

ADULT BIBLE STUDY IN SIMPLIFIED ENGLISH

STUDY GUIDE

Luke:

The Gospel Story

Includes Christmas Lesson

WRITERS

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Adult Bible Study in Simplified English Study Guide

Luke: The Gospel Story

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Luke: The Gospel Story

Introduction

News reporters ask questions. They know if they ask the right questions, they will get the right answers. Luke would have made a good news reporter.

But Luke lived about 2,000 years ago and had never heard of the job! But he was very good at asking questions and finding answers. In the years after Jesus' ministry was complete, Luke talked to many people who knew Jesus personally. He wanted to write down all the answers he could find so people would know for sure that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Many people have written about the things that have happened among us. Those who saw everything from the first and helped teach the Good News have passed these things on to us. ...I have looked with care into these things from the beginning. I have decided it would be good to write them to you one after the other the way they happened. Then you can be sure you know the truth about the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

Luke wrote this gospel around 60-61 A.D., about 30 years after Jesus returned to heaven.

Luke's Gospel is the longest of the four

Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Luke wrote two books: The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. The people who knew Jesus told Luke what they saw in Jesus' life and ministry. Because of Luke's writings, we know so much more about the birth, life, ministry, death, and rising again of Jesus.

As you study these lessons, ask questions, seek answers, and get ready to know more about Jesus!

About the Writers

Judy Hughes wrote lessons 1-5. Judy taught English to internationals in the U.S. and abroad for many years. She and her husband, a retired pastor, now attend First Baptist Church, Belton.

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Luke: The Gospel Story

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Luke: The Gospel Story

Word List

Lesson 1

miracle: an event that cannot be explained by nature; an act of God

research: to carefully study to find and report new information on a subject

revival: the act of coming back to God

salvation: being saved from sin

Lesson 2

glory: the nature of God that is worthy of praise; God's shining-greatness seen as a bright light

manger: an open box that holds food for farm animals

spotlight: a bright light directed on a small area

stable: a place where animals are kept; a barn

Lesson 3

celebrate: to do something special for an important event

devout: loyal and devoted to God

frantic: having or showing a lot of fear and worry

logical: sensible or reasonable

Lesson 4

generous: readily giving money, help and kindness

repent: to be sorry for your sins and determined not to sin again

Lesson 5

shortcut: a quicker, easier way; any way that saves time and energy

substitute: a person or thing put in the place of someone or something else

test: to cause (someone or something) to show how strong or good that person or thing really is

Lesson 6

cruel: hurting others without feeling sorry for it

harshly: harmful because of force or power; not kind

humble: not high in rank or status

missionary: a person who goes to another country to tell others about Jesus

purpose: a goal or a reason

rebelled: past tense of rebel — to oppose or fight against something or someone

synagogue: a Jewish place of worship

Lesson 7

disciple: someone who learns and helps spread the teachings of a famous person

examined: past tense of examine — to look at something closely and carefully

excelled: did better than others at a given job

expectations: feelings or beliefs about how good something or someone will be

ordinary: normal or usual

rabbi: a person trained to teach about Jewish law and religion

Torah: the first five books of the Jewish religious writings

unworthy: not good enough to deserve something

Lesson 8

compassion: a feeling of wanting to help

human nature: a way of thinking and living that is common to people

impact: a powerful effect

natural: usual or expected

opposite: completely different

resources: plural for resource — an ability or an object which allows you to do things that are needed

Luke: The Gospel Story

Word List

selfish: being concerned only for yourself and not for others

series: a number of things that happen one right after the other

Lesson 9

interrupted: past tense of interrupt — to break in and stop something from happening for a time

judgment: saying whether someone is good or bad

parable: a story that teaches a lesson

professional: paid to play a sport or other activity

referee: a person who makes sure that players follow the rules

reputation: the common opinion people have about someone

unusual: not normal

Lesson 10

bold: showing a lack of fear

despair: the feeling of no longer having any hope

experts: plural of expert — someone who has special skill or knowledge in a subject

filth: something that is very dirty, offensive, or disgusting

inheritance: money or property that is received from someone who dies

jealous: feeling or showing an unhappy desire to keep something to oneself

resented: past tense of resent — to be angry or upset about something that seems unfair

unworthy: not good enough to deserve something or someone

Lesson 11

consequence: something that happens as a result of one's actions

cursed: affected by a force that causes bad things to happen

eternal: lasting forever

philosopher: a person who studies the truth about the meaning of life

Lesson 12

before: in front of or ahead of someone or something; also, face to face with someone

crucifixion: a way to kill someone that causes terrible pain and shame being nailed to a cross

crucify: to put to death by nailing or tying the hands and feet to a cross made of wood

Lesson 13

convinced: made to be very sure that something is true

despair: the feeling of having no hope

resurrection: rising from the dead to eternal life with a new kind of body

tomb: a space above or below the ground where one or more bodies are placed

unbelievable: hard or impossible to believe

Christmas Lesson

myth: an idea or story that some think is true but is not true

traditions: something that has been done in the same way year after year, such as eating special foods on holidays, opening presents at Christmas, or singing songs on special days

virgin: a person who has never had sex

Luke: The Gospel Story

Memory Verses

Lesson 1

“For God can do all things.” (Luke 1:37)

Lesson 2

“Greatness and honor to our God in the highest heaven and peace on earth among men who please Him.” (Luke 2:14)

Lesson 3

“Jesus grew strong in mind and body. He grew in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52)

Lesson 4

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Lesson 5

“Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11)

Lesson 6

“The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has put His hand on Me to preach the Good News to poor people.” (Luke 4:18a)

Lesson 7

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will fish for men.’” (Luke 5:10b)

Lesson 8

“Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you.” (Luke 6:31)

Lesson 9

“If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin.” (1 John 1:9)

Lesson 10

“See what great love the Father has for us that He would call us His children. And that is what we are.” (1 John 3:1a)

Lesson 11

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go into the holy nation of God.” (Luke 18:25)

Lesson 12

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.’” (Luke 23:34a)

Lesson 13

“Jesus said to them, ‘These are the things I told you while I was yet with you. All things written about Me in the Law of Moses and in the Books of the early preachers and in the Psalms must happen as they said they would happen.’” (Luke 24:44)

Christmas Lesson

“When they saw the star, they were filled with much joy.” (Matthew 2:10)

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

*Luke:
The Gospel Story*

Lesson 1: Two Miracles and Two Promises

Bible Text

Luke 1:1-38

Memory Verse

“For God can do all things.” (Luke 1:37)

Word List

miracle: an event that cannot be explained by nature; an act of God

research: to carefully study to find and report new information on a subject

revival: the act of coming back to God

salvation: being saved from sin

New parents spend many hours thinking and planning what to name a new baby. Some choose a family name. Some choose a name for the sound of it. But some parents choose a name for its meaning. In today’s lesson, an angel brings the good news of two **miracles**. One baby was the coming Savior. The other baby was sent to prepare the way for the Savior. God gave these babies special names with special meanings.

The Introduction to Luke’s Gospel

(Luke 1:1-4)

Luke was not a Jew. His name is a Greek name. Paul called Luke a “dear doctor.” So we know that Luke was a man of science. Luke learned about Jesus from someone who had seen the Lord.

Many people had written about Jesus. But most did not tell the story of Jesus’ life. They told about the difference Jesus made for them.

Luke put all these stories together. He carefully **researched** the life of Jesus from the beginning. He talked to people who had been with Jesus. He wrote this book for a dear friend whose name means *friend of God*. Luke wanted his friend Theophilus to know the truth. Luke believed the story of Jesus is true and can be trusted.

The Miracle of John and the Promise of Revival (Luke 1:5-23)

Zacharias’ name means *God remembers*. Elizabeth’s name means *God is my wealth*. They were both from a family of priests.

They were both right with God; but they had a problem. They had no children. They were both old now, and their hopes of having children were gone. Jews thought that a couple who could not have children had

been cursed by God. It might have been easy to think that God did not remember them. But they trusted God even if He chose for them to have no children.

Each year Zacharias served as a priest in the temple for two weeks. This time Zacharias had a great honor. He was chosen to put perfume on the altar in the Most Holy Place. He would never get to do this again.

The priest was always alone at the altar. The people prayed outside. They waited for the priest to come out and speak to them.

Suddenly, an angel stood beside the altar. Zacharias was afraid. The angel told him that he and his wife would have a son. It was a miracle for two old people to have a child after so many years of waiting. The angel said to name the baby John. John means *God is showing kindness*.

This child came with a wonderful promise. God would use John to call His people back to Him, just like the early teacher Elijah. There would be a **revival** in the land because of John. He would bring joy and gladness to many people. John would be filled with the Holy Spirit from his birth. What an amazing promise!

But the angel said that they must be careful to raise this child right. He should live a different kind of life. He should never drink wine. Everyone in those days had wine with their meals, but this family would not.

Maybe Zacharias was afraid to hope for a son after so many years of waiting. He wasn't sure he believed what the angel said. So he asked for a sign.

The angel explained that he was Gabriel. He had come all the way from God's presence to stand beside the altar with this message. Surely that was a good enough sign to make Zacharias believe.

But if he needed a sign, Gabriel gave him one. He said Zacharias would not be able to speak until these things happened. When Zacharias came out of the temple, he could not say a word to the people. Every day for nine months, Zacharias would be reminded that God remembered him.

The Miracle of Jesus and the Promise of Salvation (Luke 1:24-38)

Six months later, God sent Gabriel to Nazareth with a most important message. He came to Mary, a young unmarried woman. She was engaged to be married to Joseph. But they had not yet come together as husband and wife.

The angel appeared to Mary and said, "You are honored very much . . . The Lord is with you." Mary wondered what this unusual greeting meant. How was she honored? How was the Lord with her?

Then the angel said she would become a mother. Mary wondered how that could be.

She was not yet married. She had never been with a man. She did not disbelieve what the angel said, but she wanted to know *how* it would happen.

Maybe Mary wanted to know what she should do to help God. Gabriel told Mary that God would do everything. Mary needed only to be willing. God would do the rest. Mary took a great risk to agree to be used by God like this. But she said, “I am willing . . .”

Then the angel told Mary what had already happened in Elizabeth’s life. It was a miracle for an old woman to have a baby. Mary was a young woman, but her baby would be the greatest miracle of all. He was the Son of God.

Gabriel told Mary to name her baby Jesus because it means *Our God Saves*. Jesus brought **salvation**. Jesus came to save us from our sin.

Things to Think About

1. What is the story of your name? Why did your parents give you that name? Does it mean something special?
2. Who has made a difference in your life? What did he or she do to make your life better?
3. What changes could you make in your life to draw closer to God?
4. Have you yielded to God and let Him save you from sin?
5. What is there in your life that only God can do?

Things to Remember

Why did God tell Zacharias so much about how to raise John? This old couple must have known how to raise a child. God wanted John to grow up in a special way because he had a special purpose. John came to bring revival and call the Jews back to God. Revival never comes without God’s people doing things God’s way. Revival comes when we change the way we live.

Why did the angel *not* give Mary a long list of things to do? Jesus came to bring the free gift of salvation. Only God can bring salvation. Mary did not have to do anything but be willing to let God use her.

God never forces Himself on us. We do not have to work to be saved. All we have to do is to be willing to let God work in us. Then we see the miracle of salvation for ourselves. These are truths we can trust forever.

Luke 1:1-38

1 Many people have written about the things that have happened among us.

2 Those who saw everything from the first and helped teach the Good News have passed these things on to us.

3 Dear Theophilus, I have looked with care into these things from the beginning. I have decided it would be good to write them to you one after the other the way they happened.

4 Then you can be sure you know the truth about the things you have been taught.

5 When Herod was king of the country of Judea, there was a Jewish religious leader named Zacharias. He worked for Abijah. His wife was of the family group of Aaron. Her name was Elizabeth.

6 They were right with God and obeyed the Jewish Law and did what the Lord said to do.

7 They had no children because Elizabeth was not able to have a child. Both of them were older people.

8 Zacharias was doing his work as a religious leader for God.

9 The religious leaders were given certain kinds of work to do. Zacharias was chosen to go to the house of God to burn special perfume.

10 Many people stood outside praying during the time the special perfume was burning.

11 Zacharias saw an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar where the special perfume was burning.

12 When he saw the angel, Zacharias was troubled and afraid.

13 The angel said to him, "Zacharias, do not be afraid. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will give birth to a son. You are to name him John.

14 You will be glad and have much joy. Many people will be happy because he is born.

15 He will be great in the sight of the Lord and will never drink wine or any strong drink. Even from his birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit.

16 Many of the Jews will be turned to the Lord their God by him.

17 He will be the one to go in the spirit and power of Elijah before Christ comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers back to their children. He will teach those who do not obey to be right with God. He will get people ready for the Lord."

18 Zacharias said to the angel, "How can I know this for sure? I am old and my wife is old also."

19 The angel said to him, "My name is Gabriel. I stand near God. He sent me to talk to you and bring to you this good news.

20 See! You will not be able to talk until the day this happens. It is because you did not

believe my words. What I said will happen at the right time.”

21 The people outside were waiting. They were surprised and wondered why Zacharias stayed so long in the house of God.

22 When he came out, he could not talk to them. They knew he had seen something special from God while he was in the house of God. He tried to talk to them with his hands but could say nothing.

23 When his days of working in the house of God were over, he went to his home.

24 Some time later Elizabeth knew she was to become a mother. She kept herself hidden for five months. She said,

25 “This is what the Lord has done for me. He has looked on me and has taken away my shame from among men.”

26 Six months after Elizabeth knew she was to become a mother, Gabriel was sent from God to Nazareth. Nazareth was a town in the country of Galilee.

27 He went to a woman who had never had a man. Her name was Mary. She was promised in marriage to a man named Joseph. Joseph was of the family of David.

28 The angel came to her and said, “You are honored very much. You are a favored woman. The Lord is with you. You are chosen from among many women.”

29 When she saw the angel, she was troubled at his words. She thought about what had been said.

30 The angel said to her, “Mary, do not be afraid. You have found favor with God.

31 See! You are to become a mother and have a Son. You are to give Him the name Jesus.

32 He will be great. He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the place where His early father David sat.

33 He will be King over the family of Jacob forever and His nation will have no end.”

34 Mary said to the angel, “How will this happen? I have never had a man.”

35 The angel said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come on you. The power of the Most High will cover you. The holy Child you give birth to will be called the Son of God.

36 “See, your cousin Elizabeth, as old as she is, is going to give birth to a child. She was not able to have children before, but now she is in her sixth month.

37 For God can do all things.”

38 Then Mary said, “I am willing to be used of the Lord. Let it happen to me as you have said.” Then the angel went away from her.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 2: The Birth of the Savior

Bible Text

Luke 2:1-20

Memory Verse

“Greatness and honor to our God in the highest heaven and peace on earth among men who please Him.” (Luke 2:14)

Word List

glory: the nature of God that is worthy of praise; God’s shining-greatness seen as a bright light

manger: an open box that holds food for farm animals

spotlight: a bright light directed on a small area

stable: a place where animals are kept; a barn

Christmas cards do not always tell the true story about the night Jesus was born.

Even the carols suggest a story that does not match the facts.

The birth is shown as a calm and peaceful event. All was happy and bright. The night was clear. Bethlehem was sleeping. The cattle were standing by. And the sweet baby slept without making a sound.

The **stable** was clean and light. There

were none of the usual smells of a stable. Well-dressed shepherds came with lovely lambs in their arms. We have changed the story so much that it is hard to see the real story of the birth of our Savior as told by Luke.

The Savior Is Born (Luke 2:1-7)

Mary and Joseph were getting ready for the birth of the baby. Joseph was not the father of the baby. The Holy Spirit had given the Son of God to Mary. They were married but they were not living like a husband and wife. They wanted to do things exactly right for God’s Son.

Maybe Mary prepared a room for the new baby. Joseph made things from wood. Maybe he made a cradle.

Then the ruler of the Roman Empire made a new law. He said that everyone must go to their hometown to have their names written in a book. He wanted their names so he could tax them.

Both Joseph and Mary were from David’s family. His hometown was Bethlehem, but they lived in Nazareth, which was 90 miles away.

Joseph could have gone and left Mary alone at home. But he did not. Mary made the long, hard trip with him. It would have taken them three days or more to travel 90 miles.

It was close to the time for Jesus’ birth,

so it was a hard trip for Mary. They must have wondered why God would let the ruler make such a law at this time.

The ruler did not know God, but God used him. Micah 5:2 said the Savior would be born in Bethlehem. God planned for Jesus to be born in Bethlehem 700 years before the ruler made this new law.

Bethlehem was very crowded with all the members of David's family. There were no hotels in those days. People invited travelers into their homes. But even family members did not offer Mary and Joseph a good place to have a baby.

Luke does not say where they were staying. We think it might have been a stable. There was no cradle for baby Jesus. Mary put Him in a **manger**. This is a place where animals are fed. There might have been animals in the stable that night.

Mary may have wished that God's Son was born in a nicer place. She wrapped the baby warmly. No one helped her. Maybe she was sad as she looked at that beautiful baby. Maybe she told God how sorry she was that His Son did not have a better place to be born. Maybe she shed a tear because no one in David's family was there to welcome Him.

Good News of Great Joy (Luke 2:8-14)

Mary and Joseph could not see what God was doing just outside of Bethlehem. In

the dark night, shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. These sheep would be used in the temple. The temple leaders thought that shepherds were dirty. They could raise the sheep, but shepherds could not worship in the temple.

Suddenly, something like a **spotlight** from heaven was shining down on them. The dark night was lit up with the **glory** of God. The shepherds were afraid.

An angel spoke to them. He said that night the Savior had been born in Bethlehem. He is Christ the Lord. He said this was good news that would bring joy to all people. The angel said they could go and see the Savior with their own eyes. They would know it was Him when they found a baby wrapped in cloth and lying in a manger.

Then an army of angels was in the sky! They all began to say the same thing. "Greatness and honor to our God in the highest heaven and peace on earth among men who please Him." The angels knew that there was no peace on earth.

We are all enemies of God because of our sin. God's army of angels came to declare peace. It was Good News that would make all people glad! God turns His enemies into His children through Jesus. Only God through His Son can bring us peace.

Shepherds Worship and Witness

(Luke 2:15-20)

Then the hillside was dark and silent again. The angels left and the shepherds were there alone with the sheep. But everything had changed. They could not just lie down and go back to sleep. They had to go see the Savior.

They said “Let’s go *now!*” They had the Good News right from the Lord Himself. They left their sheep and hurried off to see the baby. They may have searched all over Bethlehem. They may have found several babies wrapped in cloths.

But there was only one baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. No one puts a new born baby in a dirty manger. No one would expect the holy Son of God to come into a dirty world and make us right with God.

Things to Think About

1. What surprises you about the Christmas story?
2. How would you prepare for the birth of a baby into your family?
3. Have you ever been sad or discouraged, only to discover that God was working in places and ways you could not see?
4. In what unusual places have you worshipped Christ?
5. Have you shared the Good News with someone recently?

Mary’s sad heart was suddenly full of joy. *Angels* brought the Good News of Jesus’ birth! Mary never forgot what happened that night. She thought about what the shepherds said for many years to come. Mary and Joseph were no longer alone.

The shepherds were so excited about this Good News that they told everyone. Everyone received the news with great joy. The shepherds who could not worship in the temple worshipped God kneeling beside His manger. Even as they returned to that hillside, the shepherds kept thanking God for the gift of His Son.

Things to Remember

The story of Jesus’ birth is surprising. Would the Son of Almighty God really come to earth as a helpless baby? Would He really come at such a humble place and troubled time? We are surprised that simple shepherds were visited by angels.

The most surprising thing about the birth of Jesus is what it means for us. Holy God sent His only Son out of the beauty and glory of heaven into a dirty world. We are surprised that we can find peace with God simply by believing in His Son. His joy and peace through His Son still surprises us today.

Luke 2:1-20

1 In those days Caesar Augustus sent out word that the name of every person in the Roman nation must be written in the books of the nation.

2 This first writing took place while Quirinius was ruler of Syria.

3 So all the people went to their own cities to have their names written in the books of the nation.

4 Joseph went up from the town of Nazareth in the country of Galilee to the town of Bethlehem. It was known as the city of David. He went there because he was from the family of David.

5 Joseph went to have his and Mary's names written in the books of the nation. Mary was his promised wife and soon to become a mother.

6 While they were there in Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth to her baby.

7 Her first son was born. She put cloth around Him and laid Him in a place where cattle are fed. There was no room for them in the place where people stay for the night.

8 In the same country there were shepherds in the fields. They were watching their flocks of sheep at night.

9 The angel of the Lord came to them. The shining-greatness of the Lord shone around them. They were very much afraid.

10 The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. See! I bring you good news of great joy which is for all people.

11 Today, One Who saves from the punishment of sin has been born in the city of David. He is Christ the Lord.

12 There will be something special for you to see. This is the way you will know Him. You will find the Baby with cloth around Him, lying in a place where cattle are fed."

13 At once many angels from heaven were seen, along with the angel, giving thanks to God. They were saying,

14 "Greatness and honor to our God in the highest heaven and peace on earth among men who please Him."

15 The angels went from the shepherds back to heaven. The shepherds said to each other, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see what has happened. The Lord has told us about this."

16 They went fast and found Mary and Joseph. They found the Baby lying in a place where cattle are fed.

17 When they saw the Child, they told what the angel said about Him.

18 All who heard it were surprised at what the shepherds told them.

19 But Mary hid all these words in her heart. She thought about them much.

20 The shepherds went back full of joy. They thanked God for all they had heard and seen. It happened as the angel had told them.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 3: The Surprising Savior

Bible Text
Luke 2:39-52

Memory Verse

“Jesus grew strong in mind and body. He grew in favor with God and man.” (Luke 2:52)

Word List

celebrate: to do something special for an important event

devout: loyal and devoted to God

frantic: having or showing a lot of fear and worry

logical: sensible or reasonable

Like Jesus, I grew up in a very **devout** home. My father was the pastor of a growing church. My mother played the piano in the services. As a young child, I sat on the front row so they could see what I was doing. Unlike Jesus, I went to sleep in church.

My mother and father were excited as they left church one Sunday. My father thought I was with my mother. My mother thought I was with my father. When they got home, they were surprised that I was not with

either one of them. They were frantic. They thought, “How could we have been so careless? How could we have left her?” They called their friends. No one knew where I was. They searched all over town. Finally, they returned to the church. They found me still sleeping on the front row.

Raised in a Devout Home (Luke 2:39-42)

Luke does not tell us much about the childhood of Jesus. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth. They loved the Lord and wanted their children to know and love God.

Jesus was the Son of God, but he was a real boy too. As his body grew, his mind grew strong, and he was wiser than other boys. Jesus also grew in spirit, and God was pleased. Jesus was well liked by the people around Him.

Devout Jewish families **celebrated** three major feasts each year in Jerusalem. Men who lived within 20 miles were required to go every year. But men who lived far away might go only once in their lifetimes.

The most important feast was called **Passover**. It remembered how death passed over the homes of the Jewish slaves in Egypt who obeyed and trusted God. Every spring for eight days, the people gave thanks to God. They praised Him for protecting them from death and setting them free from slavery.

We know Mary and Joseph were

devout because they went to Jerusalem *every* year for Passover. The trip was long and took three to five days. Women did not have to go. Joseph could have gone alone. But every year Mary went with him.

The roads were crowded with people. The women walked together. And the men followed to watch over them. Each evening, families came together to spend the night.

When Jesus was twelve, His parents took Him to Jerusalem with them. He could go into the temple with the men. He could listen and talk with the best teachers in the land.

In those days, teachers sat down and waited for students to ask questions. Then the teachers answered the questions in a way that made students think deeper. Students had to come prepared with good questions. Their questions were not, “who, when, where?” Good students asked “why” and “how” questions.

Found Worshipping (Luke 2:43-52)

When the eight days were over, Mary and Joseph started home. They must have been excited about the Passover. They may have talked about all that had happened in those eight days. Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph. Joseph thought He was with Mary.

They traveled all day. When families came together that evening, Mary and Joseph

were surprised that Jesus was not with them. How could they have been so careless? No one knew where Jesus was. They were filled with fear for their son.

The next morning they started back to Jerusalem. They must have been **frantic** as they hurried to find their son. On the third day, they went back to the temple. They were surprised to find Jesus still sitting and talking with the teachers.

Other boys might have been playing ball in the streets. Other children might have been afraid. But Jesus was not afraid.

They knew Jesus had wisdom that other boys did not have. But they did not expect Him to surprise even the wisest teachers. Jesus made them think deeply. They wondered how He could understand so much at such a young age.

Mary reacted like any other mother. She was relieved to find her son. Maybe she wanted to hold Him tightly. But she was also upset that Jesus had not done what she expected Him to do. She asked the question any mother would ask. “Why have You done this to us?”

Mary focused on how Jesus had made her feel. She was frantic and afraid. She knew Jesus was the Son of God. But she wanted Jesus to respect Joseph like a father. Mary wanted Jesus to honor His mother and father

as God's Law commanded.

Jesus did not argue. He reminded her that she could have saved herself a lot of worry. The most **logical** place to find Jesus was in God's House. He knew that His real Father was God.

Mary and Joseph did not really understand what Jesus said. Did He already know that He was the Son of God? Was He ready to go and do His Father's will at such a young age?

Jesus honored His parents. He went home and obeyed them. He grew strong in His mind and body. He grew to be respected by other people. Most important, Jesus grew in His understanding of God, His Father.

Things to Think About

1. Have you ever experienced the fear of losing a child or being lost as a child?
2. What surprises you most about Jesus?
3. What questions do you want answered by God? Have you come prepared to ask questions and think deeply about God's Word?
4. How would God's plan for human growth change the way we teach our children today?
5. How would God's plan for families change things in your life?

Things to Remember

Jesus still surprises those who spend time with Him. He is the most remarkable person who ever lived on this earth. But God desires for us all to be like His Son.

He wants all of us to grow the way Jesus grew. We all must grow strong in our bodies and minds. Our hearts must be strong enough to be respected by other people. And our spirits must grow strong enough to be approved by God.

God has a design for families. He provided both a mother and father here on earth for His Son. He wants both mothers and fathers to raise children who know Him. Schools and churches are not the best teachers. Mothers and fathers who love God are the best teachers as they answer important questions their children ask. Parents can teach their children to think deeply about God's Word and His Ways.

Luke 2:39-52

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything the Law said to do, they went back to Nazareth in Galilee.

40 The Child grew and became strong in spirit. He was filled with wisdom and the loving-favor of God was on Him.

41 His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the special religious gathering to remember how the Jews left Egypt.

42 When He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem as they had done before.

43 When the days of the special supper were over, they started back to their town. But the boy Jesus was still in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it.

44 They thought Jesus was with the others of the group. They walked for one day. Then they looked for Him among their family and friends.

45 When they could not find Jesus, they turned back to Jerusalem to look for Him.

46 Three days later they found Him in the house of God. He was sitting among the teachers. He was hearing what they said and asking questions.

47 All those who heard Him were surprised and wondered about His understanding and at what He said.

48 When His parents saw Him, they were surprised. His mother said to Him, "My Son,

why have You done this to us? See! Your father and I have had much sorrow looking for You."

49 He said to them, "Why were you looking for Me? Do you not know that I must be in My Father's house?"

50 They did not understand the things He said to them.

51 He went with them to Nazareth and obeyed them. But His mother kept all these words in her heart.

52 Jesus grew strong in mind and body. He grew in favor with God and men.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 4: Preparing the Way for the Savior

Bible Text

Luke 3:1-20

Memory Verse

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Word List

generous: readily giving money, help and kindness

repent: to be sorry for your sins and determined not to sin again

When runners run a race, there are three commands that are given: “Get Ready,” “Get Set,” and “Go!” Runners get ready when they put their feet into the racing blocks. They get set by taking the proper starting position in the blocks. They begin running when they hear the command, “Go!”

God knew that people would need to get ready for Jesus. He sent John to prepare the way. John’s message would make the

hearts of the people ready to receive the message of Jesus. After they received Christ and were changed by Him, they would change the world around them with the Good News.

Get Ready (Luke 3:1-6)

Luke tells us when these things happened by telling who the rulers were. The 15th year of Tiberius would have been about 28 AD. Some of these rulers met Jesus later. Annas and Caiaphas plotted to kill Him. Herod cut off John’s head and heard the charges against Jesus. Pilate said Jesus should die on a cross.

John was the miracle son of Elizabeth and Zacharias. It had been 400 years since God had sent someone with a message. People believed that when God sent a message again, it would be the time for His Son to come.

John lived alone in the desert until the Word of God came to him. Then he moved to the Jordan River. The people came to the river to hear what God told John to say.

John said people should **repent**. This means to change your mind, to agree with God about your sins. You change your heart when you are sorry and ask God to forgive your sins. You change your life when you start living like God would want you to. God forgives our sins when we repent.

When the people repented, John

baptized them in the Jordan River. Being put under the water did not wash away sin or save the people. But it showed everyone what had happened in their minds, hearts and lives.

Before John came, Jews did not get baptized. But Gentiles who decided to become Jews got baptized as a sign of their decision. John's baptism was a sign that a change had happened in anyone's mind, heart and life. This was something new to the Jews. Some thought this kind of baptism was not for the Jews.

God had planned this message long before John was born. The early preacher Isaiah said that someone would come to prepare the way for God's Son. He used a picture of people getting the road ready for a king. They smoothed out the road so that the king could pass by easily. John smoothed out the hearts of the people. When the way was smooth, people could see God's salvation in Jesus.

Get Set (Luke 3:7-14)

But the people would not be set to receive Jesus unless their lives changed. To repent means to stop going the wrong way and turn around to go the right way.

Many people came out to the river. But John knew that some of them had not really repented. He called them a family of snakes. Being baptized does not forgive your sins or

change your life. Wet sinners are still sinners.

Some people said that God would not judge the Jews. They thought they could live any way they wanted. They thought that God would ignore their sin because they were Jews.

John said God could make anyone His child. His love and forgiveness were for all people. John warned that God was already judging their wrong thoughts and actions.

So some of the people began asking John what they should do. We show our changed minds and hearts by the way we live. John called this good fruit. Good fruit is to be **generous**, to share what we have. We do not have be greedy by wanting more than we need.

Tax collectors came to the river to hear John. They were Jews who worked for the Romans. The other Jews hated the tax collectors because many were not honest. They charged more taxes than necessary and kept the extra money. John told them to be honest and not cheat people.

He told the soldiers not to take money from people by force. They should never tell lies about people. To be content with what we have is a sign of the change in our hearts and minds.

Go! (Luke 3:15-20)

The people were ready for the Son of God to come. They began to wonder if maybe John was the Son that God had promised to send. But John said his job was to prepare the way for Jesus. John wanted the people to know he was unimportant and Jesus was very important. He said he was not fit to untie the sandals of the Son of God. John was humble and content with what God had given him to do.

John could not really see into the hearts of the people he baptized. But Jesus can see into our hearts. He can separate the sinners from those who truly repent. God sends the Holy Spirit to make us clean when we have repented of our sins. His Holy Spirit gives us the power to change our lives.

John was not afraid to speak the truth

Things to Think About

1. Herod tried to stop John's message. How do people today try to stop the message of Jesus Christ?
2. What makes it hard to repent and change our lives?
3. What are some things we put our trust in today instead of God?
4. How content are you with what you have and the plan God has for your life?
5. Whose heart does God want you to prepare for Jesus to enter?

to the rulers. Herod took his brother's wife. John told him that was wrong. Herod did not want to hear that he was a sinner. He tried to stop John's message by putting him in prison. One day his sinful heart would even lead him to cut off John's head.

Things to Remember

We still need to repent today, but not just inside our heads and hearts. It shows in the way we live. God's children are humble and generous. We are not greedy. We are content with what we have and with what God has for us to do. We stop living in sinful ways. How we treat others is a sign of a heart that has repented and belongs to God.

John's message was not always gentle, but it was always good news. It is still Good News today. We can be ready for Jesus when we hear the Good News of His offer of forgiveness. When our minds, hearts and lives have changed, we know that God has put His Holy Spirit in our lives.

Luke 3:1-20

1 Tiberius Caesar had been ruler for fifteen years. Pontius Pilate was ruler of the country of Judea. Herod was the ruler of the country of Galilee. His brother Philip was the ruler of the countries of Ituraea and Trachonitis. Lysanias was the ruler of the country of Abilene.

2 Annas and Caiaphas were the head religious leaders. The Word of God came to John the Baptist, the son of Zacharias. John was in the desert.

3 He went into all the country around the Jordan River. He preached that people should be baptized because they were sorry for their sins and had turned from them, and they would be forgiven.

4 The early preacher Isaiah wrote these words: "His voice calls out in the desert. 'Make the way ready for the Lord. Make the road straight for Him!

5 Every valley will be filled and every mountain and hill will be brought down. The turns in the road will be made straight and the rough places will be made smooth.

6 And all men will see God saving people from the punishment of their sins."

7 John said to the people who came to be baptized by him, "You family of snakes! Who told you how to keep from the anger of God that is coming?

8 Do something to let me see that you have turned from your sins. Do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you, God can make children for Abraham out of these stones.

9 Even now the ax is on the root of the trees. Every tree that does not give good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire."

10 The people asked him, "Then what should we do?"

11 He answered them, "If you have two coats, give one to him who has none. If you have food, you must share some."

12 Tax-gatherers came to be baptized also. They asked him, "Teacher, what are we to do?"

13 He said to them, "Do not take more money from people than you should."

14 Also soldiers asked him, "What are we to do?" He answered them, "Take no money from anyone by using your own strength. Do not lie about anyone. Be happy with the pay you get."

15 The people were looking for something to happen. They were thinking in their hearts about John the Baptist. They wondered if he might be the Christ.

16 But John said to all of them, "I baptize you with water. There is One coming Who is greater than I. I am not good enough to get down and help Him take off His shoes. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.

17 He comes ready to clean the grain. He will gather the grain and clean it all. He will put the clean grain into a building. But He will burn that which is no good with a fire that cannot be put out."

18 John spoke much more as he preached the Good News to the people.

19 He had also spoken sharp words to Herod the ruler because of Herodias. She was his brother Philip's wife. And John spoke to Herod about all the wrongs he had done.

20 To all these, Herod added another sin by putting John in prison.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 5: The Tempted Savior

Bible Text

Luke 4:1-13

Memory Verse

“Your Word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11)

Word List

shortcut: a quicker, easier way; any way that saves time and energy

substitute: a person or thing put in the place of someone or something else

test: to cause (someone or something) to show how strong or good that person or thing really is

What if we could not make the choice to either love God or to refuse Him? What if we had no choice but to do things God’s way? God gave us the freedom to choose right or wrong. He loves us enough to give us a choice to love Him or to reject Him. He will never take that freedom away. He never tries to buy our love. He wants us to choose His way because we love Him.

It would have been easier for God to demand that we obey Him. But God wants

our hearts to be cleaned from sin. He could have bought our love by giving us what we need. But God wants us to know that we are more than just physical bodies. He refused to do anything less than give His only Son to set us free from sin and death.

In today’s lesson, we see how Jesus handled temptation from the devil. The devil is a real being. He is a liar and a thief. He tries to steal our relationship with our Father. He wants to destroy our lives. Jesus was not afraid of the devil because He knew God’s Word and trusted His Father.

No Shortcuts (Luke 4:1-4)

Jesus was baptized by John at the Jordan River. He heard the voice of His Father say, “This is my much-loved Son. I am very happy with You.” Then the Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert for 40 days. During that time the devil came and tempted Jesus in three ways.

Jesus did not eat any food in all that time. At the end of the 40 days, He was very hungry. The devil told Jesus to prove He was the Son of God by turning stones into bread. This would not have been hard. Jesus could do anything. Later He would feed thousands of people at once.

But this was not really about hunger or food. The devil was tempting Jesus to take a **shortcut**. Jesus could save time and effort by

just turning the stones to bread. But the devil was really tempting Jesus to take a shortcut to the hearts of people. They would love Him if He gave away free bread.

Jesus knew the devil really wanted to stop Him from being the Savior of the world. This temptation was about more than Jesus' physical body needing food. It was about the war He came to wage against the devil. He came to defeat the devil for all of us. There were no shortcuts to winning that war.

Jesus set the example of how to win when we are tempted to sin. He quoted the Word of God. "Man is not to live by bread alone." We are more spirit than anything else. Jesus reminded us that life is more than physical bodies.

God's Word is powerful. Real life comes from God's Word. We can resist the devil if we know God's Word. There are no shortcuts to our relationship with God the Father. Just like Jesus, we need to hide God's Word in our hearts. It's our best weapon against the devil.

No Substitutes (Luke 4:5-8)

The devil is a liar. He lied when he said he could give Jesus power and greatness. Real power and real greatness come from God alone. The devil offered a **substitute** for power by using force.

Rulers of nations try to force people to

be good. Some churches try to force people to be good. They say people have to work or follow rules to have a relationship with God.

The use of force always comes with punishment. If we disobey the laws, we get fined or go to jail. Jesus came to save us from the punishment of sin. He came to reward us with life with Him forever. The only way to win over sin and death was for Jesus to die on the cross.

By going to the cross and defeating death, Jesus received all the power in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). The devil could not give him that kind of power. Putting anything or anyone else in God's place would be losing the war against sin and death.

The only way for us to defeat the devil is to trust in Jesus our Savior. We always have the choice. God never forces us to follow Him.

No Tests (Luke 4:9-13)

Next the devil tempted Jesus to **test** God's love and care by jumping off the high point of the temple. He tried to get Jesus to question if God really loved Him. The devil's test was to see if God would send angels to rescue Jesus. Surely if the people saw angels come to rescue Jesus, they would believe.

But the devil twisted the Scripture. It does not mean that we can put ourselves in danger so that God will save us. God rescued

Jesus from death *after* He suffered and died on the cross. Jesus answered the devil again with the Word of God.

Sometimes people today want to say that God rescues His children from suffering. But as long as we live on this earth there will be troubles. When suffering comes we wonder if God has forgotten about us. The devil wants us to question God's love.

But God is always here with us. Sometimes we see His hand most clearly when times are hard. Jesus was willing to trust God even if it meant He would die on the cross. Faith does not test. Faith trusts.

Things to Remember

Jesus' temptations help us know that we are not alone in the fight against the devil. The devil tempts us with things related to our bodies. He lies and misuses Scripture. And he puts questions in our minds about God's love

and care. We can beat him if we follow Jesus' example of solid faith and trust.

God's Word has the power to stop the attacks of the devil. We must hide His Word in our hearts so that we know what God wants us to be like. We must hold firmly to our faith that God cares for us.

Jesus refused to take a shortcut. He refused to put something else in God's place. And Jesus refused to make God do what He wanted. Jesus knew He would go to the cross, but He trusted that His Father knew what was best. Jesus our Savior is the example of a life that pleases our Father.

Things to Think About

1. How are we tempted to take shortcuts to satisfy our needs?
2. What are some things we substitute for God and worship?
3. What does it mean to test God? How do we test His love for us?
4. What are some Scripture verses that help you stand strong against the devil?

Luke 4:1-13

1 Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit when He returned from the Jordan River. Then He was led by the Holy Spirit to a desert.

2 He was tempted by the devil for forty days and He ate nothing during that time. After that He was hungry.

3 The devil said to Him, “If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to be made into bread.”

4 Jesus said to him, “It is written, ‘Man is not to live by bread alone.’”

5 The devil took Jesus up on a high mountain. He had Jesus look at all the nations of the world at one time.

6 The devil said to Jesus, “I will give You all this power and greatness. It has been given to me. I can give it to anyone I want to.

7 If You will worship me, all this will be Yours.”

8 Jesus said to the devil, “Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, ‘You must worship the Lord your God. You must obey Him only.’”

9 Then the devil took Jesus up to Jerusalem. He had Jesus stand on the highest part of the house of God. The devil said to Jesus, “If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here.

10 For it is written, ‘He has told His angels to care for You and to keep You.

11 In their hands they will hold You up. Then Your foot will not hit against a stone.’”

12 Jesus said to the devil, “It is written, ‘You must not tempt the Lord your God.’”

13 When the devil finished tempting Jesus in every way, he went away from Jesus for awhile.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

*Luke:
The Gospel Story*

Lesson 6: Jesus' Purpose

Bible Text

Luke 4:4-24, 28-30

Memory Verse

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has put His hand on Me to preach the Good News to poor people." (Luke 4:18a)

Word List

cruel: hurting others without feeling sorry for it

harshly: harmful because of force or power; not kind

humble: not high in rank or status

missionary: a person who goes to another country to tell others about Jesus

purpose: a goal or a reason

rebelled: past tense of rebel — to oppose or fight against something or someone

synagogue: a Jewish place of worship

William Knibb was a Baptist

missionary from England. He arrived in Jamaica in November 1824. In Jamaica, Knibb found that slaves were treated **harshly**. He felt very angry about the things he saw happening to slaves. Knibb decided he must

act to help slaves in Jamaica. This became the main **purpose** of his ministry there.

In 1831, the slaves in Jamaica **rebelled** against their **cruel** owners. Many people blamed Knibb for these problems. They said that he encouraged the slaves to fight back. People in Jamaica turned against Knibb. They did not approve of Knibb's purpose in helping the slaves. They made things very hard for him. They wanted to punish him. They put him in prison for helping the slaves.

Knibb was finally released from prison. When he returned to England, he kept working to end slavery. He spoke in front of the British government. He asked the British government to free slaves. He said slaves should also be paid fairly for their work.

In 1838, the British finally ended their system of slavery. William Knibb never forgot his purpose. After many years, his work brought change. It had not been easy. Many had worked against him. But Knibb achieved his goal. The ugliness of slavery was finally ended. Knowing this goal was met brought Knibb much joy.

Jesus Returns Home (Luke 4:14-16)

Like William Knibb, Jesus had an important purpose. In his Gospel, Luke told many things about Jesus' purpose. The people from Jesus' hometown did not know much about His purpose. He had left their town as a

little-known carpenter. Now many people throughout the country knew Jesus. People from other towns talked about Him and listened to His teachings. Now Jesus was returning to His home in Nazareth.

The people in Nazareth had many questions. Like others, they heard about Jesus' teachings and His miracles. They were excited to see Jesus again. They were excited that so many others knew about this man from their town. They were happy someone from Nazareth was so important.

Because Jesus was so important, they invited Him to read from the Scripture at their **synagogue**. This was a high honor. The synagogue was the center of Jewish life. It was a place of worship. It was also a school, a community center, and a court. During worship, any man could read and explain the Scripture. But sometimes, a special teacher was invited. This is how Jesus was invited to read and teach in Nazareth.

Jesus States His Purpose (Luke 4:17-21)

Jesus read from the words written by the early preacher, Isaiah. Jesus might have picked this passage Himself. The synagogue leaders might have picked it for Him. Either way, these words were very meaningful to Jesus' life.

The Jewish people knew that the words of Isaiah told what the Savior sent from God would be able to do: preach the Good News, heal sad people, tell people who were being held they could be set free, make blind people see and set free those who were in trouble (Luke 4:18).

These words from the early preacher Isaiah explained Jesus' purpose. Jesus understood that God sent Him to tell the Good News. God sent Jesus to save people from the punishment of sin. God sent Jesus to all people. God sent Jesus to the rich and the poor. God did not send Jesus only to those with much power and honor. He also sent Jesus to **humble** people who had little power and honor from others.

Jesus is still good news for all people everywhere! Through Jesus, "men can receive favor with the Lord" (v. 19). All people can be saved from the punishment of sin. Jesus brings freedom and healing to the blind, the poor, and the sad-hearted. The people in Nazareth must have been surprised to hear Jesus' words. They must have been shocked when Jesus said He would complete God's promises.

In front of everyone, Jesus clearly stated His purpose. He let everyone know that He was God's chosen Savior. He told everyone that God's Spirit was on Him. This

would be a hard thing for people from Nazareth to understand. After all, they only knew Jesus as a simple working man from their small village. Now they would have to consider Jesus' purpose very carefully.

People Reject Jesus' Purpose (Luke 4:21-24, 28-30)

The Jewish people had waited a very long time for the promised Savior. The early teachers told about the promised Savior. But it had been about 400 years since any of the early teachers last spoke. Now, Jesus was inviting them to believe that God's promise was being fulfilled. How would they respond? Would they accept Jesus' words? Would they believe in His power and purpose?

Jesus questioned what was in their hearts. He said something they would all understand. He stated a common Jewish proverb: "Doctor, heal yourself" (v. 23). This meant that one should not do for others what he refused to do for himself or for his own

Things to Think About

1. How would you explain Jesus' purpose to someone who does not know Jesus?
2. How would you describe the purpose of your own life?
3. Why is it hard for some to accept Jesus' purpose?
4. What can you do to share Jesus' purpose with people who are different from you?

family. In other words, the people of Nazareth might expect Jesus to do the same miracles for them which He did in other places. Jesus was worried that his hometown might only embrace Him if He did what they wanted.

He thought they might not care about His purpose to save people from the punishment of sin. He thought they might only care about what He could do for them. Sadly, Jesus was right. The people of Nazareth did not accept Jesus' purpose. Instead, they were angry with Jesus' words. And they forced him out of their town.

Things to Remember

Jesus had an important purpose. He came to save *all* people from the punishment of sin. *All* means *everyone*. The rich. The powerful. The homeless. The sick. The poor. The prisoners. The old. The young. Everyone.

And Jesus invites us to join Him in telling others about this great purpose, too!

But many people reject Jesus' purpose. Some do not believe Jesus can save people from the punishment of sin. Some do not even believe sin is a problem. Others do not believe everyone deserves God's forgiveness. The people of Nazareth did not respond to Jesus' purpose with willing hearts. They missed God's chosen Savior even though he lived among them. What a sad thing! How will you respond to Jesus today?

Luke 4:14-24; 28-30

14 Jesus went back to Galilee in the power of the Holy Spirit. People talked about Him so much that He was well-known through all the country.

15 Jesus taught in their places of worship and was honored by all people.

16 Jesus came to Nazareth where He had grown up. As He had done before, He went into the Jewish place of worship on the Day of Rest. Then He stood up to read.

17 Someone handed Him the book of the early preacher Isaiah. He opened it and found the place where it was written,

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is on Me. He has put His hand on Me to preach the Good News to poor people. He has sent Me to heal those with a sad heart. He has sent Me to tell those who are being held that they can go free. He has sent Me to make the blind to see and to free those who are held because of trouble.

19 He sent Me to tell of the time when men can receive favor with the Lord.”

20 Jesus closed the book. Then He gave it back to the leader and sat down. All those in the Jewish place of worship kept their eyes on Him.

21 Then He began to say to them, “The Holy Writings you have just heard have been completed today.”

22 They all spoke well of Jesus and agreed with the words He spoke. They said, “Is not

this the son of Joseph?”

23 He said to them, “I wonder if you will tell this old saying to Me, ‘Doctor, heal Yourself. What You did in the city of Capernaum, do in Your own country!’”

24 He said, “A man who speaks for God is not respected in his own country.

...

28 All those in the Jewish place of worship were angry when they heard His words.

29 They got up and took Jesus out of town to the top of a high hill. They wanted to throw Him over the side.

30 But Jesus got away from among them and went on His way.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

*Luke:
The Gospel Story*

Lesson 7: Following Jesus

Bible Text

Luke 5:1-11

Memory Verse

“Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid. From now on you will fish for men.’” (Luke 5:10b)

Word List

disciple: someone who learns and helps spread the teachings of a famous person

examined: past tense of examine — to look at something closely and carefully

excelled: did better than others at a given job

expectations: feelings or beliefs about how good something or someone will be

ordinary: normal or usual

rabbi: a person trained to teach about Jewish law and religion

Torah: the first five books of the Jewish religious writings

unworthy: not good enough to deserve something

Teachers were very important to the Jewish way of life. But Jewish education was quite different from the American way of education. Young Jewish boys went to their

local synagogue for learning. Beginning around age five, they learned to read Hebrew and memorize the Scriptures. By age 13, Jewish boys had memorized all of the Jewish **Torah**. Only the best students continued their education after this age.

If a boy was a very strong learner, he could keep studying the Scriptures. Since Jewish boys had already memorized the Scriptures, they knew what it said. Their next phase of learning focused more on understanding what the Scriptures meant. After this, the few boys who **excelled** in these studies could keep learning. They could seek a **rabbi**'s training around the time they turned 17.

Choosing a rabbi was very important. Not every Jewish rabbi understood the Scriptures the same way. A rabbi selected only the best students. He looked for students who could learn what he taught. He looked for students who could live like he lived. He looked for students who could become like him. He looked for students who could meet his **expectations**. A rabbi was sure to pick only those students he felt could follow in his ways.

Because of this, it was very hard to become the **disciple** of a rabbi. Very few students were chosen. It was a high honor. A rabbi would not waste his time with any disciple he thought was **unworthy** of his time

and attention. Possible disciples were thoroughly questioned, tested, and examined. He wanted disciples who had the ability to be just like him. If a young man was chosen, he would hear these special words from the rabbi who would teach him: *Follow me.*

Simon Obeys Jesus (Luke 5:1-3)

The Book of Luke places these verses near the Lake of Gennesaret. This is another name for the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had fled Nazareth and gone to Capernaum (4:31). In Capernaum, Jesus did more miracles. He cast out demons (4:32-37). He also healed the sick (4:38-41). Unlike in Nazareth, the people in Capernaum did not want Jesus to leave them (4:42).

Capernaum was near the Lake of Gennesaret. Jesus had met a fisherman named Simon in Capernaum when He healed Simon's mother-in-law (4:38-39). One day Simon was with Jesus at the Lake of Gennesaret. The crowds were pushing in on Jesus near the lake. Jesus needed a place where he could speak to them.

The fishermen had left their boats so they could clean their nets. Jesus climbed into Simon's boat and asked him to push out into the water. Simon understood Jesus had spiritual power. He had seen it with his own eyes. His mother-in-law was healed. Now, Simon obeyed Jesus' request. Simon pushed

the boat into the water. Jesus "taught the people from [Simon's] boat" (v. 3).

Jesus Rewards Simon (Luke 5:4-7)

After teaching the people from the boat, Jesus had more to teach Simon. Jesus told Simon to take his boat into deep water and let down the nets. This must have sounded crazy to Simon! Simon knew that during the day, fish could see the nets and swim around them. Besides, they had not caught any fish at all that night.

It is possible Simon willingly obeyed even though he was tired from a long night of fishing. But maybe Simon also had questions. Maybe he wondered if Jesus understood how tired he was. Maybe he wondered why someone else couldn't help Jesus.

In any case, Simon did what Jesus asked. And the result was amazing! Simon's net pulled in so many fish, he needed help pulling it in. The fish were so heavy, the boat began to sink. Simon's simple choice to do what Jesus said brought great rewards.

Simon Follows Jesus (Luke 5:8-11)

Jesus watched Simon push out in the boat. He also watched Simon cast the nets in deep water. He saw how Simon obeyed. This showed him what was in Simon's heart. He saw that Simon's heart was willing

to do what Jesus said. But Simon saw something else in his own heart.

When Simon saw the great number of fish, he knew that Jesus had power over all things. He knew that Jesus was God. But he also knew something about himself. Simon knew that his heart had questioned Jesus before he acted to obey. He knew he was concerned with his own comfort before he pushed out in the boat. He knew his heart had doubted Jesus' instruction to cast the nets in deep water. Simon knew that he was a sinner standing next to a holy God. So he got down at Jesus' feet to praise and worship Him.

Then, something even more surprising than the great catch of fish happened. Jesus did not punish Simon for his selfish, doubting heart. Instead, Jesus invited Simon to follow Him. He said to Simon, "From now on you will fish for men" (v. 10).

Things to Remember

Jesus invited Simon to be His disciple. Unlike important rabbis of the time, Jesus did not pick the best book-learners as his disciples. Simon was a simple, sinful, **ordinary** fisherman. Yet he received an invitation from the greatest teacher of all. Jesus chose Simon because of his willing heart. What an amazing act of grace and love!

Jesus' invites every person to follow Him. How will you respond? Will you respond with a willing heart like Simon's? There are no special requirements to follow Jesus. He does not choose people because they are smart, or powerful, or popular. Jesus wants people who are willing to depend on Him and to follow where He leads. Lay down your nets and follow Him today!

Things to Think About

1. Do Jesus' instructions ever seem crazy or foolish to you? Give an example.
2. Are you willing to follow Jesus' instructions even when they don't make sense? Why or why not?
3. Have you ever seen God do something completely unexpected? How did you respond?
4. When was the last time you recognized the sin in your own heart like Simon did?
5. What keeps you from following Jesus?
6. How can you be part of gathering people for God's kingdom?

Luke 5:1-11

1 While Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, many people pushed to get near Him. They wanted to hear the Word of God.

2 Jesus saw two boats on the shore. The fishermen were not there because they were washing their nets.

3 Jesus got into a boat which belonged to Simon. Jesus asked him to push it out a little way from land. Then He sat down and taught the people from the boat.

4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, “Push out into the deep water. Let down your nets for some fish.”

5 Simon said to Him, “Teacher, we have worked all night and we have caught nothing. But because You told me to, I will let the net down.”

6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish, their net started to break.

7 They called to their friends working in the other boat to come and help them. They came and both boats were so full of fish they began to sink.

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he got down at the feet of Jesus. He said, “Go away from me, Lord, because I am a sinful man.”

9 He and all those with him were surprised and wondered about the many fish.

10 James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were surprised also. They were working together with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, “Do

not be afraid. From now on you will fish for men.”

11 When they came to land with their boats, they left everything and followed Jesus.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

*Luke:
The Gospel Story*

Lesson 8: God's Kingdom

Bible Text

Luke 6:17-36

Memory Verse

"Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you." (Luke 6:31)

Word List

compassion: a feeling of wanting to help

human nature: a way of thinking and living that is common to people

impact: a powerful effect

natural: usual or expected

opposite: completely different

resources: plural for resource — an ability or an object which allows you to do things that are needed

selfish: being concerned only for yourself and not for others

series: a number of things that happen one right after the other

Imagine the scene. You are standing on a country hillside in Israel. You have gathered with a crowd to hear a popular teacher. This teacher has been traveling from city to city.

Every day people gather to hear him. He

is a powerful speaker. He has a strong **impact** on those who hear him. He even seems to have special powers. Many who are sick or troubled have changed completely after hearing him. There is clearly something special about this teacher.

People have come from all around to hear him. They have come from far-away cities. Some have even come from other countries. They want to see and hear and touch this teacher whom they have heard about. Some in the crowd are shouting to get His attention. There is dust in the air from the crowd running toward him. People are pushing and shoving just to get close.

This was the scene in Luke 6 when Jesus spoke to a large crowd. Many different people from different ways of life had heard about Jesus. They knew stories about Him. They wanted to see and hear Him. They wanted to receive healing from His hands. And Jesus responded to them with great **compassion**. First, He met their needs. After showing them His care and concern, He did something else. He spoke important words of life to them.

Jesus' Blessing (Luke 6:17-22)

Jesus spoke a special blessing to the crowd that day. His words encouraged people in the crowd. But they did more than just encourage. The words of Jesus' blessing told

the crowd what things were most important in God's kingdom. This may have been the biggest surprise of all. Many people believed that God's blessings were given to the rich and the powerful. But Jesus' blessings to the crowd that day showed a very different idea.

First, Jesus blessed those who were poor. In describing the same scene, Matthew called these people the "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3, NIV). They knew there was "nothing good in themselves" (Matthew 5:3, NIV). The poor had no **resources**. They could only depend on the mercy and grace of others. They clearly understood their need for God. By blessing the poor, Jesus explained something important about God's kingdom. Only a person who understands his own need for grace can enter the kingdom of God.

Second, Jesus blessed the hungry. He promised that their hunger will be filled. In describing the same scene, Matthew recorded that Jesus called them people "who are hungry and thirsty to be right with God" (Matthew 5:6). Jesus knew that people had both physical and spiritual needs. He understood that many people are physically full but are still spiritually hungry. In God's kingdom, He will satisfy both physical and spiritual hunger.

Third, Jesus blessed those who were full of sorrow. In God's kingdom, earthly sorrow will be replaced by deep joy. This joy comes from being in the presence of God. On

earth, sin brings sorrow. But in God's presence, there is no sin or sorrow. There is only joy that lasts forever.

Finally, Jesus blessed those who are hated because they follow Jesus. The world always works against the things of God. Even the early preachers were hated by many men. Jesus wanted the crowd to understand that God's ways are very different from the ways of people.

Jesus' Warning (Luke 6:23-26)

After speaking a **series** of blessings, Jesus followed with a list of strong warnings. These warnings must have shocked the crowds. The things that Jesus said were **opposite** from the things that men said. Men said that riches were proof of God's blessings. Men said that having a life full of possessions was proof of God's blessings. Men also said that sorrows and troubles were punishment from God. Men often sought the honor and praise of other men instead of the honor and praise of God. Jesus gave a clear warning about all these things. None of these things had a place in God's kingdom.

Jesus' warnings were as surprising as His blessings. He challenged the way that people thought about God. He challenged the way that people lived. He wanted to make God's kingdom clear for everyone to understand. His words brought joy to some

people. And His words made other people very angry. No matter how people responded, Jesus' words were right and true.

Loving God's Way (Luke 6:27-35)

After He explained what God's kingdom is like, Jesus said more. He explained how to live and love like you are part of God's kingdom. Again, Jesus challenged the way people lived. He said:

- Love those who work against you (v.27)
- Do good to people who hate you (v. 27)
- Respect those who make things hard for you (v. 28)
- Give to people who steal from you (v. 30)
- Treat other people how you want to be treated no matter how they treat you (v. 31)

These are hard things for people to do. This is not a **natural** way for people to live. People usually seek what is good for them, not what is good for others. This is human

nature. It is a **selfish** nature. It is a sinful nature. Living and loving God's way takes a special kind of power. People can only live like this with God's help. Only God's loving-kindness can make people live like this.

Things to Remember

Do you ever wonder how to live or how to respond to others? Look to Jesus' words in these verses for help. Living like you are in God's kingdom is a different way to live. Show love instead of hate. Show mercy instead of punishment. Pray for those who hurt you. Treat other people the way you want to be treated. People who follow Jesus live this way for one reason. They live this way because of God's grace and power. When people who follow Jesus live like this, they show others what God is like.

Things to Think About

1. Why did such large crowds come to see Jesus?
2. In what ways do people try to satisfy their desires apart from God?
3. Which of Jesus' blessings gives you the most hope? Why?
4. Which of Jesus' warnings makes the most impact on you? Why?
5. In what ways is it hardest for you to live and love like you are in God's kingdom?

Luke 6:17-36

17 Then Jesus came down and stood on a plain with many of His followers. Many people came from the country of Judea and from Jerusalem and from the cities of Tyre and Sidon. They came to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.

18 Those who were troubled with demons came and were healed.

19 All the people tried to put their hands on Jesus. Power came from Him and He healed them all.

20 He looked at His followers and said, “Those of you who are poor are happy, because the holy nation of God is yours.

21 Those of you who are hungry now are happy, because you will be filled. Those of you who have sorrow now are happy, because you will laugh.

22 You are happy when men hate you and do not want you around and put shame on you because you trust in Me.

23 Be glad in that day. Be full of joy for your reward is much in heaven. Their fathers did these things to the early preachers.

24 “It is bad for you who are rich. You are receiving all that you will get.

25 It is bad for you who are full. You will be hungry. It is bad for you who laugh now. You will have sorrow and you will cry.

26 It is bad for you when everyone speaks well of you. In the same way, their fathers spoke well of the false teachers.

27 “I say to you who hear Me, love those who work against you. Do good to those who hate you.

28 Respect and give thanks for those who try to bring bad to you. Pray for those who make it very hard for you.

29 Whoever hits you on one side of the face, turn so he can hit the other side also. Whoever takes your coat, give him your shirt also.

30 Give to any person who asks you for something. If a person takes something from you, do not ask for it back.

31 Do for other people what you would like to have them do for you.

32 “If you love those who love you, what pay can you expect from that? Sinners also love those who love them.

33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what pay can you expect from that? Sinners also do good to those who do good to them.

34 If you let people use your things and expect to get something back, what pay can you expect from that? Even sinners let sinners use things and they expect to get something back.

35 But love those who hate you. Do good to them. Let them use your things and do not expect something back. Your reward will be much. You will be the children of the Most High. He is kind to those who are not thankful and to those who are full of sin.

36 “You must have loving-kindness just as your Father has loving-kindness.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 9: God's Forgiveness

Bible Text

Luke 7:36-50

Memory Verse

"If we tell Him our sins, He is faithful and we can depend on Him to forgive us of our sins. He will make our lives clean from all sin." (1 John 1:9)

Word List

interrupted: past tense of interrupt — to break in and stop something from happening for a time

judgment: saying whether someone is good or bad

parable: a story that teaches a lesson

professional: paid to play a sport or other activity

referee: a person who makes sure that players follow the rules

reputation: the common opinion people have about someone

unusual: not normal

My younger children often play games together. Sometimes they play a board game like checkers. Sometimes they play hide-and-seek inside the house. Other times, they go outside to play tag or a game of catch. From the kitchen, I can often hear them laughing

and playing while I cook dinner. I can also hear them arguing when things go wrong. Most of the time, their arguing happens because someone is not following the rules.

The rules are important in any game. They make the game fair for all the players. They also help all players know what to expect. It is no wonder that someone gets upset when the rules are not followed. This throws everything off balance. It changes the game for everyone. Even **professional** athletes become angry with a **referee** when the rules are not followed.

Rules were also important in Jesus' time. For Jewish people like Jesus, religious rules were the most important rules. There were even special religious leaders. Special religious leaders made sure people knew and followed the rules. These were the proud religious law-keepers. They knew the Jewish religious rules very well. They felt that they followed the Jewish religious rules better than other people.

A proud religious law-keeper would never touch or talk to a sinful person. They felt that because they followed the rules, God loved them more than He loved others. But Jesus had many problems with the proud religious law-keepers. Jesus was not pleased with their proud hearts. Because of their pride, they trusted religious rules to save them

from the punishment of sin. Jesus knew that only He could forgive people and save them.

A Troubled Woman (Luke 7:36-39)

Many people wanted to learn more about Jesus and His message. Jesus was often invited to spend time in the homes of people. He went wherever people welcomed Him. One day, a proud religious law-keeper invited Jesus to eat dinner at his home. A dinner guest was a person of great honor. But this dinner would turn out to be quite **unusual**.

A woman **interrupted** dinner at this man's home. She was known to many people because of her sins. In this passage, Luke did not say what her sins were. But it is clear that people knew her sinful **reputation**. Maybe she lied and cheated. Maybe she did many sex sins. Whatever the case, her neighbors knew she was very sinful.

She disturbed the men's dinner by acting in a shocking way. She broke many of the Jewish rules for women. Women could not freely talk with men. There were special rules for proud religious law-keepers, too. Common sinners were not welcome near them. But this woman knew that there was something more important than rules.

Maybe she had met Jesus before. Her actions toward Him showed this might be true. She went to Jesus. She wept loudly and deeply. Her tears made Jesus' feet very wet.

She touched Jesus by drying His feet with her hair. She kissed His hands and feet. And she put special perfume on Jesus. She honored Him and showed Him great love. But her actions made the proud religious law-keeper very angry. He saw her actions and made a strong **judgement** about her. The proud religious law-keeper was even angrier that Jesus accepted the sinful woman's behavior.

An Important Parable (Luke 7:40-43)

Jesus knew what was in the heart of the proud religious law-keeper. He did not like it one bit. So He told a **parable** to teach the man an important lesson: Two people owed money to a banker. One owed 500 pieces of silver. This was almost two years' of pay. The other owed 50 pieces of silver. This amount was far less than the first.

Neither man could pay what he owed. Out of kindness, the banker cancelled what each man owed. Then Jesus asked an important question: *Which man would love the banker more?* The answer was clear. The man who owed the banker more money would love him more.

A Painful Lesson (Luke 7:44-47)

Jesus' question probably caught the proud religious law-keeper by surprise. Jesus wasn't interested in following the religious rules. He was more interested in honoring the

deep love for Jesus in this woman's heart. Jesus was changing the rules for the proud religious law-keeper.

Jesus asked an even stranger question. He said, "Do you see this woman?" (7:44). Of course everyone in the room saw the woman. Her actions were the center of attention. But Jesus knew others could learn from her actions. Simon, the religious law-keeper, needed to see what was in this woman's heart. And he needed to learn what was in his own heart.

Jesus compared Simon's actions to the woman's actions. Foot washing was a common courtesy given to guests. People wore sandals and walked everywhere. So their feet were often dirty. Simon did not give Jesus any water to wash His feet. But the woman did with her tears. Simon did not greet Jesus with a kiss. But the woman kissed Jesus many times. Simon did not put special oil on Jesus' head. This was an honor normally given to guests. The woman poured very expensive perfume on Jesus. The woman showed deep love and gratitude to Jesus. Simon did not.

Things to Think About

1. What happens when people value religious rules more than they value Jesus?
2. Who are you more like? Simon or the woman?
3. Do you believe Jesus can forgive sin? Why or why not?

The woman understood how much Jesus had forgiven her. Simon did not think he needed forgiveness for anything.

A Forgiving God (Luke 7:48-50)

Jesus could have ended the discussion right there. Instead he took extra time to talk with the woman. He said, "Your sins are forgiven" (v. 48). The woman already knew Jesus forgave her. Why else would she have acted with such love and thankfulness? Still Jesus reminded her of His forgiveness in the presence of everyone. With His words, He protected her from the guilt and shame of their judgments about her.

Jesus told her she could go in peace because her faith had saved her. Her actions showed that she had trusted in Christ. Because she placed her faith in Jesus, she was saved from the punishment of sin. Because she placed her faith in Jesus, she had peace she had never known before.

Things to Remember

Jesus' offer of forgiveness has not changed. He offers grace and mercy to everyone. Are you like the woman in this story? Do you know you need forgiveness? Or are you like the proud religious law-keeper? Are you separated from God's forgiveness because of sin in your heart? Ask God to show you what is in your heart today.

And ask Him for the forgiveness that He freely wants to give. You can be saved from the punishment of sins through Jesus. He is God. And He forgives.

Luke 7:36-50

36 One of the proud religious law-keepers wanted Jesus to eat with him. Jesus went to his house and sat down to eat.

37 There was a woman in the city who was a sinner. She knew Jesus was eating in the house of the proud religious law-keeper. She brought a jar of special perfume.

38 Then she stood behind Him by His feet and cried. Her tears wet His feet and she dried them with her hair. She kissed His feet and put the special perfume on them.

39 The proud religious law-keeper who had asked Jesus to eat with him saw this. He said to himself, "If this Man were One Who speaks for God, He would know who and what kind of a woman put her hands on Him. She is a sinner."

40 Jesus said to him, "I have something to say to you, Simon." And Simon said, "Teacher, say it."

41 "There were two men who owed a certain man some money. The one man owed 500 pieces of silver money. The other man owed 50 pieces of silver money.

42 Neither one of them had any money, so he told them they did not have to pay him back. Tell Me, which one would love him the most?"

43 Simon said, "I think it would be the one who

owed the most." And Jesus said to him, "You have said the right thing."

44 He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house and you gave Me no water to wash My feet. She washed My feet with her tears and dried them with the hairs of her head.

45 You gave me no kiss, but this woman has kissed my feet from the time I came in.

46 You did not put even oil on My head but this woman has put special perfume on My feet.

47 I tell you, her many sins are forgiven because she loves much. But the one who has been forgiven little, loves little."

48 Then He said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 Those who were eating with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this Man Who even forgives sins?"

50 He said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you from the punishment of sin. Go in peace."

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 10: The Father's Love

Bible Text

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

Memory Verse

"See what great love the Father has for us that He would call us His children. And that is what we are." (1 John 3:1a)

Word List

bold: showing a lack of fear

despair: the feeling of no longer having any hope

experts: plural of expert — someone who has special skill or knowledge in a subject

filth: something that is very dirty, offensive, or disgusting

inheritance: money or property that is received from someone who dies

jealous: feeling or showing an unhappy desire to keep something to oneself

resented: past tense of resent — to be angry or upset about something that seems unfair

unworthy: not good enough to deserve something or someone

Have you ever lost something? Maybe you lost your car keys. Maybe you lost your wallet. Maybe you lost something even more valuable. A funny thing happens when

something is lost. It becomes the center of attention. People search for things that are lost. They think carefully about the last time they saw the lost object. They focus all their energy on trying to find it.

Jesus told several stories about things that were lost. One story is about a lost sheep. One story is about a lost coin. And the story in today's lesson is about a lost son. These stories teach important truths. They teach about God's love for people. God cares deeply about people who have lost their way. People who follow Jesus should care about these people, too.

Religious People (Luke 15:1-2)

Luke 15 contains three important stories that Jesus told. Jesus told these stories to religious people. The proud religious law-keepers were **experts** on following Jewish religious laws. The teachers of the Law were another group of important religious teachers. These religious people spoke against Jesus. They did not like the fact that He spent time with sinners. They felt that sinners did not deserve their attention. They wondered why Jesus would welcome sinners if He was a good Jewish teacher.

Jesus knew what was in their hearts. He knew they were full of pride. He knew they did not truly care for others. He knew they wanted religious power. He understood that they cared only for themselves. This did not

please Jesus. He wanted to teach them an important lesson about God. So He told them a story to teach this lesson.

A Lost Son (Luke 15:11-16)

The story of the lost son is one of the most powerful stories in the Bible. In Jesus' day, children were a sign of God's favor. Sons were considered a special blessing. Jesus knew that the religious leaders would understand a story about two sons. The father of these two sons would leave his sons an **inheritance** after his death. In Jesus' time, a son could ask for his part of the family's riches before his father died. But this would be a **bold** request. It would show little respect for the father. In fact, it ended their relationship as father and son.

The father could have said no to this request. But he divided the family's riches and gave the younger son his part. He did this even though he probably knew the son would make unwise choices. In the same way, God the Father allows people freedom to make choices. He does not force people to love or follow Him. But the Father's heart is sad when one of His children chooses to leave His loving care. He takes no joy in watching His children trade His love for a life of sin. He knows that sin brings only pain and death.

This is exactly what happened to the younger son in Jesus' story. He spent his riches on wild living. He became so hungry

that he was willing to work with pigs. He was even willing to eat the uneaten corn that the pigs left behind. He was poor and hungry and far from home. His life was filled with **filth** and sadness.

A Father's Welcome (Luke 15:17-24)

The son was filled with **despair**. No one would help him. He had no way to help himself. His spirit was completely broken. Then he remembered something. At home, his father's servants had everything they needed. He knew he had given up the right to be a son. But he thought that maybe he could still be a servant in his father's house. So he turned toward home, ready to beg for mercy.

When he was still a long way from home, his father saw him. Had his father been out searching for him? Was he looking and longing for the boy's return? This seems to be true. His father ran to him and welcomed him warmly. He brought gifts and prepared a great feast. The father was full of joy! He was not interested in talking about his son's foolish actions. He was not interested in being angry with his son. The father's heart was only filled with gladness at his son's return.

God the Father longs for people to come back to Him. When they do, He responds like a good father. He offers grace and forgiveness. He does not put guilt and

shame on them. Instead, He looks at them with unfailing love. The proud religious people did not love sinners. They believed sinners deserved no grace or mercy. Instead, the religious leaders put heavy loads of guilt and shame on sinners. Jesus wanted to show that this is not God's way of responding. He wanted religious people to see that their way of responding was wrong. He wanted them to understand that their hearts and their actions did not please God.

A Jealous Brother (Luke 15:25-31)

The older son heard what was happening. Was he happy for his brother's return? Did he join the celebration? Did he share in his father's joy? Sadly, he did not. Instead, he responded like the proud religious people. He was angry about his brother's sins. He was **jealous** of the father's kindness towards his brother. He **resented** the large celebration at his brother's return. In his heart, he had no mercy and grace for his brother. This is the same feeling the religious

leaders had toward sinners.

The older son made the father sad just as the younger son did when he went away. The father saw that the older son did not truly love him. Instead, the older son acted out of duty to his father. He followed his father's rules, but he did not love what his father loved. He only wanted the rewards of following his father's rules. He wanted this more than he wanted to know and love his father. The same thing was true of the religious teachers of the Law.

Many people are like the religious teachers of the Law. They work hard for God, thinking He will reward them. They look down on people who do not follow God's rules. They do not show grace for people who struggle with sin. They do not love the people who are lost in sin the way God does. Their hearts are hard toward the things of God, even though they follow His rules.

Things to Remember

Jesus told a story about a father's love for his sons. He wanted the sinners and the proud religious people to learn something. He wanted sinners to know that they are important to God the Father. God feels great joy when people come to Him for forgiveness. He longs to clean them from their sins. He longs to give them good gifts. He longs to celebrate with them in His presence.

Things to Think About

1. How do you react when you lose something?
2. If you were the father in this story, would you have granted the son's request? Explain why.
3. Which son do you relate to more easily? Why?
4. Who are the "worst" sinners in today's society?
5. How can Christians remember that following God's rules does not make them more deserving of His love?

But this story teaches proud religious people something, too. It shows that religious pride keeps people apart from God. It shows that proud religious people are just as far away from God as the son who went away. It shows that guilt and shame have no place in God's kingdom. Most of all, it shows the deep love that God the Father wants to show each person.

Luke 15:1-2, 11-32

1 All the tax-gatherers and sinners were coming to hear Jesus.

2 The proud religious law-keepers and the teachers of the Law began to speak against Him. They said, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."

...

11 And Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger son said to his father, 'Father, let me have the part of the family riches that will be coming to me.' Then the father divided all that he owned between his two sons.

13 Soon after that the younger son took all that had been given to him and went to another country far away. There he spent all he had on wild and foolish living.

14 When all his money was spent, he was hungry. There was no food in the land.

15 He went to work for a man in this far away country. His work was to feed pigs.

16 He was so hungry he was ready to eat the outside part of the ears of the corn the pigs ate because no one gave him anything.

17 "He began to think about what he had done. He said to himself, 'My father pays many men who work for him. They have all the food they want and more than enough. I am about dead because I am so hungry.

18 I will get up and go to my father. I will say to

him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.

19 I am not good enough to be called your son. But may I be as one of the workmen you pay to work?"

20 "The son got up and went to his father. While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him. The father was full of loving-pity for him. He ran and threw his arms around him and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not good enough to be called your son.'

22 But the father said to the workmen he owned, 'Hurry! Get the best coat and put it on him. Put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet.

23 Bring the calf that is fat and kill it. Let us eat and be glad.

24 For my son was dead and now he is alive again. He was lost and now he is found. Let us eat and have a good time.'

25 "The older son was out in the field. As he was coming near the house, he heard music and dancing.

26 He called one of the servants and asked what was happening.

27 The servant answered, 'Your brother has come back and your father has killed the fat calf. Your brother is in the house and is well.'

28 The older brother was angry and would not go into the house. His father went outside and asked him to come in.

29 The older son said to his father, 'All these many years I have served you. I have always obeyed what you said. But you never gave me a young goat so I could have a supper and a good time with my friends.

30 But as soon as this son of yours came back, you killed the fat calf. And yet he wasted your money with bad women.'

31 "The father said to him, 'My son, you are with me all the time. All that I have is yours.

32 It is right and good that we should have a good time and be glad. Your brother was dead and now he is alive again. He was lost and now he is found.'"

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 11: A Rich Man

Bible Text

Luke 16:19-31

Memory Verse

“It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to go into the holy nation of God.” (Luke 18:25)

Word List

consequence: something that happens as a result of one's actions

cursed: affected by a force that causes bad things to happen

eternal: lasting forever

philosopher: a person who studies the truth about the meaning of life

Albert Camus was a famous French **philosopher** who lived in the 1900's. He said, “Life is a sum of all your choices.” We make choices everyday. Every choice has a **consequence**. The results of our choices help to shape the our lives. Camus understood this truth. Jesus understood this, too.

In fact, Luke's Gospel records several stories about people who made choices. In Luke 15, the younger son chose wild living

over his father's love. In Luke 17, a sick man chose to show his thankfulness to Jesus. In Luke 18, a religious leader chose to keep his riches instead of following Jesus. These choices had an important effect on each person's life.

Jesus met another rich man in Luke 16. Having riches in life means a person has many choices to make. Should a person spend the money? What should he buy? Should he save the money? Should he give the money to others? How can he keep his money safe? Jesus knew that having riches makes it hard to make wise choices. He warned that earthly riches are not as important as **eternal** rewards.

A Rich Man and a Poor Man (Luke 16:19-21)

Jesus told a story about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man wore purple clothes. They were made of a costly material. Only the most important and wealthiest people had these kind of clothes. Other people would know this man was wealthy just by looking at his clothes. He lived in a fine house and ate the best food. His life was filled with comfort and ease.

The poor man's life was very different. He had a bad skin disease. He had painful sores on his body. He was very hungry, but he had no food to eat. He sat outside the gates of

the rich man's home. He hoped to eat any pieces of food that were left from the rich man's dinner.

The poor man suffered many things. But everything he needed was just beyond the rich man's gate. Sadly, the rich man chose to keep his riches for himself. He chose not to share. He chose not to show care or concern for the poor man. He chose to be selfish even as the dogs licked the poor man's sores.

Jewish people in Jesus' time believed that riches were a sign of God's favor. They also believed that sickness and troubles were a sign of God's punishment. They would believe that the rich man was blessed by God. They would also believe that the poor man was **cursed** by God. Jesus' story would teach something very different.

Choices and Consequences **(Luke 16:22-31)**

The poor man was named Lazarus. When he died, he was carried away to heaven by angels. There he found comfort and relief from his earthly troubles. Something different happened to the rich man. When the rich man died, he found himself separated from God in hell. He faced much pain. His earthly riches could not help him in hell. While Lazarus had trouble in his earthly life, that trouble did not last forever. The rich man's earthly comfort

did not last forever either.

From hell, the rich man could see Lazarus in heaven. He understood that his earthly riches were no longer valuable. Now he was in pain that would last forever. He had made a foolish choice in his earthly life. He did not make wise choices with the riches he had. He did not care for others. He did not share. He did not worship God with the riches he had. He did not live or love like God does.

Even worse, there was no way for the rich man to reach the place where Lazarus was in God's presence. Once the poor man had begged the rich man for food. Now it was the rich man who begged. He begged God to send Lazarus to give him water. He pleaded to warn his family about the pain of hell.

He wanted to warn his five brothers to make wise choices with the riches they had. He wanted to warn them about the consequences of living a selfish life. He wanted to tell them about the rewards of living and loving like God does. Out of his deep pain, he asked God to send Lazarus to tell his family about these things.

God's answer, through Abraham, to the rich man was surprising. God would not send Lazarus to warn his family. His family could already read the warnings of the early preachers. They could read the Writings of Moses. God knew their hearts were proud. Pride keeps people from doing what God says.

Because of their proud hearts, the family would not listen to Lazarus. The rich man still begged. But God did not change his answer.

In heaven, Abraham spoke to the rich man about his request. He said something that was right and true and frightening. Abraham said that the rich man's family had a hard problem. It was not a problem of knowing what to do. They had read the Writings of Moses.

Instead, they had a problem with their hearts. They did not want to do the things God said. They wanted to live their own way. They wanted to keep their many riches. They did not want to care for others. Their hearts were full of sin. It was sin that kept them from putting their faith in God to save them from the punishment of sin. Even seeing a dead man raised to life would not change their hard hearts. Seeing with the eyes is not the same

thing a believing with the heart. They needed faith in their hearts to see and obey God.

Things to Remember

The story of the rich man teaches an important lesson. His story shows that earthly choices can have consequences that last forever. The wisdom of this world is not the same as the wisdom of God. Choices that seem wise in this life might seem very foolish after death. People need God's wisdom to keep from making foolish choices. Jesus turned the rules of earthly kingdoms upside down. He said that in God's kingdom, rich is poor, and poor is rich. First is last, and last is first. The servant is the master, and the master is the servant of all. Jesus wants us to see with spiritual eyes. He wants us to see things the way He sees them. Then we can make wise choices that will last forever.

Things to Think About

1. How much money does it take to be "rich"?
2. Is being rich a sin? Why or why not?
3. How can earthly riches be used for eternal purposes?
4. In what ways do earthly riches tempt us away from living and loving as God wants us to?
5. Besides money, what other things can make people have a proud heart?
6. Which is more important? Earthly riches or eternal rewards? How do you know?

Luke 16:19-31

19 “There was a rich man who dressed in purple linen clothes everyday. He lived like a king would live with the best of food.

20 There was a poor man named Lazarus who had many bad sores. He was put by the door of the rich man.

21 He wanted the pieces of food that fell from the table of the rich man. Even dogs came and licked his sores.

22 “The poor man who asked for food died. He was taken by the angels into the arms of Abraham. The rich man died also and was buried.

23 In hell the rich man was in much pain. He looked up and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus beside him.

24 He cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, take pity on me. Send Lazarus. Let him put the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue. I am in much pain in this fire.’

25 Abraham said, ‘My son, do not forget that when you were living you had your good things. Lazarus had bad things. Now he is well cared for. You are in pain.

26 And more than all this, there is a big deep place between us. No one from here can go there even if he wanted to go. No one can come from there.’

27 “Then the rich man said, ‘Father, then I beg you to send Lazarus to my father’s house.

28 I have five brothers. Let him tell them of

these things, or they will come to this place of much pain also.’

29 Abraham said, ‘They have the Writings of Moses and of the early preachers. Let them hear what they say.’

30 But the rich man said, ‘No, Father Abraham. If someone goes to them from the dead, they will be sorry for their sins and turn from them.’

31 Abraham said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and to the early preachers, they will not listen even if someone is raised from the dead.’”

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 12: Tried and Crucified

Bible Text

Luke 23:1-27, 32-49

Memory Verse

“Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them. They do not know what they are doing.’” Luke 23:34a

Word List

before: in front of or ahead of someone or something; also, face to face with someone
crucifixion: a way to kill someone that causes terrible pain and shame being nailed to a cross
crucify: to put to death by nailing or tying the hands and feet to a cross made of wood

Jesus was killed. In fact, **crucifixion** was the way He was killed. Shocking! Think about it.

You have learned a lot about Jesus in this study. But have you really seen Him? Not with your eyes, but have you seen Him with eyes of faith? The One whose birth was a miracle. The One who catches fish and men, and preaches like no other. The One who welcomes sinners and offers forgiveness. He is the sinless Son of God and the only Savior.

Have you seen His glory? How is it possible this One was crucified?

Chapters 23 and 24 are the two most important chapters in Luke. The chapters are about the two most important events in all of human history: Jesus’ crucifixion and His being raised from the dead.

Tried (Luke 23:1-25)

Jesus’ trial was in two parts. There was a Jewish trial (Luke 22:54-71), and there was this Roman trial. At the Jewish trial, the Jewish leaders decided Jesus was guilty of making Himself equal with God. The sentence was death. They, however, did not have the right by law to kill anyone. So they had to bring Jesus **before** the Roman leaders.

Luke writes about the Roman trial in three parts:

1. Jesus before Pilate, the governor of Judea (23:1-5)
2. Jesus before Herod, the governor of Galilee (23:6-12)
3. Jesus back before Pilate and His punishment (23:13-25).

One thing we see as true in this trial is that Jesus was not guilty. Pilate said, “I find nothing wrong in this Man” (23:4). The word “nothing” is a strong word. Pilate said there was nothing at all of which Jesus was guilty. He spoke better than he knew. Jesus is the sinless Son of God. Do you see His glory?

When the Jews became angry, Pilate

sends Jesus off to Herod. He and his soldiers made fun of Jesus and treated Him in a cruel way, but they did not find Him guilty of anything either. Jesus said nothing (v. 9). In fact, in the entire Roman trial Jesus spoke only once. In Jesus' language, it was just two words. All this was told about before it happened in Isaiah 53:7: "... caused Him to suffer, yet He did not open His mouth." He suffered in silence. Do you see His glory?

After Herod had his fun, Jesus went back to Pilate. The trial got even more amazing. It was as if Pilate became Jesus' lawyer. Count the number of times he said Jesus was not guilty. Count the times it says Pilate wanted to let Jesus go free. Pilate was not a good man, but even he could see who Jesus was. Jesus is our perfect substitute. Do you see His glory?

The rest of the Roman trial was enough to make us feel fear. Evil took over. Pilate could not help the crowd see the truth. The cries, "**Crucify Him!**" must have been terrible to hear. Hell got its way, or did it? The trial ended when Pilate gave Jesus over.

Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). He is the One who went to the cross for you. Do you see God's plan? Do you see your Savior? Do you see His glory?

Crucified (Luke 23:26-27, 32-49)

A badly beaten and bloody Jesus was

led out to Calvary with the women following. Many people watched as He walked. Our suffering Savior is still Lord. He showed us in His suffering how much God loves us. Do you see His glory?

Luke tells us about the terrible crucifixion in verse 33. It is a fact of history that Jesus was crucified between two criminals. It is also an example of how God was still in control of all that happened. A booklet called *Our Daily Bread* says that Myron J. Taylor preached a sermon with the title, *A Hill With Three Crosses*. He said, "One cross portrays a thief dying **IN** sin, and the other a thief dying **TO** sin. But the center cross speaks of the Redeemer dying **FOR** sin." Do you see your Savior there, on Mount Calvary? Do you see His glory?

Bible teachers speak of Jesus' "seven words" from the cross. They are talking about the seven statements Jesus made while dying on the cross. Luke wrote about three of the seven. Verse 34 is the first of those three.

Jesus was suffering the most evil thing ever done in all of human history. Yet there from the cross, the first thing He did was pray. And for what did He pray? Read verse 34. Can you believe it? Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven. Jesus prayed for His enemies. Jesus prayed that they be forgiven! Jesus prayed for His enemies. Amazing. Do you see His mercy? Do you see His love? Do you see the

suffering Son praying for the sinners who made all this necessary? Do you see the only Savior? Do you see your Savior? Do you see His glory?

As the chapter ends, there is no doubt about what comes next. Jesus was crucified, dead, and buried. Jesus really died, paying the penalty for our sin. His body was really buried. It lay in the tomb, waiting for the third day.

Things to Remember

Jesus was tried and crucified. He was killed by sinful men and evil forces. But there is a reason we call it Good Friday. Jesus obeyed the will and plan of God the Father. Amazingly, He was making events happen and saying words told by the early preachers in the Old Testament many years before. He was paying the terrible price for our terrible sin, so we could be forgiven and set free.

Things to Think About

1. Jesus suffered great wrong from sinful people. Are you struggling with being wronged? How does Jesus' example help you?
2. The Bible calls every believer to the cross life. Read Luke 9:23. You have studied Jesus' trial and crucifixion. How can you better follow your Lord and Savior? What do you need to do to become more like Jesus?
3. On which side of the cross are you? Are you with those who rejected Jesus? Will you risk dying in your sin? Or have you repented of your sin and received Jesus, who alone can save?

Give Him thanks. Give Him praise and honor.

Give Him Glory!

Luke 23:1-27, 32-49

- 1 Then all the many people got up and took Jesus to Pilate.
- 2 They began to tell things against Him, saying, "We have found this Man leading the people of our nation in a wrong way. He has been telling them not to pay taxes to Caesar. He has been saying He is Christ, a King."
- 3 Pilate asked Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" He said, "What you said is true."
- 4 Then Pilate said to the religious leaders and to the people, "I find nothing wrong in this Man."
- 5 They became more angry. They said, "He makes trouble among the people. He has been teaching over all the country of Judea, starting in Galilee and now here."
- 6 When Pilate heard the word, Galilee, he asked, "Is the Man from Galilee?"
- 7 As soon as Pilate knew Jesus belonged in the country where Herod was king, he sent Him to Herod. Herod was in Jerusalem at that time also.
- 8 Herod was very glad when he saw Jesus because he had wanted to see Him for a long time. He had heard many things about Him and had hoped to see Him do some powerful work.
- 9 Herod talked to Jesus and asked many things. But Jesus said nothing.
- 10 The religious leaders and the teachers of the Law were standing there. They said many false things against Him.
- 11 Then Herod and his soldiers were very bad to Jesus and made fun of Him. They put a beautiful coat on Him and sent Him back to Pilate.
- 12 That day Pilate and Herod became friends. Before that they had worked against each other.
- 13 Pilate called the religious leaders and the leaders of the people and the people together.
- 14 He said to them, "You brought this Man to me as one that leads the people in the wrong way. I have asked Him about these things in front of

you. I do not find Him guilty of the things you say against Him.

15 Herod found nothing wrong with Him because he sent Him back to us. There is no reason to have Him put to death.

16 I will punish Him and let Him go free.”

17 *Every year at the time of the special supper, Pilate would let one person who was in prison go free.

18 They all cried out together with a loud voice, “Take this Man away! Let Barabbas go free.”

19 Barabbas had killed some people and had made trouble against the leaders of the country. He had been put in prison.

20 Pilate wanted to let Jesus go free so he talked to them again.

21 But they cried out, “Nail Him to a cross! Nail Him to a cross!”

22 Pilate said to them the third time, “Why, what bad thing has He done? I have found no reason to put Him to death. I will punish Him and let Him go free.”

23 But they kept on crying out with loud voices saying that He must be nailed to a cross. Their loud voices got what they wanted. 24 Then Pilate said that it should be done as they wanted.

25 Pilate let the man go free who had made trouble against the leaders of the country and who had killed people. He gave Jesus over to them to do with as they wanted.

26 They led Jesus away. A man named Simon was coming in from the country of Cyrene and they made him carry the cross following behind Jesus.

27 Many people followed Jesus. There were women who cried and had sorrow for Him.

...32 Two other men were led away with Jesus to be put to death also. These men had done things making them guilty of death.

33 When they came to the place called Calvary, they nailed Jesus to a cross. The other two men were nailed to crosses also. One was on the right side of Jesus and the other was on His left side.

34 Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them. They

do not know what they are doing.” And they divided His clothes by drawing names.

35 The people stood around looking on. The leaders were there with them making fun of Jesus. They said, “He saved others, let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the Chosen One of God!”

36 The soldiers made fun of Him also. They put sour wine before Him.

37 They said, “If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself.”

38 These words were written in the Greek and Latin and Hebrew languages above His head: “THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.”

39 One of the men who was guilty of death who was on a cross beside Jesus spoke bad words to Him. He said, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.”

40 But the other man on a cross spoke sharp words to the one who made fun of Jesus. He said, “Are you not afraid of God? You are also guilty and will be punished.

41 We are suffering and we should, because of the wrong we have done. But this Man has done nothing wrong.”

42 And he said to Jesus, “Lord, remember me when You come into Your holy nation.”

43 Jesus said to him, “For sure, I tell you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

44 It was dark over all the earth from noon until three o’clock.

45 The sun did not shine. In the house of God the curtain was torn in two pieces.

46 Then Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I give My spirit.” When He said this, He died.

47 When the soldier saw what had happened, he thanked God. He said, “For sure, He was a good man.”

48 All the many people who came together to see the things that were done, went away beating themselves on their chests.

49 All His friends and the women who had come with Him from Galilee stood a long way off watching these things.

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Luke:
The Gospel Story

Lesson 13: The Unbelievable Resurrection of Jesus Christ

Bible Text

Luke 24:1-12, 33-49

Memory Verse

“Jesus said to them, ‘These are the things I told you while I was yet with you. All things written about Me in the Law of Moses and in the Books of the early preachers and in the Psalms must happen as they said they would happen.’”
(Luke 24:44)

Word List

convinced: made to be very sure that something is true

despair: the feeling of having no hope

resurrection: rising from the dead to eternal life with a new kind of body

tomb: a space above or below the ground where one or more bodies are placed

unbelievable: hard or impossible to believe

I can think of a few events during my life that are almost **unbelievable**. Some are good and some are bad. September 11, 2001, is an example of one of the bad ones. An example of a good one was watching the first American astronauts walk on the moon. Many amazing things have happened, but to this day remembering Neil Armstrong and then Buzz

Aldrin walking on the moon is unbelievable.

The **resurrection** of Jesus Christ was an unbelievable event. It was an unbelievable event after an unbelievable event. They had seen Jesus’ crucifixion. It was the awful killing of the One they thought was the promised Messiah. Unbelievable. They were in **despair**. They were not ready for what was coming. Jesus had told them He would be raised from the dead on the third day. But neither the crucifixion nor the resurrection were understandable to them.

Luke reports the events of resurrection on Sunday in three parts. Each one tells about a part of the day. Each is filled with truth about God. Verse 34 tells the important Easter exclamation, “‘It is true! The Lord has risen’” As the final part happens, the resurrection faith of Jesus’ followers is still growing. As we look at two of these parts, may our living Lord build our faith, as He did that of His first disciples.

The Tomb, Angels, and Women

(Luke 24:1-12)

It was the first day of the week. That is Sunday in Jewish thinking. God Almighty was about to begin showing Jesus’ followers that He had raised His Son from the dead.

The first sign was given to the women. They were the funeral followers as Joseph took Jesus’ body to the **tomb** (Luke 23:55).

Women could not be witnesses in court in those days. But God gave them the gift of being the first to see the signs of the resurrection. They were His witnesses.

When they got to the tomb, they were surprised to find both an open tomb and an empty one. They did not know what to think of what they saw. Suddenly, the dark tomb was filled with light from the clothes of the two men who they saw. The women were very afraid. The two men were angels (v. 23). They were the first preachers of Jesus' resurrection.

The angels' sermon in the tomb has three parts. First, there is a question. "Why do you look for the living One among those who are dead?" It was a great question. It was meant to cause the women to think about what they believe is true. They might have answered the question: "We are not seeking someone who is alive. We are looking for Jesus. He is dead. We saw Him die. We saw them put Him in this tomb." And they would have been right, but only about His death. It is the third day now. They were in the wrong place looking for the wrong thing.

The message of Easter is in the second part of the sermon. "He is not here. He has risen!" It is exciting to imagine the joy in the angels' voices. "He is risen!" became the victory cry of the church. A dark and despairing world needs to hear that cry today.

The third part of the angels' sermon is a

call to remember. Three times in the Gospel of Luke Jesus told them that He was going to die and be raised to life again (Luke 9:22, 44-45; 18:31-34). The women had heard Him say this. They had not understood it. But now God had done it. Jesus, the true Christ, had been crucified and raised! What Jesus told them would happen had happened. The women remembered His words.

They hurried back from the tomb. The women became the first people to be witnesses to the resurrection. They told of the tomb. They told about the angels and what they said. But nobody believed them. "Their words sounded like foolish talk" (Luke 24:11). Peter wanted to know so he went to the tomb to see for himself. He returned amazed, but not **convinced**.

Jesus Comes, Convinces, and Gives a Job Command (Luke 24:33-49)

Two disciples went back to Jerusalem after seeing Jesus while they were walking down a road. They then went and got together with the other disciples. These first Christians started to understand what had happened. "It is true! The Lord has risen" (v. 34). Doubt was being replaced by belief. Despair was gone. Hope was returning. Joy was rising. "He is alive! JESUS IS REALLY ALIVE!" The two who returned from their trip added their witness. The facts were becoming clearer.

Truth was being made stronger by the witness of many.

Then suddenly Jesus was there with them. He greeted them, “May you have peace.” His blessing was full of the truth of the gospel of salvation. But the disciples could not believe it. They were surprised and frightened, even though they had just been talking about Jesus being alive. It was still so unbelievable.

Jesus convinced them it was really Him. It became clear that they were not dreaming with their eyes open. They were not seeing some spirit from the grave. This was not Jesus come back to life like Lazarus (see John 11). But there was more. Jesus was convincing them that they were seeing His resurrection body. There is a resurrection that will take place at the end of all time. In Jesus’ case, that kind of resurrection had just occurred! The resurrection of Jesus was the

beginning of God’s new creation. And it all happened as the Bible said it would happen. It is all part of God’s wonderful plan of salvation. You and I can join a long line of faithful witnesses. Unbelievable!

Things to Remember

Two things are interesting. One is how slow these first followers were to come to faith in the resurrection of our Lord. There are many words or phrases describing their doubt or disbelief. But God the Father and our risen Lord were removing all doubts from their minds. Seeing Jesus convinced these followers that the resurrection of Jesus was real. God wants to remove all our doubts, too.

The second thing is how important the Bible is for the growth of our faith. In each part of the story, Jesus’ words or the words from the Old Testament, or both, are given. The chapter shows our living Lord as our teacher. It makes clear how we need God’s help to understand His love and plan.

Luke 24:1-12, 33-49

- 1 Early in the morning on the first day of the week, the women went to the grave taking the spices they had made ready.
- 2 They found the stone had been pushed away from the grave.
- 3 They went in but they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.
- 4 While they wondered about what had

Things to Think About

1. You know Jesus is risen, but do you sometimes still seek Him “among the dead”? For example, do you seek Him by doing religious things without really thinking about what you are doing?
2. Do we sometimes despair? Is it because we are not remembering Jesus’ words? A good way to remember is to memorize. As you memorize, make sure you are understanding. Then believe, obey, and do His Word.
3. In what areas does your faith need to grow? Ask God to show you areas where your understanding and faith need to grow and to help you in those areas.

happened, they saw two men standing by them in shining clothes.

5 They were very much afraid and got down with their faces to the ground. The men said to them, “Why do you look for the living One among those who are dead?”

6 He is not here. He is risen. Do you not remember what He said to you when He was yet in Galilee?

7 He said, ‘The Son of Man must be given over into the hands of sinful men. He must be nailed to a cross. He will rise again three days later.’”

8 They remembered what He had said.

9 When they came back from the grave, they told all these things to the eleven followers and to all the others.

10 They were Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James. Other women who were with them told these things to the followers also.

11 Their words sounded like foolish talk. The followers did not believe them.

12 But Peter got up and ran to the grave. He got down to look in and saw only the linen clothes. Then he went away, surprised about what had happened.

...

33 Then they got up at once and went back to Jerusalem. They found the eleven followers together and others with them.

34 They said, “For sure the Lord is risen and was seen by Simon.”

35 Then they told what had happened on the road and how they came to know Him when He broke the bread.

36 As they talked, Jesus Himself stood among them. He said, “May you have peace.”

37 But they were afraid and full of fear. They thought they saw a spirit.

38 Jesus said to them, “Why are you afraid? Why do you have doubts in your hearts?”

39 Look at My hands and My feet. See! It is I, Myself! Touch Me and see for yourself. A spirit does not have flesh and bones as I have.”

40 When Jesus had said this, He showed them His hands and feet.

41 They still wondered. It was hard for them to believe it and yet it made them happy. Then He said to them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”

42 They gave Jesus a piece of fish that had been cooked and some honey.

43 He took it and ate it in front of them.

44 Jesus said to them, “These are the things I told you while I was yet with you. All things written about Me in the Law of Moses and in the Books of the early preachers and in the Psalms must happen as they said they would happen.”

45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Holy Writings.

46 He said to them, “It is written that Christ should suffer and be raised from the dead after three days.

47 It must be preached that men must be sorry for their sins and turn from them. Then they will be forgiven. This must be preached in His name to all nations beginning in Jerusalem.

48 You are to tell what you have seen.

49 See! I will send you what My Father promised. But you are to stay in Jerusalem until you have received power from above.”

Adult Bible Study

in Simplified English

Christmas Lesson: Seekers of the King

Bible Text

Matthew 2:1-12

Memory Verse

“When they saw the star, they were filled with much joy.” (Matthew 2:10)

Word List

myth: an idea or story that some think is true but is not true

traditions: something that has been done in the same way year after year, such as eating special foods on holidays, opening presents at Christmas, or singing songs on special days

virgin: a person who has never had sex

When my children were young, we celebrated Christmas with both the story of Jesus and the story of Santa Claus. We wanted them to know the story of Jesus was true. We also wanted them to know the story of Santa Claus was *not* true. They believed the story of Jesus because we had read it many times in the Bible. They knew the story of Santa was just for fun. But for some people, Santa is all they know of Christmas.

Many parents do things to make their

children believe in Santa. They ring bells on Christmas Eve night. They help children leave Santa a snack of cookies and milk. (Then the parents eat a bite of a cookie and drink the milk to make it look like Santa was there!) They take their children to see Santa at the mall. Then one day, the children learn that Santa is not real.

The truth about Santa is really a wonderful story about a kind man named Nicholas who lived around 300 B.C. He secretly gave money to girls who did not have enough money to get married. He secretly put money and treats in children’s shoes at night.

Over time, the truth about Nicholas was pushed aside. Other **traditions** were added. The **myth** of Santa Claus became what it is today. Here are some myths we hear every year at Christmas: Santa lives at the North Pole. He has elves who make all the toys. He keeps a list of good boys and girls. He travels in a big sleigh with flying reindeer.

Many people think Santa is the best thing about Christmas. But they are missing the best part of Christmas! They are missing the truth. They are missing the best gift of all.

The truth about why we celebrate Christmas is found in the Bible. In God’s Holy Word, we learn about the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.

Are you ready to seek truth this Christmas?

Searching for Jesus (Matthew 2:1-6)

Jesus was born in the right place.

About 700 years before Jesus was born, the early preacher, Micah, wrote that a King was coming: “Bethlehem ... from you One will come who will rule for Me in Israel. His coming was planned long ago, from the beginning” (Micah 5:1-2; Matthew 2:5-6). This King would be a leader of Israel and would be born in Bethlehem.

The people of Israel had heard Micah’s words read aloud many times when they went to the synagogue. They knew a King would be born in Bethlehem. But no one knew *when* that King would be born.

Jesus was born in the right family. The Bible tells us that Jesus’ birth was a miracle. He was born to a woman who was a **virgin**. That had never happened before! His mother, Mary, was a virgin when Jesus was born. She was engaged to marry Joseph, but they were not married yet. An angel had told Joseph that Mary’s baby was not from another man, but from the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18-25). God was Jesus’ Father in heaven. Joseph and Mary would care for Jesus as his parents on earth.

Jesus was fully God and fully human. That was a miracle, too! It is hard for us to understand how it could happen, but it was all part of God’s plan. Jesus was God’s gift to the people of the earth.

Jesus was born at the right time. Wise

men from the East knew something special had happened. They studied the stars and the very old writings to understand important events in the world. They saw a bright new star and traveled from the East to find the newborn “King of the Jews” (v. 2). One day, they arrived in Jerusalem.

But Jerusalem already had a king. Herod was king at that time. He was called King Herod the Great, but he was not great. He was not good or kind. He was angry, cruel, and jealous of anyone who might take his place as king. He killed his wife, mother-in-law, and three of his six sons.

When the wise men came to Jerusalem, they asked jealous King Herod about this new king. They wanted to find him and worship him. But this question caused Herod to worry. The people of Jerusalem worried, too. They knew Herod was a jealous man. If he was worried, they were worried. His jealousy might cause him to do something terrible.

Herod wanted to know more about this baby the wise men were calling the King of the Jews. He called a special meeting of all the religious leaders and teachers of the Law. They had only one question to answer: *Where was Christ to be born?* Their answer was to read Micah 5:2 to the king. Bethlehem in Judea was the place where this new King would be born.

Finding Jesus (Matthew 2:7-10)

Herod wanted to know more about when the special baby was born. He did not want others to know, so he had a secret meeting with the wise men. He asked when they had first seen the star. The wise men did not know much about King Herod. They did not know what terrible thing he was planning. So they told him what he wanted to know.

Herod told the wise men to go and find the young child. Then, he told them to come back and tell him where they found the child. He said he would go worship the new King, too. But Herod was not telling the truth.

Herod knew the new King was not a baby anymore. He knew it had taken the wise men about two years to travel from the East to Israel. The baby would now be about two years old. What would jealous Herod do?

About 600 years before Jesus was born, the early preacher, Jeremiah, wrote that something terrible would happen in Bethlehem: “The sound of crying and much

sorrow was heard in Ramah. Rachel was crying for her children. She would not be comforted because they were dead” (Jeremiah 31:15; Matthew 2:18).

Rachel was an ancestor of the Jews (Genesis 29-35). She was buried at Bethlehem (Genesis 35:19-20). The people who lived there felt a special closeness to Rachel, even though she had been gone for hundreds of years. Jeremiah had warned that one day, many children would die in Bethlehem.

This is the terrible truth of what King Herod did. He sent soldiers to Bethlehem to kill all the children two years old and younger. He was trying to kill the new King.

But God had sent an angel to tell Joseph to take Mary and Jesus far away before this happened. Jesus was safe.

Worshipping Jesus (Matthew 2:10-12)

But what about the wise men? Did they ever find the King? Yes! When they saw the star, they were filled with much joy. They followed it to Bethlehem. They knew the baby was about two years old then. They found the house where Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were living. They got down in front of Him just like people did when they met a king. They knew that He was much more than a king. They worshiped Him.

They gave gifts to Jesus just like they would give to a king. They gave Him gold, perfume, and spices. Gold was worth much

Things to Think About

1. What traditions do you have in your family for Christmas or another holiday like it?
2. Do you seek the King when you want to do the right thing to do or the right way to go? How do you seek the King?
3. What does God show you that brings you joy?
4. How does God tell you or show you how to live your life?
5. How can you honor Jesus as King of your life?

and was a gift for a king. The perfume was used by priests to burn it in the temple during worship. The spices were given when someone was dying to help ease pain. It was also used to prepare a body for burial. Each gift was important. Jesus would be the King who, like a priest, would be the bridge between man and God. Finally, Jesus would die for the sins of all people in the world.

God spoke to these wise men in a dream and told them not to go back to Herod. They obeyed God and went home a different way than they came. They did not tell King Herod where to find the Child King.

Things to Remember

God speaks to people in many different ways. God spoke to the wise men in the ways they understood, through the stars and in dreams. They saw Jesus as a king. We know today that He is the King of all kings.

Is Jesus your King? How do you worship Him and show your love to Him? Do you obey Him as your King? Be a seeker of truth this Christmas. Make Jesus the King of your heart.

Matthew 2:1-12

1 Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in the country of Judea. It was the time when Herod was king of that part of the country. Soon after Jesus was born, some wise men

who learned things from stars came to Jerusalem from the East.

2 They asked, “Where is the King of the Jews Who has been born? We have seen His star in the East. We have come to worship Him.”

3 King Herod heard this. He and all the people of Jerusalem were worried.

4 He called together all the religious leaders of the Jews and the teachers of the Law. Herod asked them where Christ was to be born.

5 They said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea. The early preacher wrote,

6 ‘You, Bethlehem of Judah, are not the least of the leaders of Judah. Out of you will come a King Who will lead My people the Jews.’”

7 Then Herod had a secret meeting with the men who learned things from stars. He asked them about what time the star had been seen.

8 He sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and find the young Child. When you find Him, let me know. Then I can go and worship Him also.”

9 After the king had spoken, they went on their way. The star they had seen in the East went before them. It came and stopped over the place where the young Child was.

10 When they saw the star, they were filled with much joy.

11 They went into the house and found the young Child with Mary, His mother. Then they got down before Him and worshiped Him. They opened their bags of riches and gave Him gifts of gold and perfume and spices.

12 Then God spoke to them in a dream. He told them not to go back to Herod. So they went to their own country by another road.