of

fulfilling God's mission – to bring his presence and His kingdom to earth – the people “did not recognize the time of God's coming.”

Prepare the Temple for the King. v.45-48 God incarnate (Jesus) cleared the temple to make it a house of prayer to God again. After that, he returned everyday to teach in the temple. God was in the Temple not just in Spirit but in the flesh. Imagine the Pharisees rejecting God himself in the very Temple where they were supposed to recognize him. Jesus was protected by the crowds who “hung on his words.”

Spend some time considering how you can recognize God's presence through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Consider how your body is the new Temple and how each disciple brings God's presence as His Temple.

Day 21: Last Call for Questions

Read Luke 20 and consider these devotional thoughts:

The final week of Jesus' life, called Passion Week, included his entry into Jerusalem, clearing the temple, facing the barrage of questions from the Pharisees and Sadducees, describing the destruction of Jerusalem, and proceeding to the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion. As God himself entered the temple, the religious leaders attacked him with questions: Who gave you authority? What authority on earth do you recognize? What really happens at the resurrection? God, in person, stood in the temple courts, confronting their insincerity and delivering some final teachings.

The Power of the Question. v.1-8 Jesus mastered the art of asking good questions to make people think. He anticipated the opposition and fired back his own challenges. “John's baptism – was it from heaven, or of human origin?” (4) “Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” (18) “Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.” (25) “God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.” (38) “Why is it said that the Messiah is the son of David?” (41) How does Jesus respond to the chief priests' question about his authority? He answers one unanswerable question with another. Rather than be on the defensive with his critics, Jesus turned the question about his authority into a question about their unwillingness to accept the authority of John the Baptist (and therefore, God) in their life. *As we serve, how can you ask questions that will help those we serve think about their own relationship with God?*

The Parable of the Tenants. v.9-19 Jesus told this provocative parable to answer the question of what authority he was acting under. The parable illustrated the rebellious history of Israel: God sent prophet after prophet to get his people to respond, only to be rejected; now God sent his Son

(Jesus!) who would be killed. The people reacted in horror when the people killed the son in the parable (“God forbid!”) not realizing that they incriminated themselves by their testimony. Then Jesus turned the tables on them by clarifying the meaning of the parable – they were the villains who rejected God; now God would give the kingdom to the Gentiles! Rather than being cut to the heart, they were embittered and looked for a way to arrest him. Jesus’ lesson to us: either accept Jesus or expect to be held accountable. *What impresses you about Jesus in this situation?*

Hit Me with Your Best Shot. v.20-26 The Pharisees represented the most conservative Jewish leaders – they held strictly to the Bible and created a wealth of interpretations to maintain strict obedience to the text. However, rather than listen to God’s son, they “sent spies who pretended to be sincere” to Jesus, trying to incriminate him. They devised a trick question to expose Jesus’ lack of loyalty to Caesar. Not only does Jesus surprise them with his answer, he incriminates them by exposing their lack of loyalty to God! Though this answer silenced his critics, they would later misrepresent his position during his trial (23:2). *As you are reading today, how can you make sure that you focus on your relationship with God and not just “have a QT”?*

The False Hypothetical. v.27-40 The Sadducees then took their shot at Jesus. Sadducees represented the most liberal side of Judaism – the denied any miracles, the supernatural (angels, demons, Satan, etc.), and the afterlife, including the resurrection of the dead. Like many liberal religious people, they preferred using words to devise an excuse for disobedience rather than seeking the truth of God’s teaching that would require them to change their position and their life. Their hypothetical question was meant to trap Jesus into an answer that would discredit him. Jesus corrected them, validating both the teaching about the resurrection and angels. His words challenged both sides equally, to the point where both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were both afraid to ask any more questions. *How can you make sure that in your relationship with God you stay focused on obedient humility rather than on rationalizing questions?*

God’s Question for The “Teachers of the Law.” v.41-47 Whenever we set ourselves up against God, we invite correction. Jesus delivered correction to those “teachers” who opposed him. First, he explained how David understood that the Messiah would be his descendent and yet also be God (“Lord”), verifying Jesus’ position as Messiah and Son of God. Then Jesus exposed their true hearts through the hypocrisy of their practices: they love power, position, recognition, and greed. If we are honest, our hearts are really no better than these religious leaders. Even when we make every effort to obey, to serve, to put ourselves out, and lay our lives down, we still want recognition and even credit for our good deeds. Jesus didn’t correct them because of their imperfect, sinful hearts. His correction confronted the fact that they had no desire to know Jesus.

Thus, their religion shielded them from a relationship with God. ***How can you make sure that your religion isn't a substitute for your relationship with God?***

Day 22: A Widow's Gift and Jerusalem's Destruction

Read Luke 21 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Luke 21 presents two powerful sections. First, Jesus contrasted the widow's offering (2 coins worth a fraction of a penny) to the offering of the rich. The second section describes the destruction of the city of Jerusalem along with the Temple. Jesus' teachings address two very common modern theological errors. Many today believe a prosperity gospel – supposing that God primarily blesses his children materially – and therefore, they over-value worldly riches. Others fascinate on the “end times” – so consumed with discussions about prophecy, the coming of Jesus, and the millennial kingdom that they neglect basic discipleship.

Financial Heart Check. v.1-4 After rebuking the teachers of the law who “devour widows' houses” – taking advantage of defenseless widows by fraud and selfish schemes (20:47) – Jesus stood in the temple “court of women” watching people give their “gifts” or offerings to the temple treasury. I know that God sees my giving, but I am also guilty of over-valuing what people think. I am prone to compare my giving to others. I want to feel like I am “more generous” than others or have someone recognize that I contribute my time as well as my money. I want to be seen as a person who gives a lot. As someone who is “rich” I am not sure I even know what it means to sacrifice. ***How does the widow's example challenge your heart?***

Understanding the Signs. v.5-38 People frequently misunderstand this passage by missing the context. The disciples remarked about the beauty of the Temple³. Jesus responded by predicting that the entire Temple will be destroyed. The disciples ask two questions: “When will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?” Matthew adds a third question, “and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?” Doug Jacoby identified 16 fulfilled prophecies between Matthew 24 and Luke 19/21 from the account of the Jewish-Roman historian Josephus⁴. Understanding how catastrophic this event was to be to the Jewish nation, Jesus used apocalyptic language, similar to language in sections of Daniel and Revelation, dramatically illustrating the horrors of the war that destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. This event transformed how the Jews were able to practice their religion (no

3 Josephus records that [Herod the Great](#) completely rebuilt the Temple in 20-18 BCE, even going so far as to replace the foundation stones and to smooth off the surface of the Temple Mount. This Temple became known as [Herod's Temple](#). “Whatever was not overlaid with gold was purest white” (Josephus, Wars, 5.5.6).

4 <http://www.douglasjacoby.com/wp-content/uploads/2003/12/DJer80.pdf>.

more priests or sacrifices; instead Rabbis taught the law in their synagogues). Hebrews 8:13 described the Jewish system as “obsolete and outdated” noting that it “will soon disappear” referring to the destruction of the Temple.

Luke 21:29 closes the section with the statement, “this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened” – clearly indicating fulfillment during the first century AD. Then Jesus spoke the echoing words, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” – heaven is eternal, God’s Word is eternal, and our souls are eternal. Jesus finished the section with a warning to be watchful rather than being caught up in worldliness. From history, Eusebius recorded that most of the first century Christians understood Jesus’ teaching, recognized the signs, fled, and escaped the horrors of the Roman’s destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus taught in the temple each day and prayed on the Mount of Olives each night. The people listened attentively, challenged to be prepared for the coming days. ***Do you feel ready for Jesus’ return? If not, how can you get yourself ready?***

Day 23: The World Turns on Jesus

Read Luke 22:1-38 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Jesus teaching in the temple stirred people’s hearts and revealed their true colors. Luke 22 focuses on how individuals and groups turned on Jesus:

- The chief priests and teachers of the law wanted to get rid of Jesus.
- Satan entered Judas, leading him to betray Jesus.
- The apostles seemed oblivious to the gravity of the situation, arguing at the last supper about who will be the greatest. Jesus alerted them that one of them will betray him and even tells Peter that he will disown him. Jesus warned the apostles to prepare for the fulfillment of all his teachings.
- Peter, James, and John (specified in Mt 26:37) withdrew with Jesus to pray, but fell asleep in his darkest hour.
- Only an angel attended to Jesus during his strenuous prayer in Gethsemane.
- Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss followed by Peter’s triple denial.
- The guards who arrested Jesus then mocked and beat him, dragging him before the council of the elders.

In one day Jesus went from being the most sought after teacher in the temple to the most betrayed man on the planet.

Satan Entered. v.1-6 1 Peter 5:8 describes Satan like a “roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Paul warns us to be alert to Satan’s schemes (2 Cor 2:11). Judas opened his heart to Satan, and Satan entered. I believe as Christians we have the power to drive Satan out of our lives in Jesus’ name. However, when we open the door, he will take advantage of our weakness

and devour us. Consider how insidious Satan is – he makes the sin seem so tempting, yet every sin we commit leaves us devastated. When Satan is done with us, we find that we chased sin down to the steps of death (Prov 5:5). ***Considering Satan’s ability to enter, what doors do you need to shut or how can you call on Jesus’ now to cast Satan out and expose his temptations for what they truly are – instruments of destruction?***

Unwavering Faith Despite Our Betrayal. v.7-38 The disciples were young (teens to early 20s) and ambitious followers. They wanted to “do great things for God” and help change the world by becoming “fishers of men.” They were also human. In the midst of Jesus’ solemn Last Supper, while Jesus described his coming betrayal at one of their hands leading to his suffering and death, they argued about who “was considered the greatest among them.” Somehow Jesus never lost patience with them. He carefully instructing them, “conferring his kingdom on them” that they may “sit at his table in the kingdom.” He assured them of their place as “judges over Israel,” and reassured Peter that he will turn back and strengthen his brothers. In the midst of so many turning against him, Jesus believed in his disciples, despite knowing they would all fall away. ***Do you believe that Jesus has unwavering faith in you despite your misplaced ambition, failures, and struggles?***

Day 24: “Father”

Read Luke 22:39-23:49 and consider these devotional thoughts:

Prayer was more to Jesus than a religious ceremony or ritual. He poured out his heart to his Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he prayed “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me, yet not my will, but yours be done.” Questioned before the authorities, Jesus boldly claimed his Sonship, “From now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” Unjustly crucified along with criminals, Jesus prayed, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing.” At the bitter end of his torture, Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Even the Roman Centurion at the foot of the cross praised God and admitted, “surely this was a righteous man.” Righteous means in a right relationship with God. Jesus knew his Father intimately and he was determined to bring that same relationship with the Father to us, no matter the cost.

Never Alone. 22:39-71 Jesus prayed earnestly, “his sweat like drops of blood,” strengthened by an angel while the disciples slept. He was not alone, his Father and his angel were with him. Betrayed with a kiss, arrested like a rebel, and disowned by one of his closest companions... he was not alone. Mocked and beaten by guards until his back became chunks of ripped flesh... he was not alone. Taken before the religious leaders who represented his Father to the people and questioned... “are you the Messiah?” “Are you the Son of God?” ... he was not alone. He knew

that soon he would be seated next to his father in glory. ***How can you claim the promise that God is close the brokenhearted rather than being tempted to feel abandoned by God when things get tough?***

Judge the Judge. 23:1-25 Pilate reluctantly played the judge over the One who will one day judge the living and the dead. He tried to pawn his responsibility off on other leaders and on the people. He concluded, “I find no basis for your charges against him.” But the crowds wouldn’t quit. The pressure to give in was too much for him, and Pilate granted their demand: he “surrendered Jesus to their will.” We can all relate to the tragedy of buckling when we knew what was right, but the pressure was too much. Temptation seized us. There was a way out, but we didn’t take it. Everyone in the crucifixion story was guilty... Pilate, Herod, Judas, the leaders, the people. Everyone was guilty... Peter, James, John, all of the apostles, all of the disciples, and everyone who ever sinned. ***Aren’t you glad the story doesn’t end there?***

Gracious Surrender. 23:26-49 Jesus, King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Messiah, Prince of Peace, the Great I Am, God’s own Son – crucified. “He could have called 10,000 angels” (Hymn from Mt 26:53) but he held back. “Do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and your children” (23:28). “Forgive them – they don’t know what they are doing” (23:34). The all-powerful surrendered his life for you and me: “into your hands I commit my spirit.” Jesus was now alone. Darkness came over the whole land. The sun stopped shining. The curtain of the temple (the separation between man and God) was torn in two. Glorious Surrender. ***Close out today by reading aloud Psalm 31.***

v.1-5 In you, Lord, I have taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Turn your ear to me, come quickly to my rescue; be my rock of refuge, a strong fortress to save me. Since you are my rock and my fortress, for the sake of your name lead and guide me. Keep me free from the trap that is set for me, for you are my refuge. Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, Lord, my faithful God. (Read the whole Psalm if you have time)

Day 25: The Power

Read Luke 23:50-24:52 and consider these devotional thoughts:

A lifeless body, wrapped in cloth, laid in a tomb. Dead. Then... God’s Power raised Jesus from the dead (Eph 1:19-20). Fourteen times Luke describes the “Power” of God, the “Power” of Jesus, and the “Power” of the Holy Spirit. The disciples on the road to Emmaus referred to Jesus as “a prophet, powerful in word and deed.” Luke finishes his gospel with the disciples observing the greatest demonstration of God’s power – the Resurrection, then worshiping continually at the temple, praising God and waiting for “power from on high.”

Resurrection. 24:1-12 The greatest stories ever told borrow the theme of resurrection: the dead coming back to life, the beaten becomes the victor, the hero is knocked down but rises again. The power is not in the fall but in the getting back up: Rocky Balboa, knocked down time and time

again, gets back up to win a victory; the hero, taken to the brink of death, rises up to win. Satan claimed victory over Jesus by putting him to death on the cross, yet Jesus trumps Satan by overcoming death: “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54). As Proverbs 24:16 states, “though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again, but the wicked stumble when calamity strikes.” The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now at work in us to make “us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions” (Eph 2:5). ***How do you need resurrection power in your life? Do you believe God will give it to you?***

Recognize God. v.13-35 How is it possible that the disciples walked with Jesus on the road and yet somehow failed to recognize his presence? How do we have the Holy Spirit in us and yet still fail to recognize God’s penetrating love that breaks through our barriers into our wandering hearts? These men shared about Jesus yet failed to recognize God incarnate in their presence. Our religion must always be one of recognizing God’s presence in our lives, not just talking about him but talking to him and knowing him. ***Spend some time recognizing God’s presence in your life over the past few days.***

In Their Presence. v.36-51 Jesus’ disciples were amazed by the resurrection. Jesus stood with them, hands and feet scarred, flesh and bones, eating fish, and comforting them with his presence. They faced the worst that Satan could throw at them, and survived. All they desired at this point was Jesus’ presence with them. But it was time to return to heaven. Jesus again comforted them, promising an even greater presence in their lives through “power from on high” as they would now carry his message into all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. “They stayed continually in the temple, praising God,” anticipating... ***What were they waiting for?***

What are you waiting for... it’s time for the Book of Acts!