



Getting Started

Memory Verse(s)

With all our series, we have memory verse(s), both for adults and kids, though the kids are usually more diligent at learning them than the adults :)

For this series, our memory verses are 1:1-4.

Encourage your members to memorise the verses, as

- (1) it helps keep us integrating Luke together, in terms of its purpose; and
- (2) it's a gift to have Scripture in our mind for life, especially as we age.

How to read Luke 9-12

Having revealed who he is (9:18-20) and what he has come to do (v21-22, 31, 44) Jesus resolutely sets out for Jerusalem in 9:51 *"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem."*

The journey takes till 19:41-45, and all the way Jesus prepares his disciples for Jerusalem and beyond.

Jesus keeps clarifying:

(1) who he is

(2) what it means to follow him after he will be 'taken up to heaven' (9:51, 24:51, Acts 1:2).

Note:

Re (1): We need to be careful to first read Luke in terms of who Jesus is, and what he is saying about discipleship pre-resurrection and Pentecost (Acts 2), before we apply the lessons to ourselves. To not first read Luke in its unique historical context, we'll miss so much of who Jesus is and how he's uniquely doing for us what we can't, and we're in danger of accidentally ending up with a moralist reading.

Re (2): Each passage needs to be read in terms of the "now but not yet": ie *now* (we follow Jesus between his 1st and 2nd comings - God is already with us by his Spirit, our sins are forgiven) but not yet (we still long to see our Lord face-to-face, with no more struggle against sin).

Eg: Jesus' Temptation (Luke 4:1-13) can be read as 'how to not give into temptation, like Jesus did (eg we should quote passages of the Bible). But in context, it is saying something much grander - that Jesus is the unique human who can save us. He is the new Adam (hence the genealogy in 3:23-38) who can stand up to Satan on our behalf. What a relief! When we are tempted, and often give into temptation, we need to 1st rely on Jesus, before we consider him as a model for us.

Eg The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-13) can be read as 'we' should pray like Jesus'. But in context, Jesus says more about the motivation for prayer (v5-13 - ie see how loving your Father is - how he wants to give you good gifts). And even more significantly, when we see what Jesus says to pray (e.g. v4 'Forgive us our sins'), we're to recall 5:20 and 7:48 where it is Jesus who forgives. That is, we see that Jesus is the unique answer to the Lord's prayer. Jesus is the way God will bring about the 5 requests of the Lord's prayer.

A final suggestion: Luke keeps coming alive when we see the links (words, themes) throughout the gospel. We've indicated some in these Studies, but keep re-reading over Luke, and you're sure to discover some of your own!

Study 1

Study 1 is a fascinating passage about prayer. It may feel familiar in terms of what we often call the “Lord’s prayer”, but the rest of the details may be less familiar.

The disciples’ request is “teach us to pray”, but Jesus does much more than that! ie He teaches them (1) who to pray to, (2) what to pray, (3) why to pray, and (4) that he is the answer to all their prayers!

Even more deeply, the fact that Jesus “was praying” (v1), and will be the only one left praying in the garden of Gethsemane (22:40-46), shows that he is the only human who is fully dependent on God, and will die as that representative human on our behalf. ie Ultimately there is only one human who knows how to pray as one completely dependent on God, and he does so perfectly for us!

Back to the study ... We start with ‘who taught you to pray?’. Be sensitive to anyone new in the group who may not know how to pray. But most members should have some interesting stories/reflections. So much is learned by godly example.

We don’t know what caused the disciples to ask their question. But the references show that Jesus was often praying, and it was of vital importance.

- One occasion, heaven opened when he was praying (3:21-22).
- On another occasion, Jesus prayed all night (6:12).
- The transfiguration (9:28) happened when Jesus was praying.
- Jesus prayed full of joy through the Holy Spirit (10:21-22).

So it’s not surprising that they would ask him to teach them.

The prayer is addressed to ‘Father’: God is literally Jesus’ Father, and the disciples call him Father through him (11:13 ‘your Father’, see 10:22).

The 5 requests are:

1. Hallowed be your name.
2. Your kingdom come.
3. Give us today our daily bread.
4. Forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who sins against us.
5. Lead us not into temptation.

Re-writing in our own words helps us to reflect on what’s so familiar!

Jesus motivates his disciples to pray by 2 comparisons.

V5-10 (Contrast 1)

If a friend will reluctantly give you bread because of your 'shameless audacity' (ie that you pester him for it), how much more will a good Father love to give you good gifts.

le Just ask and God will be given to you. You don't need to pester God, or have all night prayer vigils. He doesn't need to be pressured into heeding your prayers. He loves to hear your prayers and give you more than you ask. "Just knock and the door will be opened to you". God is not waiting behind the door (like the friend awoken at midnight) hoping you'll go away. He loves to open the door.

V11-13 (Contrast 2)

Human fathers (who are all evil i.e. not perfect) still give good gifts to their kids. How much more will the perfect Father in heaven give the ultimate gift (the Holy Spirit) to anyone who asks! As we read on in the Bible, we find out that the Spirit points us to Jesus, applies his perfect life and atoning death to us and gives us a new heart which wants to follow him. So Jesus and the Spirit are the answer to the Lord's prayer (eg God's name being hallowed, his kingdom coming, forgiveness. And our daily bread and conviction away from temptation is utterly dependent on him).

Reflect

It would not make sense for Jesus to pray "Forgive me my sins", for himself, as he was perfect. However as our representative on the cross, he died on our behalf for all our sins.

Jesus was committed to all 5 requests, and so that is why he must go to Jerusalem, no matter the cost to see them fulfilled.

The Lord's Prayer - is it the form of prayer OR model of prayer? Both! It's a wonderful prayer to pray corporately. Though notice that the version in Matthew's Gospel (Mt 6:5-15) is slightly different. And the version in the Anglican Prayer Book adds another line to the end (as a summary for the entire context, and liturgical conclusion to the prayer). Hence, it is not the actual words but the content that is of first importance.

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
Now and forever. Amen.*

Matthew warns us not to be like the pagans who 'babble' (Matt 6:7), which can happen when we end up reciting prayers without thinking.

The Lords' prayer is one model for us, but there are many other model prayers in the Bible (e.g. some of Paul's prayers 1 Cor 1:4-9, 2 Cor 1:3-4, Eph 1:3-10, 4:14-21). So we want all the Scriptures to richly shape our prayers. A very helpful book on Paul's prayers is [Don Carson: Praying with Paul](#) that you can borrow from the Church office.

It would seem that praying to the Father should be our normal way of starting our prayers, as the great privilege is that, in Christ, we can pray to God like Jesus does - i.e. we are adopted as children! However, there are some occasions in the Bible, where Jesus is addressed directly, as he is our Lord like Acts 7:59, 1 Cor 16:22, Rev 22:20. This article gives more [depth](#). But the general pattern is: to the Father, in the name of Christ, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son (John 14:13-14).

Study 2

This study delves into an area that is mostly unfamiliar to us, though it can be more commonly experienced in overseas mission, especially in areas where there has been more explicit dealing with spiritual forces (eg witch doctors). There is an unseen spiritual realm of good (God, angels) and evil (Satan, demons). See Eph 6:10-20.

When the Son of God arrived on earth, in order to defeat Satan on the cross, it is not surprising that Satanic forces were very active (ie Satan rallies his forces to fight back), and so we see Jesus and his disciples remove demons from many people, as the long list of passages shows. Luke doesn't always describe much detail, but just records that it was happening.

The 5 responses are:

1. the demon left
2. the man who had been mute spoke
3. the crowd was amazed
4. some said Jesus was acting by Bezebul's authority
5. others tested him by asking for a sign.

Jesus basically says to them: it's completely illogical what you are saying!

V17-18 If Satan's workers (e.g. apparently Jesus) get rid of Satan's workers (e.g. demons), then won't Satan's kingdom collapse?

V19-20 If Jesus is working for Satan, then doesn't that mean the Pharisee's followers (literally "your son") are also working for Satan? No - it can't be that, so it must be proof that Jesus is part of the kingdom of God.

V21-22 Satan = the strong man with possessions (people); Jesus = the stronger man who can overpower him and plunder him.

V23-26 You can't be an empty house - i.e. sit on the fence/spiritual vacuum. You must be either with Jesus or Satan - there is no middle ground.

The blessed person is not Mary who gave birth to Jesus, but rather the person who listens to the word of God (Jesus) and obeys it (i.e. The blessed person knows God as Father and is part of a new spiritual family; 11:2 cf 8:19-21).

Reflect

Satan's power over us is as a deceiver on earth and as an accuser in heaven (Rev 12:9-10). Jesus' death strips Satan of his power to accuse, because we are now fully forgiven and thus fully exonerated of all guilt, and no longer slaves to Satan and sin.

However, this reality is now but not yet. Satan is still a prowling lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet 5:8), and will be finally silenced when Jesus returns (Rev 12:8-12). Satan will tempt us away from Jesus, and so we need to "be strong in the Lord" by knowing how to handle God's word and by prayer (Eph 6:10-20).

Should we expect demon possession today? These 2 articles are very helpful.

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-world-we-cannot-see/>

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/demon-possession-west/>

"First, we must stand on the truth that "the human heart is the biggest problem we face; thus, proclaiming the Word takes priority over casting out demons." Second, demons cannot possess believers [Luke 10:17-19, Col 1:13, 1 John 4:4], though this oppression can be so severe it may feel controlling ... Third, our Enemy is a schemer (Eph. 6:11), a cunning strategist who chooses whatever wiles he determines most effective in a given culture or situation. Possession is only one of his strategies—and not often the primary one. With those caveats in mind, we must accept the possibility of demon possession today while evaluating each situation prayerfully and wisely. My experience is that the prevalence of such activity varies around the world. Much of the world's population, for example, are animists who believe that "spiritual forces have power over human affairs" and therefore must be appeased or even manipulated. Fear often characterizes such religious cultures, and so it makes sense that powers would manifest themselves through possession to deepen local fear." (From 2nd article).

"Jesus knew their thoughts" is unnerving if we are rejecting Jesus or intentionally dabbling in sin. But it is supremely comforting when we trust Jesus for forgiveness, and know that he knows our true heart's desires for him, even if we're still sinful.

Study 3

This study takes some careful reading of the logic of the text to discover the “sign of Jonah” (v29–32) and how to avoid it (v33–36).

V29-32

The main idea is that it is wicked to ask Jesus for yet another sign from heaven (cf v16), given 11 chapters of signs so far, including the sign just before (v14). That is, the crowd's request for another sign reveals that they don't want to accept God's long awaited King standing in front of them (making them “a wicked generation” v29).

Jesus is damning in his critique of them, with 2 main examples:

- (1) The “sign of Jonah” is a terrible sign of judgement for those who reject God. If previous generations were judged for rejecting the prophets, how much more will this generation be judged, when they reject God's King? They are more wicked than the wicked Ninevites of Jonah's time, who eventually repented (Jonah 3:5).
- (2) There is no hope for them, if the great Queen of Sheba travelled so far to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now the source of Solomon's wisdom is right there in front of them, and they refuse to listen to him (Luke 11:28).

V33-36

These verses can be slightly confusing because light refers to different references. You might jump to thinking that the light in v33 is the crowd or disciples - ie “don't bury your light, let everyone see your light”, like Matthew 5:14-16. But in context, Luke is making a different point (like that in Luke 8:16-18).

Luke's main point in 11:29-32 is that it is wicked to reject Jesus, by demanding a sign. So v33 then makes the point about why that is wicked - ie the light (Jesus) is not hidden but available for all to see. Then v34-35 challenges the crowds about whether they have healthy or unhealthy eyes. Healthy eyes will recognise Jesus and he then brings light to the whole body. But unhealthy eyes, who don't recognise Jesus, lead to the body being full of darkness.

Reflect

Even as Christians, we can fall into the trap of that wicked generation, and demand signs from God. "I'll follow you if ...". Or more subtly "I'll follow you when ...".

Healthy eyes come from looking to (listening and obeying) Jesus, the light of the world. (John 8:12). Share practical ideas of how we can do that individually and together this week?

Study 4

This study is a big challenge to hypocrisy. We are all prone to hypocrisy, and recognising it helps us to keep seeing our complete need for Jesus more clearly. Think of your own examples to lead the group discussion with, so that everyone feels comfortable sharing their own stories. This study should not just be seeing where the historical Jewish leaders went wrong, but taking the warning for ourselves, by honest reflection and repentance.

We're not told the reason that this particular Pharisee invited Jesus to eat with him, but it is obvious from Jesus' response that it was disingenuous.

- (1) So far the Pharisees have been looking for ways to accuse Jesus and get rid of him and the passage finishes with v53-54.
- (2) Last time Jesus was invited to a Pharisee's house (7:36-50), Simon was exposed as a hypocrite, who recognised the woman as a sinner, but not himself. As a result, he did not think he needed forgiveness, and loved little.
- (3) The "woes" seem to be directed to both this Pharisee "said to him" and as well as more generally "you Pharisees" (11:39).

The Pharisee is "surprised" that Jesus has not followed the Jewish traditions, implying that he has been watching him carefully, looking for a way to "catch him" (v54). Jesus' rebuke is scathing (to say the least) - saying that while he might look ceremonially clean on the outside, he is unclean inside. Jesus designates him as foolish, because the one who made the outside (God) is also the one who made the inside. He needs to clean up the inside (swap greed for generosity), but this can only happen if God forgives his sins and gives him a new heart (see the New Covenant Jer 31, Eze 34, Luke 10:27, 12:34).

V45 is sadly comical because if the expert of the law had been listening to the previous 3 woes (directed to the Pharisees), he would have been rebuked rather than insulted - ie he shows his pride and hypocrisy.

Reflect

Example: Hypocrisy applied to prayer.

Matt 6:5-8 warns us that we can be hypocrites in our prayers. When could this happen?

- When we tell people that we have been praying for them, but forget to, and then quickly pray to relieve our conscience.
- When we subtly tell other people how much we have been praying, and feel proud of our piety.
- When we (think we) notice others not praying or not praying well, and in our heart judge them, or feel good about our prayer-life in comparison?
- When we think the answer to our prayers is our prayers, rather than God's Fatherly kindness.

V41 in context is saying that changing from being "full of greed" (11:39) and "hypocrisy" (12:1) to generosity, will indicate they have changed hearts by receiving Jesus and being cleaned (5:20, 23, 6:37, 7:43, 47-48).

Pray

Having been convicted of our own tendency to hypocrisy, you might like to pray the Lord's prayer together from 11:2-4, and ask for the forgiveness Jesus wonderfully offers to us all.

Study 5

This study should feel both sober and comforting. Jesus sums up the previous section (11:37-54) and warns the disciples about “the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy”. 11:33-36 speaks about light being seen and 12:2-3 says that even all hypocrisy will be revealed. This “show down” with the powerful Jewish leaders is hardly likely to end well.

Then Jesus goes on to comfort his disciples in the face of their fears (12:4-12). Their fears are very real and realistic, as Jesus will soon end up expediently crucified, as Jesus has warned them (9:22, 44). Even the voyeuristic crowds are dangerous as they're ‘trampling on one another’ (v1).

Jesus comforts his disciples in 5 ways:

v4-5 God is the one to fear (authority over hell), not the Jewish leaders or crowds.

v6-7 God doesn't forget even the cheapest sparrow, so he will not forget you.

v8-9 For those who are with Jesus, he will advocate for them in heaven (1 John 2:1).

v10 In our fear, we may shrink back from Jesus (eg Peter 22:57-62) - this can be forgiven. But those who maintain resistance to the Holy Spirit's work of pointing to Jesus can't be forgiven. Because Jesus is the only way to have our sins forgiven and acceptable for heaven, so if the Jewish leaders won't accept Jesus, in their persistence, they can't be forgiven.

v11-12 Under persecution, and after Jesus dies, the Holy Spirit will provide for the disciples - they will become the foundation for the church (see Luke's 2nd book Acts) and write the New Testament to provide for us all eternal words of faith.

Reflect

V10: What can't be forgiven is a persistent rejection of the Holy Spirit, who points us to Jesus - the only way to forgiveness of sin.

V11: This is explicitly promised to the early disciples, that they will be taught by the Holy Spirit to be the foundational witnesses of the church (24:48, Acts 1:8).

John Piper's article does not mention the unique message to the original disciples first, but has nice insights on how the Spirit now guides our words through what we know of God's words (eg Col 3:16).

Pray

There's volumes of tearful information about the persecuted church. To make it containable for your group, you could ask 4 group members to look at one website each and bring to the group one highlight story/point for prayer.

Study 6

In Luke 12:1-12 and v22-34 Jesus is comforting his disciples in their fears/worries, with v13-21 sandwiched in between, highlighting in relief what not to worry about - an abundance of possessions.

Again, take the lead in the 'Getting Started' question and be honest about one of your worries, so that the group feels safe to share, and then you can model how the passage has transformed your thinking in the 'Reflect' section.

V13-21

In all likelihood, the man was worried about getting justice in a family inheritance dispute with his brother. But Jesus warns him about his heart (cf 11:39) - was the "rich fool" putting his confidence in and more concerned about his possessions rather than God (as the parable indicates v16-21)? With Jesus literally standing before you, what should you ask? (10:25).

Jesus' response is ironic, as he is indeed the Judge of all things.

Jesus uses the man's request to warn the whole crowd about all kinds of greed (11:39, 12:15). It's not that money is evil, but *"the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."* (1 Tim 6:10).

v22-34

The disciples ultimately have no need to worry about food and clothes because of how much our God cares for us, and the infinite value of seeking his kingdom. Drawing a picture may help to visualise and remember some of the images.

V31 is not the prosperity gospel. It's saying that God wants to give good gifts to his children (v22-30), and so if we seek him/his kingdom, then that is what he will do. If he's going to give us his kingdom, then food and clothes are a given.

Reflect

We can be like the rich fool when we anchor our life in possessions. Being “rich towards God” simply means trusting God as our security (which v22-34 describes so well). This will mean using our possessions for kingdom treasure (v33), which will expose where our heart really is (v34).

After hearing the parable, the man should beg Jesus for forgiveness for his greed and ask to follow him. He might still pursue his inheritance, through the right channels, but the reason would be so that he can serve the kingdom, rather than accumulate possessions like the rich fool.

Different kinds of greed are ... [e.g. always wanting the newest/best, seeking to accumulate more than we need, not thinking how we can be generous to others rather than to ourselves].

The fear of God doesn't remove all fears but re-frames all other fears - so in that way 'frees' us from them.

Study 7

Despite multiple uses of “servant”, the overall of this passage is clear - i.e. the idea of being ready for Jesus' 2nd coming. But there's a few extra layers in v41-48, where Jesus ends up concluding that people will be judged according to what they have been given (responsibility and knowledge).

V25-40

There's lots of verbs in the NIV: dressed, keep [your lamps burning], waiting, [immediately] open [the door], watching, be ready.

The huge surprise is the master dresses himself to serve, allows the manager-servants to recline at the table and comes and waits on him! This seems completely outrageous. Which begs the question - who is this incredible master?

V41-48

It's not clear why Peter asks his question - is he thinking this incredible master is especially for the disciples or even more strangely for everyone? Jesus has said in v32 that the Father has been pleased to give the kingdom to his “little flock”, so perhaps Peter is innocently wondering how many are included in the kingdom. Or perhaps he is proudly hoping for special privileges like the disciples back in 9:46-50.

Jesus' answer starts with 2 manager-servants who have been given responsibility by the master (v42-46). In context, this could be applied to

- the faithful disciples and unfaithful Jewish leaders.

He then describes 2 servants, who have been given different levels of knowledge by the master (v47-48a). In context, this could be applied to

- the unfaithful Jewish leaders - either in defiance or ignorance (11:46, 52)

The main conclusion is that God's judgement is fair, and that every person will be held to account by the master. This answers Peter's question - everyone needs to be ready - but more will be expected of those who have been given responsibility, like the leaders, and the generation meeting Jesus face-face. (Jam 3:1, 1 Cor 3:10-15).

Reflect

To describe what 'being dressed ready for service' looks like day-to-day varies in any given context (Phil 2:12-13). Martin Luther is credited with saying, "Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree". And Jonathan Edwards does the flip side: "Would I be happy to be doing what I am doing right now, if I was about to meet Jesus?"

In our heart we know whether we're happily living for today and content that Jesus doesn't come back yet, or whether we clearly long for God's kingdom to come so that finally his name will be honoured (11:2). In the now but not yet, we're such a mixture of both, but overall, where is your heart?

The classic question to a wedding couple is, "Would you be happy if Jesus came back before your wedding?" We need to keep asking the equivalent question to ourselves. Is Jesus' return our greatest hope and life desire - do we long for his return? This will be reflected in our: (reverent) fear of God and consciousness of hell (v5); witness (v8-9); generosity (v33); care for others in our responsibility (v42-43); and in our obedience to God's commands (v47). "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (v34).

There do appear to be different levels of judgement - but the main idea is that God will judge fairly, and that we will be held responsible with what we have been given and know. The leaders (Jewish and disciples) have been given much, as was everyone in that "wicked generation" (11:29). Similarly, we are so privileged to know so much about Jesus, and this knowledge (and the warning of v48) should spur us on to good works for our master.

Study 8

This final study continues on from v35-48 the idea of judgement. But now Jesus talks about the coming judgement on the whole world. Hence, we see the importance of recognising Jesus' signs now, before final judgement comes.

V49-53

Judgement is described earlier in Luke as a 'fire', and Jesus wishes it was already kindled/ready, for the sake of God's righteousness (the master being treated properly v45-46), and to avoid the "baptism of fire" all alone (i.e. the judgement taken on the cross 22:42-44, 24:44-46) - "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*" (22:20). [Note: A curious verse is 22:52 - is it just a description of a kindling fire, or could it be the final chance for Peter to be reconciled with Christ before his death?]

Earlier verses in Luke speak of Jesus bringing peace. But here he is emphatic that he is not bringing peace, but division. These 2 concepts connect: Jesus has come to bring division on earth - between those who will accept him as Saviour (= peace), and those who will reject him (= bring judgement on themselves).

V54-59

The people are hypocrites because they read the weather signs, but don't care about reading Jesus' signs (which are eternally more important).

The adversary is God (and his entrusted servant-king Jesus) - the master v35-48. It is vital to be reconciled to him, before it's too late (v46, 58-59). This is possible if we read the 'signs', and understand Jesus' baptism.

Reflect

It is hard to navigate the 'division' in our families that's inevitable when we become a believer, because as much as we love our families, Jesus is now our 1st priority (8:19-21). This takes much love, wisdom and prayer, and the encouragement and wisdom of fellow believers. It can be as simple as not understanding how we spend our money, or why we have certain views on sexuality, or why we don't prioritise family gatherings (and many other activities) every Sunday. Sometimes we make unwise decisions that cause unnecessary divisions, for which we should apologise, and sometimes we don't model to our family a God priority, for which we should apologise too (and repent of).