



ENCOUNTERS IN LUKE

ADVENTURE OF A LIFETIME

(10 BIBLE STUDIES)

EXAMINATION APPLICATION

BIBLE STUDIES

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THE SMALL PRINT

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Your Commitment

I would encourage you to make a commitment to attending your group regularly. I realise that sometimes there are things that get in the way, but do prioritise studying the Bible with other. This will involve sacrifice, and effective use of your time, but I really believe that in doing so you will get the most out of studying the Bible and praying together in your small group.

Your Contribution

What you put into the group is going to determine what you get out of the group. I encourage you to contribute honestly to the discussion and workings of the group. I understand people come from different backgrounds with unique personalities & life experiences. But, we all have a big part to play, so I encourage you to be fully present and take ownership of your group.

Your Preparation

These materials are primarily for use in preparing and/or leading group discussions, but they will also be useful in keeping your thoughts together in one place. The materials provide you with the passage so that you can identify and highlight recurring themes and note down your own thoughts and questions. Also, the materials include questions designed to provoke thought, and help you reflect on what the passage meant, both at the time it was written, and also what it means for us now.

I would encourage you to make good use of these materials, as doing so will help you contribute and get the most out of the group discussions. The materials are, however, only “tools” – they are there to help you, and not to restrict you, or force you to think in a certain manner. I want to see God speaking to you through these passages, and if the questions or notes don't help you, simply don't use them!

I have also included within these materials an introduction to the book. Make of this what you will, but I hope that it is helpful in getting you started with these studies!

Your Leadership

Here are some useful pointers in how to lead your Bible study group. Be aware that included in this study guide are more questions than you can possibly ask and/or answer in one session. They are not designed to be used rigidly, and there will rarely be a need to ask every question! Make sure that you spend some time praying at the start and ensure you read & re-read the passages as much as possible. In relation to the passages, then consider the suggested questions with an open mind. There is rarely “a single right answer” and I would encourage you to share your thoughts with your group.

Where applicable I have also included quotations from relevant Christian literature, most of which are readily available online if you want to do further thinking or study. My prayer is that as you study together you would grow to love Jesus and experience Him more deeply.

I would appreciate your feedback and suggestions on how to make these materials even better!

Steve McClure, Spring 2019

Luke and His purpose

Luke begins his gospel declaring that others had already written accounts about the life of Jesus (probably Matthew & Mark). Luke himself had not been an eyewitness to the life of Jesus, but he had undertaken to draw up his own account. The opening words include a clear statement of purpose:

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. **Luke 1:1-4**

Luke was a doctor and travelling companion of the Apostle Paul. He wrote both Luke's gospel and also the Acts of the Apostles. It appears that Luke was a Gentile for he is not mentioned in the list of Jews Paul mentions in Colossians 4:10-11, 14. This of course gives him a unique vantage point with which to write and we will see that from his choice of material include within his account. Luke approaches his gospel as a historian, and its clear from the verses above that he has worked hard to investigate fully all that had happened. The account is addressed to the most excellent Theophilus. Some suggest that being addressed as Most Excellent was evidence that he was a Roman Government official. I think this is very likely and from the text we can also see that he had already experienced some teaching in the Christian faith. Luke's purpose is to bring further certainty about these things.

The Four Gospel Portraits

In 1999 Andrew Page, a friend of mine introduced me to what he called the four gospel portraits. Andrew uses this as a great way of getting our heads around the contrasting focus' of the four Gospels. In Ephesians 3:18 Paul prays for the Ephesians that they would be able to grasp the dimensions of the love of Christ in terms of its width, length, height and depth. Andrew says that we can overlay these dimensions very helpfully onto the four gospels:

Matthew's Gospel: Length

- The focus of Matthew is about Length. Matthew shows us how Jesus fulfilled the many promises made long ago about the coming Messiah. We often find Matthew quoting the Old Testament in what is the most *Jewish* of the gospels.

Mark's Gospel: Depth

- The focus of Mark is about Depth. Mark emphasises how the glorious Son of Man become a human being to suffer and die.

Luke's Gospel: Width

- The focus of Luke is about Width. He demonstrates that Jesus is the Saviour of the whole world with a special love for the Gentiles and those whom society rejects.

John's Gospel: Height

- The focus of John is about Height. John shows that Jesus is God who left the glory of Heaven to come to earth in order to be lifted up on the cross and so into the glory of His Father again.

In this second set of studies in Luke's gospel (see *Parables of Jesus in Luke*) I am going to focus on encounters that Jesus has with various people. If Luke is about width, then it is no surprise that many of Jesus' encounters in Luke happen with people such as women, children and social outcasts. Some of the most well-known encounters include people like the paralysed man, the sick woman, the blind beggar, the sinful woman, Zacchaeus the tax collector and the criminals who hung next to Jesus on the cross. There may be the odd parable included here (which involves an encounter) and the odd encounter included in the previous series (which includes a parable) but not in both.

Encounters with people

Much of the Gospels is about Jesus' encounter with people. We know that he invested a huge amount of time in the lives of the twelve disciples who would follow him for the next three years. Jim Egli & Paul Zehr studied the gospels and estimated that Jesus spent 49% of his time with the disciples and even more than that as he neared the cross.

Jesus multiplied his life in the twelve so that there would be more of Himself to go around...He lived with the urgency of a three-year timeline. With the cross before him, He knew that He had to prepare the twelve to carry on His mission." Greg Ogden in Transforming Discipleship

What is really interesting in Luke's gospel, are the unique encounters (and for that matter parables) that Luke records: many of them are not found in the other gospels. To that end, we devote our time as we see how Jesus interacted with different people.

The Gospel's radical breadth

God has always had a heart for all those He created. Yes, He chose Israel out of all the peoples of the world to be His chosen people, but even they were to be a missionary nation:

'It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.' **Isaiah 49:6**

For whatever reason, the people of Israel had turned inward somewhat, but Jesus' cuts right across the accepted social norms of the day. His heart was for all and He went out of His way to accept those He encountered and especially those whom society rejected. When Jesus spoke in Nazareth, he read from Isaiah 61 and then He told them that these words had been fulfilled in their hearing.

¹⁶...He stood up to read, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: ¹⁸'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' ²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. ²¹ He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.' **Luke 4:16b-21**

Jesus came into our world to proclaim freedom, heal the blind and set free the oppressed. He came not for the supposedly healthy, but for the sick. He came for people like you and me.

**To God be the glory;
Steve McClure January 2021**

STUDY 1 – LUKE 3:1-4:13 – JOHN, THE FATHER AND THE DEVIL

INTRODUCTION: John the Baptist prepares the way for Jesus as he preached a baptism of repentance. During this time Jesus too is baptised by John and we have a record of His encounter with his Father. The Holy Spirit comes on Him and His Father testifies that this is His son whom He loves. Immediately after that the Spirit leads Him into the wilderness where He is tempted by Satan.

SETTING THE SCENE: Think about people that you have encountered over the past six months: what is particularly memorable about those times? Jesus' ministry begins with three memorable encounters with John the Baptist, His Father and the devil: why do you think these were so significant at this time?

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JOHN THE BAPTIST (3:1-14): What do we learn here about John the Baptist and why he came (see especially the quote from Isaiah 40:3-5)? What do John's strong words throughout v7-14 tell us about his commitment to speaking the truth? What were the consequences for John (see v18-20 & 9:7-9)?

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A GREATER BAPTISM (3:15-17): How do you understand John's contrast between his *baptism of water for repentance* and Jesus' *baptism with the Spirit and fire* (v16)? When do you think such a baptism takes place? What is the significance in the treatment of the wheat and the chaff (v17)?

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JESUS' BAPTISM (3:21-22): Jesus comes to John to be baptised, but John tries to defer him (see Matthew 3:13-17): why was it necessary for Jesus to be baptised (v21)? How do you think the Spirit descending on Him and the voice from Heaven would have encouraged Jesus and been a witness to those watching? What impact might this have had on John the Baptist (see John 1:29-34)?

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ARE YOU THE MESSIAH (7:18-23): Later there is a second (albeit indirect) encounter between Jesus and John the Baptist: why do you think he sends his disciples to ask if Jesus was the Messiah given his earlier clarity (e.g., had he misunderstood Jesus' mission)? What is your reaction to Jesus' cryptic response to him in v21-23? In what sense does he answer John's question?

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JESUS' GENEALOGY (3:24-37): Luke includes Jesus' genealogy (see Matthew 1:1-17): why is Jesus' genealogy important for Luke's audience? What particular aspects does Luke emphasise compared to Matthew? What was the significance of Jesus beginning His ministry aged 30 (v23, Numbers 4:2-3)?

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TEMPTED BY THE DEVIL (4:1-13): Why was it important for the Spirit to lead Jesus into the desert and what were the devil's intentions? How would you describe the nature of the three temptations (v3, v5-7 & v9-11)? What can we learn from how Jesus deal with them (v4, v8 & v12)? In what ways was this not the end of it (v13)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: How would you summarise the major lessons from the encounters Jesus has here (John the Baptist, His Father and the devil)? If you've been baptised, what was the impact of this in your life? If not, why not? How has God spoken powerfully in your life about your new identity in Christ? What is your own experience of the devil's temptation in your life?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank the Father for sending His Son and introducing Himself to you. Ask God to help you to know His Word deeply to combat temptation. Pray that like John you would also be able to boldly speak the truth (in love), even when it comes at great personal cost.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 3:16

STUDY 2 – LUKE 5:1-11, 27-32 – THE PEOPLE JESUS CALLED

INTRODUCTION: This second encounter is had by those Jesus called to come and follow Him: the people who would become His disciples. Following Jesus involves a step of faith seeing ourselves as we really are. It will not be easy, and it is for life. Yet we will see that it is totally worth it.

SETTING THE SCENE: At the outset of this study, how would you describe what it means to follow Jesus? On a more personal level, what has following Jesus involved for you? What things have you found most encouraging and most challenging about following Jesus?

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COME AND SEE (JOHN 1:38-42): These verses record an earlier occasion when Andrew and Peter met Jesus: what impresses you about the simplicity of what happens in these verses as Jesus calls Andrew to *come and see* and then Andrew brings Peter to come and meet the Messiah?

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BACK TO THE FISHING (LUKE 5:1-3): Sometime later (perhaps up to a year) we find Peter, Andrew (see Matt 4:18-22), James and John fishing: what do you think they have been doing since he first met Jesus (see 4:38-39)? Why do you think Jesus called them to first *come and see*?

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PETER'S STEP OF FAITH (LUKE 5:4-7): Why would Jesus' instructions to go back out fishing have seemed so at odds with their experience as fisherman? How do you think Peter felt about taking his boat back into the deep water and letting down the nets (note: the time of day, lack of fish & work done cleaning)? would you describe the scale of the subsequent catch for these trawler men?

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SEEING OURSELVES AS WE REALLY ARE (LUKE 5:8-10a): What do you think causes Peter to respond to Jesus with *Go away from me, Lord, I am a sinful man*? What impact has realising your own sinfulness had on your life? What do you think Peter was afraid of (v10a)?

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COME AND FOLLOW (LUKE 5:10b-11): What do you think Jesus meant when He tells the disciples that from now on, they would fish for people (v10b)? Why did the fishermen leave their boats and nets *at once*? If you were called in a similar way to follow Jesus, would you leave at once? Why or why not?

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THE CHALLENGE: Why was pulling up their boats and leaving everything such a challenge for these fishermen? What might such a step of faith to follow Jesus look like for you today?

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CALLING THE SICK (5:27-32): What similarities do you see in how Jesus calls Levi, the tax collector (v27-28)? Why was Jesus attendance of Levi's party so controversial for the Pharisees (v29-30)? What confuses, shocks or impresses you about Jesus' response in v31-32?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Very quickly Peter and Levi's lives were turned on their heads having followed Jesus and left their homes and livelihoods. What do you sense that God wants to do in and through your life? What steps can you begin to take to move in the direction God is leading you in?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank Jesus for His patience with us, and that He has a plan for each of our lives. Ask God to call you to Himself and to begin to reveal what it is that He wants to do in and through your life. Ask God to help you take steps of faith and begin to face up to who you really are.

MEMORY VERSES: LUKE 5:10b-11

STUDY 3 – LUKE 5:12-26 – THE LEPER AND THE PARALYSED MAN

INTRODUCTION: The people Jesus meets in this passage were treated as outcasts by society. Jesus goes against the grain to show love, grace and compassion to each of them. Whatever society thinks of us, Jesus loves and cares for us; the gospel really is good news for everyone.

SETTING THE SCENE: What kinds of people do our communities tend to ostracise and why? Give examples of the sort of people who can at times make us feel nervous or uncomfortable? What steps can we take to stand up against such prejudice?

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THE UNCLEAN LEPER (v12-13): Lepers were social outcasts and because they were deemed unclean (Leviticus 13 & 14), they had to live in isolation: what do the leper's actions and words reveal about his faith in Jesus (v12)? What does this teach us about how we should come to Jesus?

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RESULTING IMPACT (v14-16): Why do you think Jesus did not want the leper to tell others about what he did (v14)? Why do you think the Leper does the opposite to this (v15)? What can we learn from Jesus' tendency here to withdraw to lonely places to pray (v16)?

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THE PARALYTIC (v17-26): What would life have looked like for the Paralytic (think both physically & emotionally)? What would it have been like to have been in the house with Jesus and experience the events of this section? How hard is it to lower a man through a flat roof on his mat?

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HIS FRIENDS (v18-20): What do you think his friends hoped to achieve by taking him to Jesus? What were the pros & cons of their plan? What risks or obstacles were associated with their audacious plan?

What is the significance of Mark's comment that when Jesus saw *their faith* (v20), He said to the paralytic, *Son, your sins are forgiven*? How would they have reacted to Jesus' response?

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OUR GREATEST NEED (v20-22): What does Jesus imply was the paralysed man's greatest need? Why is this? Why do the teachers of the law respond so strongly to Jesus here? How would you (and or your friends) react to Jesus' assertion here?

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WHICH IS EASIER (v23-24): How would you answer Jesus' question about which is easier to say: *to forgive sins or to heal*? What does the healing of the paralysed man tell the teachers of the law and the crowd about Jesus' authority?

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RESPONSES (v25-26): What strikes you about the responses of both the paralysed man and the crowds who were watching on? What remarkable things is God doing in your life that would amaze your friends and maybe even cause them to praise God?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What would be the equivalent of such prejudices today? How does Jesus expect us to treat those who are outcasts? How do these encounters shape your understanding of Jesus and His love and concern for His people?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that He has mercy on sinners like us. Ask God to give us an increased awareness of our own sin and not just the sin of others. Ask God to help us to have Jesus' heart and compassion for those that society looks down upon.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 5:24

STUDY 4 – LUKE 7:36-50 – THE PHARISEE AND THE SINFUL WOMAN

INTRODUCTION: This encounter contrasts two very different people. Jesus was visiting Simon's house, while the woman was gate crashing. It would not have been a private event, but she would not have been welcome. People would recline on low couches with their feet behind them, away from the table. It was the job of lowest servant to wash the street dirt from the guests' feet when they arrived.

SETTING THE SCENE (7:31-35): Jesus likens his listeners to bored kids who can't make up their minds what they want: what do you make of Jesus' assessment of what they thought of both Him and John the Baptist? Why does Jesus conclude saying *wisdom is proved right by all her children* (v35)?

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SIMON'S INVITATION (v36): What do you think caused Simon to invite Jesus for dinner (see 4:24)? How do you imagine it would have been like to be at Simon's banquet (see Introduction)? What do we learn about Simon and how does that explain his negative reaction towards the woman (v39)?

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AN UNWELCOME VISITOR (v37-39): It seems that the woman was there when Jesus arrived (v45): what do we learn about her and is what she does so extraordinary (nb: it was very unusual for a woman to let her hair down in public and hair was considered the most glorious part of the body)? Why do the woman's actions evoke such a strong response from Simon (v39)?

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PARABLE OF THE TWO DEBTORS (v40-43): What is the meaning of this short parable that Jesus tells Simon? Charles Spurgeon said: "All men are debtors to God; yet some are greater debtors than others": do you think Simon understood this? How big a debt has Jesus forgiven for you?

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THE PARABLE APPLIED (v44-47): How does Jesus contrast the quality of love that both Simon and the woman (v44c-46) had shown towards him? Why according to v41-42 did Simon love so little?

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THE RESPONSE OF THE FORGIVEN (v47-50): When, and on what basis, do you think that the woman was 'forgiven' (v47) and 'saved' (v48). What in your experience is the correlation between forgiveness and the ability to love others? How did the woman's great love demonstrate that her sins had already been forgiven (v48) and that she had been saved by faith (v50)?

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LEARNING FROM JESUS: Contrast how Jesus communicates with both the woman and with Simon: what does this say about his understanding of each? How can we learn from the basis with which Jesus welcomes and loves the woman (love verses prejudice)? Who do we treat with prejudice?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Consider what the implications would have been for both the woman (how she would now be treated by Jesus' followers) and for Simon (the outcome of Jesus' gentle rebuke). How do you see the good news transforming your life and the lives of those around you?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Share with one another some of your learning points from this encounter and pray into these things. Ask God to give you a deeper appreciation of the debt that has been forgiven in your own lives and ask Him to enable you to respond both to Him and to others in love.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 7:47

STUDY 5 – LUKE 8:22-39 – THE DISCIPLES AND THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

INTRODUCTION: Luke now records two quite different experiences for the disciples. First a familiar challenge (for the fisherman at least) as they faced a squall on the lake and second a more unfamiliar challenge as they encounter some very strange things on the other side of the Lake. The two encounters both evoke a fair amount of fear, but Jesus encourages them to respond in faith.

SETTING THE SCENE: What kind of things makes you afraid and why? Can you think of a time when fear froze out faith in your own life? Specifically, what was it about the fear that was so overwhelming and why was it so hard to respond in faith?

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THE DISCIPLES CAUGHT IN THE STORM (v22-25): How do the disciples respond to the storm and why was this surprising (think of their profession)? Why do you think the disciples woke Jesus up? Why are the disciples still fearful even after Jesus calms the storm? Why is Jesus so harsh on them (see how Jesus scolds rather than comforts them in v25)?

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When has it felt like God is ignoring an overwhelming crisis in your life? What are some of the obstacles in the minds of your friends that make it hard to persuade them that Christ is Sovereign? Can you think of a time when your concept of God was shattered by His display of power?

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ENCOUNTERING THE UNFAMILIAR (v26-27): Having travelled across the lake Jesus meets this man: what was unusual about him (see also account in Mark 5:3-5)? How might the disciples have felt about this encounter (especially after the journey across the lake)?

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CLASH OF CULTURES (v28-33): For these Jewish disciples, what would some of the culture shocks or unfamiliar things that they would have experienced here? How do you respond to Jesus' decision to allow the demons to destroy the pigs? What does this imply about what the demons were trying to do to the man and the value Jesus places on the man?

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IN HIS RIGHT MIND (v34-36): How do you think the disciples feel about the man following his dramatic transformation? Where do you think the man gets his clothes from (v35)? What is the initial response of the local people about what had happened in these verses? Why were they afraid (v35)?

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RESONSES (v37-39): What sort of response do the local people have now and what effect do you think that would have on the disciples? What is their real problem with Jesus? Look at Jesus' response to this rejection in v37b; is there any hope for these people? Why does Jesus send the demon-possessed man home to tell his family what God had done for him?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What do you observe here about Jesus, esp. His attitude and how He responds to the different situations? What can we learn from how the different people in this story respond to Jesus? What might it look like to respond to both the familiar and the unfamiliar in faith?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that we never face either the familiar or the unfamiliar on our own: Jesus is always with us. Share together about some of the things that are currently freezing out faith in your life and pray into these things.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 8:25

STUDY 6 – LUKE 8:40-56 – THE SYNAGOGUE RULER AND THE SICK WOMAN

INTRODUCTION: Having returned from the region of the Gerasenes Jesus has two encounters first with Jairus the Synagogue ruler, and then from the sick woman. Both encounters have much to teach us about faith especially when untimely interruptions get in the way.

SETTING THE SCENE: Sometimes we find ourselves praying persistently without God appearing to answer: what examples can you give and how did you (or are you) responding? What do you think of the idea that God's answers are fivefold: *Yes, No, Wait Mind your business & Do it yourself*

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INTRODUCING JAIRUS (v40-42): Why do you think the crowds were waiting to expectantly when Jesus returned? What was the role/responsibility of the ruler of the synagogue? What would it have cost a man like Jairus to come to Jesus publicly, humbly and plead for his daughter?

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THE PLEA OF A DESPERATE MAN: Why do you think Jesus chose to go with him to his daughter rather than just heal her with a word like the Centurion's daughter (7:7-10)? Where else do we see Jesus responding to the measure of faith people have shown? How does this encourage you?

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INTRODUCING THE SICK WOMAN (v43): The crowds almost crushed Jesus and amongst them was a woman who had suffered with bleeding for twelve years: what must this have been like for her (see also footnote)? How did her condition impact her treatment by society (Leviticus 15:19-31)?

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HEALED IN FAITH (v44-48): Touching Jesus' cloak leads to immediate healing: why however is Jesus so concerned about who touched him (see the disciple's reaction also)? How might the woman have felt as Jesus sought her out? In what sense did her *faith* heal her (v48)

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INCONVENIENT INTERRUPTIONS: How do you think Jairus would have felt about this most unwelcome interruption as they travelled to see his daughter? What is your experience of inconvenient interruptions proving to be opportunities to exercise faith?

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A CALL TO RADICAL FAITH (v49-50): If the first interruption was not enough, how do you think Jairus now feels having received the news that his daughter had died? Why does Jesus respond saying *Don't be afraid*? What is your experience of fear freezing out faith? How hard would this have been for Jairus to *believe* and see her *healed*?

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AN INCREDIBLE MIRACLE (v51-56): What do you imagine it would have been like to be at Jairus' house amidst all the mourning, wailing and mocking? What do you find most astonishing about the way that Jesus heals the girl? Why does He tell them not to tell anyone about what had happened (v56)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Does the fact that Jesus can do miracles, mean that if we believe, we should expect a life free of troubles and sickness? Why or why not? How do you respond to the notion that Jesus will use anything and everything in our lives to grow our faith and teach us to trust Him?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that He has power over sickness and even death. Ask God to help you to believe in faith that He is able to do even the impossible if it is His will to do so. Bring to God any current needs and situations that you have been praying into and ask Him to act.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 8:50

STUDY 7 – LUKE 18:15-30 – THE LITTLE CHILDREN & THE RICH RULER

INTRODUCTION: Luke draws a sharp contrast between Jesus' encounters with the little children (v15-17) and the Rich Ruler (v18-30). Jesus explained how we all need to receive the Kingdom of God like the children and be willing to let go of even the things most important to us in order to follow Him.

SETTING THE SCENE: What would you say are the costs and benefits of following Jesus? What contrast would there be (if any) between your answer and that of your friends? What kind of things hold you back (or have held you back in the past) from following Jesus?

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LITTLE CHILDREN (v15): Why do you think people wanted Jesus to touch their children (v15a)? How do you understand the disciple's response in rebuking them (v15b)? In what ways might we hinder others from coming to God: e.g., deciding who should/shouldn't be able to come to Jesus?

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD (v16-17): Who exactly does Jesus say that the Kingdom of God belongs to (v16)? What does it mean to receive the Kingdom of God like little children? To what extent does this child-like trust mean that we should or shouldn't question the things we hear about God?

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THE RICH RULER (v18): Jesus's encounter with the rich ruler is also included in Matt 19:16-30 and Mark 10:17-31: what do you think motivates this man to come to Jesus (notice the details in Mark 10:17a)? What do you make of the question that he asks Jesus (see esp. Matt 19:16)?

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WHY DO YOU CALL ME GOOD (v19-21)? Why does Jesus respond with the question *why do you call me good?* Why then does Jesus mention only five of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:16-20)? Is the man a liar or a fool for declaring that he has kept these commandments since his youth? Does Jesus imply that following the law is sufficient to inherit eternal life?

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THE COST OF FOLLOWING JESUS (v22-23): Jesus tells the man that he still lacks one thing: why was it important for this man to give up his possessions? Are we expected to do the same: why or why not? Both Matt 19:22 & Mark 10:22 say he went away sad: why was it so hard for him to follow Jesus?

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NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR GOD (v24-27): How do we respond to Jesus's declaration that it is very difficult for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God? Why is this the case? How does Jesus illustrate the human impossibility of following Jesus with His example of the camel and the eye of the needle?

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RICH REWARDS (v28-30): To what extent can you identify with Peter's response? What do you understand this reward (described as a hundred times in Mark/Matthew) to mean both in the present age and in the age to come (v29-30)? From what you have read and/or experienced, is it all worth it?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What practical steps can we take to become like little children in receiving the Kingdom of God and in letting go of absolutely everything, in order to follow Him?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank God that He wants us to trust Him like the little children. Ask God to help you to trust Him more wholeheartedly and to not hold on too tightly to the things of this world. Thank God that nothing is impossible for Him and pray for your friends to trust Him also.

MEMORY VERSES: LUKE 18:29-30

STUDY 8 – LUKE 18:31-19:10 – THE BLIND BEGGAR AND ZACCHAEUS

INTRODUCTION: The focus of these verses are two very different men but both of whom are socially ostracised by society: the blind beggar and Zacchaeus the tax collector. For both of these men, meeting Jesus is an experience that transformed their lives.

SETTING THE SCENE (18:31-34): Luke records Jesus predicting his suffering and death for a 7th time in these verses (5:35; 9:22, 43-45; 12:50; 13:32-33 & 17:25): how does what Jesus says here compare to what He has said previously? Why do you think the meaning was hidden from the disciples?

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THE BLIND BEGGAR’S FAITH (18:35-39): What do you imagine that life was like for this blind man? What had the man understood about Jesus which others had not? What does the title “Son of David” (see also “Son of Man” in v31) tell us about Jesus? Why do you think Jesus stops for the beggar?

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I WANT TO SEE (18:40-43): Why does Jesus ask him such a seemingly obvious question (v41)? What does Jesus mean by *Your faith has healed you* (v42): is it simply a matter of demonstrating faith? What’s the outcome of this healing for the man and for others? Why do you think Luke waits until now to record an account of Jesus healing the blind (see 4:18-19 & 7:21-22)? Who else was blind here?

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CLIMBING THE TREE (19:1-4): What does Luke tell us about Zacchaeus? Why was Zacchaeus’s profession such a big deal (NB: Matthew had become a disciple and many other tax collectors had been baptised by John)? What was it he believed about Jesus which motivated him to climb the tree?

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COME DOWN (19:5-7): What caused Jesus to notice Zacchaeus up the tree (e.g., divine power or a mocking crowd)? How did Jesus' instruction to Zacchaeus (to come down immediately and welcome Him for dinner) go down with the crowd (inviting yourself to dinner was pretty counter-cultural)? How did this invitation demonstrate Jesus' love and acceptance? What was the cost of doing so to Jesus?

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TRUE REPENTANCE (19:8): How does Zacchaeus demonstrate that he has truly embraced Jesus' offer of salvation (see also Leviticus 6:2-5)? What might it look like for you to offer the grace you have received to others...i.e., what impact should accepting Jesus have on our lives?

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SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST (19:9-10): In what sense had salvation not only entered Zacchaeus's house, but also his heart? How does Jesus define His mission in v10? What does Jesus do to seek and to save Zacchaeus? In what ways did the crowds misunderstand Jesus' mission (v7)?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What do these encounters have to teach us about our own role in working out Jesus' ongoing mission to the world? Who might be modern day examples of these people? To what extent are you willing to scandalise public opinion for the sake of the gospel?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Salvation comes into our hearts when we encounter Jesus: If that is true for you, then worship and praise Him together. Ask God for the kind of audacious faith shown by both of these men as they sought to encounter Jesus. Pray for opportunities to share Jesus with others.

MEMORY VERSES: LUKE 19:9-10

STUDY 9 – LUKE 23:26-49 – ENCOUNTERS ON THE CROSS

INTRODUCTION: Following His arrest and trial at the hands of both King Herod and the Roman Governor Pilate, Jesus finds Himself sentenced to death by crucifixion. This passage records His final hours and some significant encounters that He has along the way.

SETTING THE SCENE (22:39-46): After the Last Supper Jesus took His disciples to the Mount of Olives to pray: what do we learn here about how Jesus feels about all that is to come? What are the things that lead up the events of this section (skim through 22:47-23:25)?

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SIMON AND THE CROWD (v26-31): Why do you suppose that it was deemed necessary to ask Simon (from Cyrene in North Africa) to carry Jesus' cross (see also v10-11, Mar 15:15-20)? How do you understand the intriguing words that Jesus says towards the large number who followed Him?

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CRUCIFIED (v32-38): Which of the details about Jesus' crucifixion most stand out to you from these verses? What is the irony of some of the things the people and the soldiers shouted up to him at this time? In the midst of this, how do you comprehend Jesus prayer for forgiveness in v34?

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THE TWO CRIMINALS (v39-43): Verse 32-33 told us that Jesus was crucified alongside two criminals on his left and right: how does Luke's account contrast their very different attitudes towards Him? Why do Mark 15:32 and Matthew 27:44 appear at odds with this?

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TODAY IN PARADISE: Despite initially mocking Jesus, how does one of the criminals demonstrate faith and a last-minute story of salvation? How do you understand Jesus' promise that *today* He would be with Him in Paradise? To what extent do you think this seems fair given its last-minute nature?

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FINISHING WELL (v44-46): What is the significance of some of the extraordinary things which take place in these verses (See also Matthew 27:51)? Why is it so important to notice that Jesus laid down His Spirit (prophesied in Psalm 31:5) of His own accord?

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THE CENTURION AND THE ONLOOKERS (v47-49): Why do you think that the Roman Centurion (who would have observed many crucifixions) reacts in the way that he does to all that he had seen (see also Mark 15:39)? How would you sum up the response of the other onlookers mentioned here?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: What most stood out to you from these final encounters Jesus had whilst on the Cross? Which of the responses do you find yourself most identifying with? What steps of faith does this passage encourage you to take and why?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank Jesus for His willingness to make this incredible sacrifice on our behalf. Ask God to impress upon your hearts the importance of all that was achieved at the cross. Ask Him to help you respond in faith and grow in your desire to see others find faith also.

MEMORY VERSES: LUKE 23:42-43

STUDY 10 – LUKE 24 – RESURRECTION ENCOUNTERS

INTRODUCTION: At the end of chapter 23 we left Jesus dead and buried while His friends watched on. The shock however of chapter 24, is that now the tomb appears to be empty: Jesus is risen! Luke then records various resurrection encounters with the disciples, before Jesus ascends to Heaven.

SETTING THE SCENE: Why do you think that Jesus' friends are so slow to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead (esp. given that Jesus had predicted that He would rise in 18:33)? What kind of questions would you want to ask of the evidence, to test the validity of Jesus' resurrection?

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THE WOMEN AT THE TOMB (v1-8): Why were the women were so perplexed about what they found when they came to anoint Jesus' body? How likely is it that they got the wrong tomb (23:55-56)? How did their conversation with the 2 men (angels?) jog their memory about what Jesus had said (v4b-8)?

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THE APOSTLES (v9-12): The women go back to tell people about what they had found: what do you notice about the disbelief of the apostles (esp. v11)? Why do you think Peter runs immediately to the tomb? Why do you think that he goes away *wondering what had happened*?

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THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (v13-24): Luke is the only gospel to include this particular encounter: why do you think Jesus chooses to appear to those two disciples (one called Cleopas) in this manner (esp. v15b-16)? What insight do we get from what they share about the events of the previous three days (v17-21)? Why is it so hard to believe on the basis of the testimony of others (v22-24)?

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THE BIG REVEAL (v25-35): What do you imagine it would have been like to realise that it was Jesus Himself who had been with them, before disappearing from sight? In what ways would this encounter have been particularly impactful, both for them (v25-32) and for the other disciples (v33-35)?

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APPEARING TO THE APOSTLES (v36-47): What do you think it would have been like to be with the Apostles when Jesus suddenly appeared among them (v36)? To what extent can you identify with their reaction of shock and fear (v37-38)? As they touched, saw and listened to Jesus explain all that had happened: how do you imagine it would have felt to finally put all the pieces together?

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ASCENSION (v48-53): What is the role of a *witness* and why does Jesus tell them to wait until they had been clothed with power (see also Acts 1:7-8)? Why was it important for them (and for us) that Jesus ascended to Heaven? In what ways does this cause you also to praise and worship Jesus?

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DRAWING IT TOGETHER: Paul said that *if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile (1 Corinthians 15:17)*: why is the resurrection of Jesus Christ so significant? In what ways has this study helped you believe more deeply in the resurrection of Christ? Which of the encounters we have studied in this series have had the biggest impact and why?

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IDEAS FOR PRAYER: Thank the Father for the sacrifice of His beloved Son on our behalf and praise Him that Jesus did not remain dead but is alive. Pray for your friends who do not yet know Jesus, and ask God to give you opportunities to talk with them also about your belief in Jesus' resurrection.

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 24:32

MEMORY VERSES

STUDY 1 – LUKE 3:1-4:13 – JOHN, THE FATHER AND THE DEVIL

John answered them all, 'I baptise you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

STUDY 2 – LUKE 5:1-11, 27-32 – THE PEOPLE JESUS CALLED

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him. **Luke 5:10b-11**

STUDY 3 – LUKE 5:12-26 – THE LEPER AND THE PARALYSED MAN

But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' So he said to the paralysed man, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.' **Luke 5:24**

STUDY 4 – LUKE 7:31-50 – THE PHARISEE AND THE SINFUL WOMAN

Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.' **Luke 7:47**

STUDY 5 – LUKE 8:22-39 – THE DISCIPLES AND THE DEMON-POSSESSED MAN

'Where is your faith?' he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, 'Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him.' **Luke 8:25**

STUDY 6 – LUKE 8:40-56 – THE SYNAGOGUE RULER AND THE SICK WOMAN

Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, 'Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed.'

Luke 8:50

STUDY 7 – LUKE 18:15-30 – THE LITTLE CHILDREN & THE RICH RULER

²⁹ 'Truly I tell you,' Jesus said to them, 'no one who has left home or wife or brothers or sisters or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God ³⁰ will fail to receive many times as much in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.' **Luke 18:29-30**

STUDY 8 – LUKE 18:31-19:10 – THE BLIND BEGGAR AND ZACCHAEUS

⁹ Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.' **Luke 19:9-10**

STUDY 9 – LUKE 23:26-49 – ENCOUNTERS ON THE CROSS

⁴² Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' ⁴³ Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.' **Luke 23:42-43**

STUDY 10 – LUKE 24 – RESURRECTION ENCOUNTERS

They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?' **Luke 24:32**