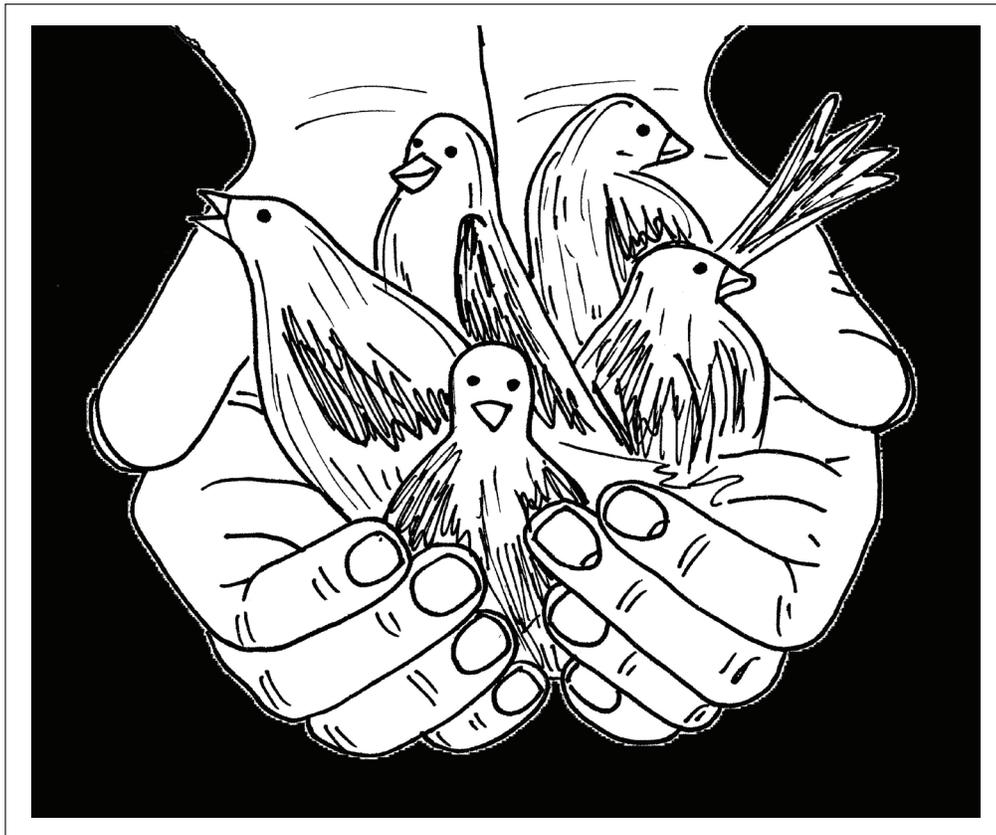
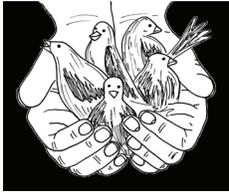


STUDIES IN LUKE



FALL 2011

SANTA BARBARA COMMUNITY CHURCH



SOURCES

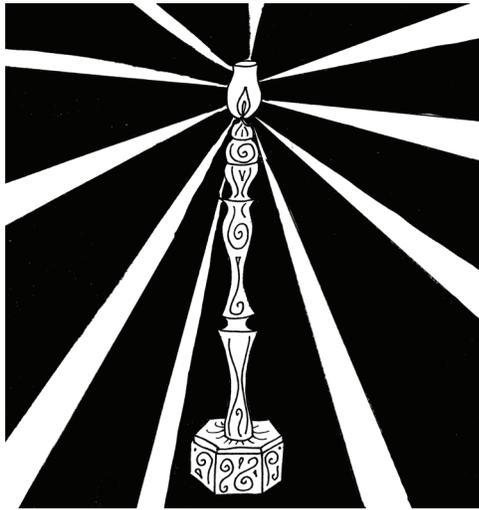
| ABBREVIATION | SOURCE |
|---------------------|--|
| Bock | Darrell L. Bock, <i>The NIV Application Commentary: Luke</i> (Zondervan, 1996). |
| Bock Commentary | Darrell L. Bock, <i>Luke</i> , (Baker Academic, 1994), 2 volumes. |
| Green | Joel Green, <i>The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament</i> (Eerdmans, 1997). |
| Gundry | Robert Gundry, <i>Commentary on the New Testament</i> , (Hendrickson, 2010). |
| Hughes | Kent Hughes, <i>Luke: That You May Know the Truth</i> (Crossway, 1998), 2 volumes. |
| Liefeld | Walter L. Liefeld, <i>Luke</i> , in <i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> (Zondervan, 1984). |
| Marshall | I. Howard Marshall, <i>The Gospel of Luke: A Commentary on the Greek Text</i> (Eerdmans, 1978). |
| Morris | Leon Morris, <i>Luke</i> (IVP, 1988). |
| Ryle | J.C. Ryle, <i>Luke</i> , in <i>The Crossway Classic Commentaries</i> (Crossway, 1997). |
| Wilcock | Michael Wilcock, <i>The Message of Luke in The Bible Speaks Today</i> (IVP 1979). |

Studies in Luke study guide has been written the pastoral staff of Santa Barbara Community Church. Study 1 was written by Mike Willbanks; study 2 by Bonnie Fearer; studies 3 & 7 by Reed Jolley; study 4 by Susi Lamoutte; study 5 by Ryan Reed; study 6 by Benji Bruneel; study 8 by Steve Jolley; and study 9 by Erik Anderson. Prayer guides at the end of each study have been written by Vijay Jayaraman. Original illustrations have been created by Cassie Koop. Layout design was created by Carolee Peterson. Fall 2011.



TEACHING CALENDAR

| STUDY NO. | TITLE/TEXT | PAGE | HG STUDY WEEK | TEACHING DATE |
|------------------|--|-------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Study One | Responding to the Light of Christ Luke 11:27-36 | 1 | 9/19-22 | 9/25 |
| Study Two | Woe to You Luke 11:37-52 | 7 | 9/26-29 | 10/2 |
| Study Three | Interrogation and Warning Luke 11:53-12:12 | 13 | 10/3-6 | 10/9 |
| Study Four | What Do You Want? Luke: 12:13-34 | 19 | 10/10-13 | 10/16 |
| Study Five | Be Ready Luke 12:35-48 | 25 | 10/17-20 | 10/23 |
| Study Six | Trouble, Repentance and Judgement Luke 13:1-9 | 31 | 10/24-27 | 10/30 |
| Study Seven | The Narrow Door Luke 13:22-35 | 37 | 10/30-11/3 | 11/6 |
| Study Eight | Rich Man, Poor Man, Heaven and Hell Luke 16:13-31 | 43 | 11/7-10 | 11/13 |
| Study Nine | Christian Duty Luke 17:1-19 | 49 | 11/14-16 | 11/20 |



STUDY ONE: Luke 11:27-36

RESPONDING TO THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

After a nice long summer break, we are picking up right where we left off three months ago in Luke chapter 11. In the last study, we looked at Luke 11:14-26 where Jesus cast out a demon from a man who had been mute. But remarkably, instead of praising God for this merciful work, some accused Jesus of doing this *by Beelzebub, the prince of demons*. Others tested him by asking for a sign from heaven. (Uh... I think you just missed one!)

Our current passage should not be separated from that context. A sign they want and a sign they will get! The question is: will they see it? And how will they respond? How will we respond?

Read Luke 11:27-36.

There are three separate but related episodes in this short passage. Why do you think Luke put them together like this? What is the common thread? (If you can't find one, keep going through the study and come back to answer this at the end.)

True Blessedness (11:27-28)

The woman in these verses gives indirect praise to Jesus' greatness by pronouncing a blessing on his mother. But Jesus uses the occasion to make an important point. As one New Testament scholar notes,

It is not physical relationship to Jesus that is supremely important, but hearing and keeping the Word of God. This points to patient, unspectacular religious practice. The Word of God came to the people of that day through the teaching of Jesus as well as through the study of Scripture... but Jesus is saying that wherever people have Scripture the path to blessing is open. (Morris, p. 218)

What comes to mind when you think of the *patient, unspectacular religious practice* that the Scriptures call us to?

Patient and *unspectacular* are not beloved traits in our age. How are you cultivating the patient and unspectacular habit of listening to and obeying the Word of God? Give some practical examples.

Jesus pronounced a blessing on those who hear and obey God's Word. Think for a moment about this blessing. In what ways are those who respond obediently to God's Word *blessed*? What benefit is there in obeying God's Word?

The Sign of Jonah (11:29-32)

Read these parallel passages in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Make note of the differences. What is the main point of each? What is the *sign* the people will receive in each? (Don't assume each gospel must be emphasizing the same thing.)

Matthew 12:38-42

Mark 8:11-13

Luke 11:29-32

Commentators differ over what *the sign of Jonah* is in Luke. Some think it refers, as it does in Matthew, to his death and resurrection.¹ Others think it refers to the presence and preaching of Jesus.² What do you think?

What are the parallels between the *queen of the South*, the *people of Nineveh*, and the people of *this generation* to whom Jesus is speaking?

1 For instance, see Morris, p. 219-220.

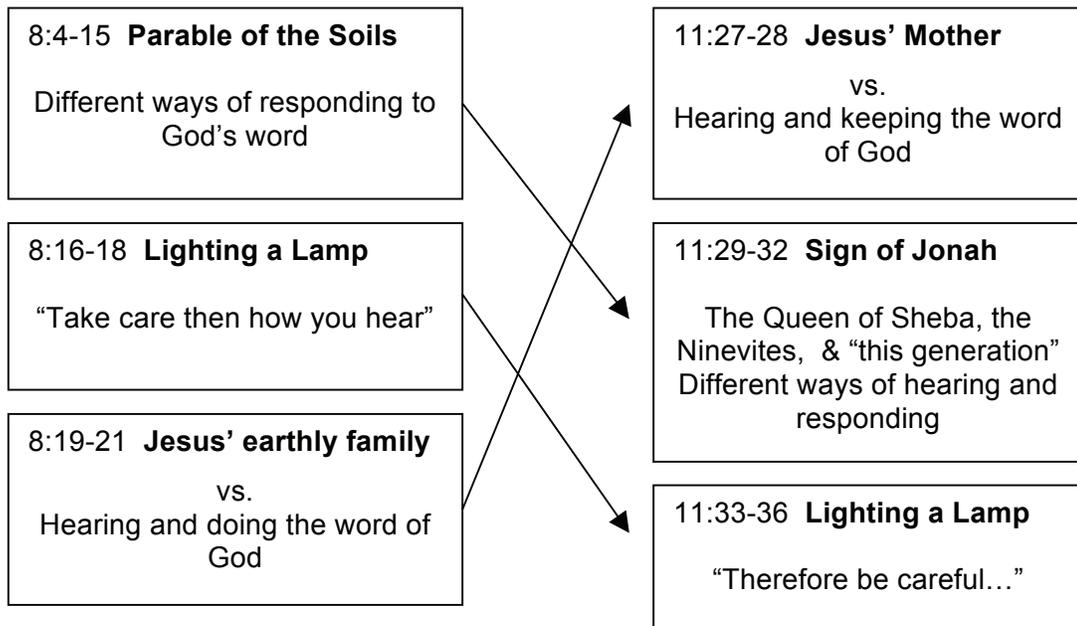
2 For instance, see Bock, p. 325.

Something greater than Solomon is here... Something greater than Jonah is here. The book of Hebrews makes this point over and over: in Jesus, God has done something unique and greater than ever before (or after). Read Hebrews 1:1-4.

Now notice how the author of Hebrews draws out a warning for his readers in Hebrews 3:12-15. Similarly, in Luke 11:29-32, Jesus is giving his hearers (and us) a stern warning. What is this warning?

The Lamp of the Body (11:33-36)

If you had been reading straight through the gospel of Luke, when you got to 11:33, you would surely stop and think, "I've heard that before!" Go back and read Luke 8:16-18. Note also how the material around that section parallels our passage here:



How does this help make sense of 11:33-36? What is the central thrust of these verses?

Verse 33 most likely refers to the ministry of Jesus, who came as the *light*. Read the following verses and respond. What does this metaphor of light tell us about Jesus? About ourselves?

John 1:4-9

John 8:12

1 John 1:5-7

Darrell Bock is helpful in making sense of verses 34-35.

The eye is a lamp in the sense that it is a doorkeeper. What the eye lets into the mind makes up the person. When such eyes are good, letting in light, then the person is full of light in life. But if the eyes are bad, letting nothing good come in, then the body is a dark place, since our inclinations unled by divine revelation take us in destructive directions. Of course, what is let in is a reflection of where our heart is. Jesus therefore, calls for people to be full of light. They are to respond to the light of God's Word by receiving it. (Bock, p. 325)

It is significant in this regard to note that the word *bad* in verse 34 is the same word used for the *evil* generation of verse 29. There is, then, the implication that a bad eye is not just an unfortunate occurrence, but something that will incur judgment.

Later, Bock summarizes this well, *This passage highlights our need to respond to Jesus... [The call of Jesus] is not just a matter of truth, but just as importantly, a matter of accountability and responsibility.* (Bock, pp. 326-327)

How have you responded to the light of Jesus? What areas of your life used to be in darkness that now have been flooded with his light? What places in your life still need to be illumined by his goodness and light?

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 11:27-36**Rejoice:**

Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it. (11:28)

- Thank God for the Bible in our own language. (The English Bible has been available for about 500 years. We are blessed to have heard!)
- Give thanks for our preachers who have opened the Word to us.
- Praise God for how you have seen the Word kept in specific people. Affirm some of your homegroup members as you give thanks for the Word kept in their lives.

Repent:

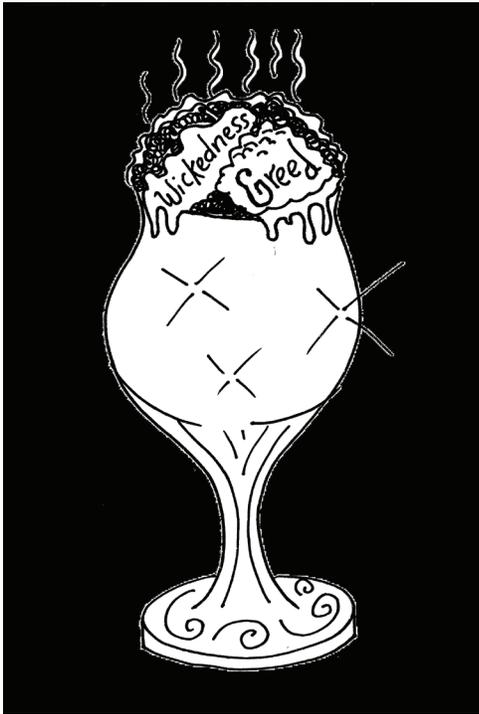
(This generation) asks for a miraculous sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah. (11:29)

See to it then, that the light within you is not darkness! (11:35)

- (Note: the sign of Jonah may be interpreted as the preaching of Christ and Him crucified.) Confess our appetite for the sensational or entertaining, instead of Christ and Him crucified. Consider 1 Corinthians 1:22-23: *Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified.*
- Confess the sins among us that have darkened the light of Christ in the church.

Request:

- That in and through the churches of our area, Christ crucified would be preached and received.
- That internationals who have traveled to our area would, like the Queen of the South, go home awed by the one, true God.
- That the nations would repent as did the Ninevites. Pray especially for the Muslim world in light of Ramadan.
- That Catholic churches would focus not on Mary, but on hearing and keeping God's word (vv. 27-28).
- That the light would shine in the darkness in our churches, making us holy, and that our light would shine in our area (vv. 33-36).
- That you as a homegroup would know the promises of scripture that speak to your individual needs. Pray scripture for those needs!



STUDY TWO: Luke 11:37-52

WOE TO YOU

It's hard to love a hypocrite. By definition, a hypocrite is one who professes feelings or virtues that he/she does not have, or does not live by. On the face of it, that description sounds like any average person who is sinful and *misses the mark*. The difference, however, between a hypocrite and the average person who messes up, is that the hypocrite doesn't see his or her need for personal change because they are so focused on a need for change in *others*. As Mark Twain once famously said, *Nothing so needs reforming as other people's habits*. That could be the credo for hypocrites to live by. Sadly, it's also a fitting description of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in ancient Palestine. Jesus had no stomach for their hypocrisy, and these religious leaders are the target of his harsh criticism in this week's text.

Jesus has spent a long day teaching (skim over the events of chapter 11 to refresh your memory). He ends the day with an invitation to dinner from a Pharisee. We are told that Jesus reclined at the table without first washing, much to his host's disapproval. The Pharisee's scorn probably had nothing to do with the lack of washing for sake of hygiene, but rather because of the Jewish practice of *ceremonial* washing. Interestingly, we don't know that the Pharisee spoke his disapproval out loud. However, Jesus responds.

Read Luke 11:37-52. Make an outline of the condemnations/woes Jesus speaks:

General rebuke (v. 39-41):

To the Pharisees:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

To the Scribes (or *lawyers* in the ESV):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

This image of a cup that is clean on the outside and dirty on the inside highlights the general hypocrisy that Jesus is condemning.

What do you think Jesus means when he says, *But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you* in verse 41?

As you look at the church in general, do you see a hypocritical focus on outward appearance rather than inward cleanliness? Explain.

Micah 6:6-8 says:

*With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
He has told you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?*

What were the Pharisees missing, according to the verses above?

For the Pharisees and teachers of the law, the ritual observances, rule-following (and the rule-creating!) were the *outside of the cup*. What constitutes the *outside of the cup* for you? Where do you find hypocrisy in your own life?

After Jesus' initial rebuke, he gets into specifics. The first *woe* (v. 42) focuses on how the Pharisees are practicing tithing.¹ What are they neglecting?

The second *woe* Jesus levels at the Pharisees (v. 43) targets the specific sin fueling all of their hypocrisy. What is it?

The third *woe* quickly follows, and is named as a consequence of the Pharisees' love for privileged attention. Their focus on being part of a religious elite has led them to become living examples of the epitome of ritual uncleanness – death itself. In Jewish tradition, to touch a dead body would render one ceremonially unclean for a period of time and, therefore, disqualified from religious activities. Jesus is saying that, not only are they temporarily *unclean* – they are permanently defiled. They have become the graves themselves, thereby defiling all who come into contact *with them*.

It is sobering to contemplate just how seriously God detests the sin of pride. Without looking anything up, write out your own definition of pride with respect to our relationship with God. Share these with your group.

Where do you see pride in yourself? Think hard about this and don't be afraid to be detailed. This text is intended to be a pointer not only to the sin of the scribes and Pharisees, but to our own hearts as well, so stop for a moment here, and pray for God to show it to you.

In verse 45, *an expert in the law*² speaks up and says, *Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also*. He was probably sorry he opened his mouth, because Jesus then takes on the scribes and experts in the law for the onerous burden they had placed on the backs of Jewish believers. The word for *burden* used here is *phortion*, a word normally used to describe a ship's cargo. Jesus' criticism seems to be two-fold: they had *added* to the law, making it crippling to live under; and, secondly, they lacked the compassion to assist those who were struggling to live out their lives under the weight of these laws.

1 Read Deuteronomy 14:22-27, 26:12-15 to better understand the background on tithing practices in the Old Testament.

2 The word *scribe* and the term *expert in the law* are often used interchangeably in the New Testament. A scribe was someone who often could read and write, was learned in the law, and usually a teacher of the law. In the gospels of Matthew and Luke, these scribes are often paired with the Pharisees in objecting to Jesus' teaching.

In 47-51, the second woe to the scribes is a truly stinging rebuke. Jesus condemns their complicity in the slaying of the prophets. The irony is that Jesus points to their religious arrogance in building tombs and monuments for the same prophets whom their own forefathers had killed. Put another way, the scribes and Pharisees were following in a long tradition of rejecting God's messengers, a tradition that would be carried on as they would reject the Messiah and his followers.

Read Luke 20:9-16, the *Parable of the Tenants*. What parallels do you find between this parable and the second *woe* to the scribes?

In verse 52, the third, and final accusation leveled at the scribes is, . . . *you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering.* In other words, the scribes (or experts in the law) are presenting religious belief, and then blocking people from entering into it. The burdensome *extra* rules and ritual observances made the experts in the law look pious and important, but Jesus points out the hollowness of their religion and the inherent evil in how the scribes obstructed the door to true faith.

Read Matthew 7:13-14. How does this add to your understanding of this final "woe" to the scribes?

Though pointed to the scribes and Pharisees, this portion of Jesus' teaching is as timeless and relevant to our lives as any other lesson from his life and ministry.

How do we apply this text? Where might we be vulnerable (or perhaps culpable) with respect to Jesus' criticisms of hypocrisy and pride? Do we practice a *checklist* Christianity? --I go to church (check), read my Bible (check), pray once in a while (check); tithe (check). . . . so, therefore, I'm in a better place with God than most of the people I know? Do we excuse ourselves from the actual work that Jesus calls us to -- dying to ourselves to be transformed by him -- because we've got all the outward *forms* of religion in place?

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 11:37-52**Read Micah 6:6-8. Take a moment of silence to reflect.**

- Extol God and His character based on this passage.
- Praise God that His commands are not burdensome, and for Jesus' words that His yoke is easy and His burden light!

Repent and confess those ways we are like the scribes and Pharisees.

- Our focus on the externals instead of what is in our hearts.
- The ugliness inside of us no one sees (you may consider separating into men and women, or confessing some things silently as well as others out loud).
- Ways in which we load others down unreasonably and don't help them (parents consider how you may treat your own children!).
- Ways in which we are like those who killed the prophets. (Consider our hardness of heart, our deafness to God's voice, or our ridicule or slander towards God's messengers.)

Pray for your homegroup members to *please God in every way, and bear fruit in every good work.* (Colossians 1:10)

- For the specific things mentioned in Micah 6:8.
- For humility and gratitude to God in our homegroup and the churches of our area.
- For missionaries that seek to bring justice and mercy as they proclaim the name of Christ. Santa Barbara A Rocha, Santa Barbara Community Development Center, Sports Outreach, and Querencia are just a few examples!
- All of the above for elders of our church and the churches of this city.



STUDY THREE: Luke 11:53-12:12

INTERROGATION & WARNING

Verses 11:53-12:1a form a bridge between two units of Jesus' teaching. Our Lord has finished his words to the Pharisees and lawyers and now moves to warn his disciples about the Pharisees and lawyers.

Recall what took place at that dinner party in our last study. Jesus shows up and startles everyone with his actions and his words. From the perspective of the other guests at the meal, Jesus is as uncouth as he is ill-mannered. First, the Pharisees were *astonished* that Jesus didn't wash before dinner (11:38). That social *faux pas* was followed by Jesus' words of woe (11:39-52). This dinner guest managed to alienate everyone present to the extent that *the Pharisees started to have it in for him bitterly and to interrogate him about very many things*.¹

Clearly they are unhappy with the woes Jesus pronounced on them. They want to *catch him* making a heretical statement (11:54).

The word rendered *catch* is *théreusai*, which is used of hunting wild beasts. It is a vivid word for intense opposition. (Morris, p. 225)

With the above in mind, read our passage. What stands out as you read? What images impress you? What is there in this passage that confuses you?

¹ This is Robert Gundry's very literal translation. (Gundry, p. 285) The ESV says they *began to press him hard and to provoke him*.

12:1 shows us the numerical apex of Jesus' popularity. The crowds now number, literally, in the *myriads*, in the thousands upon thousands. There are so many that they are *trampling one another*. With the vast crowds surrounding him, Jesus gives his disciples three warnings. Consider the following outline.

12:1b-3 A warning about hypocrisy

12:4-7 A warning to fear God

12:8-12 A warning to acknowledge the Son

A Warning About Hypocrisy (12:1b-3)

What is hypocrisy? Write a brief definition / description. Why are people so offended by hypocrisy?

12:1b What was the hypocrisy of the Pharisees? Why do you think Jesus likens the hypocrisy of the Pharisees to yeast?

12:2-3 What does Jesus promise the hypocrites? How should this promise affect you and the way in which you live the Christian life? Consider the following quotation as you formulate your answer.

Full disclosure will come on Judgment Day. Everything will be revealed, and the disclosure will be ruthless. The things whispered invisibly in the dark will be shouted in full light from the rooftops. The limitless capacities of divine omniscience assure perfect exposure of hypocrisy.

Jesus was warning them to avoid exposure at the Judgment Day by owning up to what they really were then and by letting God make their lives pleasing to him. (Hughes, 2, p. 38)

One common reason given for avoiding *church* is that the church is full of hypocrites. What do you think of this criticism? How would you respond to a believer who didn't want to join a church because *Churches are full of hypocrites*? What would you say to an unbeliever who wanted to avoid the church because of the hypocrisy of its members?

A warning to fear God (12:4-7)

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul builds a case that everyone is sinful and needs God's forgiveness. In Romans 3:9-18 the apostle quotes several scriptures that make his point. He comes to the climax of his argument by quoting Psalm 36:1, *There is no fear of God before their eyes*.

Luke 12:4-7 contains a warning from Jesus to his followers: be among those who fear God!

Re-read these verses. What does Jesus have in mind when he says we should *fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell*?

What is the counter-balance to the fear mentioned in verse 5? How should this counter-balance comfort us?

Respond to the following quotation. Discuss this and share with one another how biblical your understanding is of both the *love* and *fear* of God.

The fear of God is rather out of fashion these days; we much prefer to stress the love of God. But while there is a sense in which perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18), there is another in which fear is quite compatible with love. This kind of fear is continually regarded in the Bible as a necessary ingredient in right living. It is an attitude compounded of a recognition of the greatness and the righteousness of God on the one hand and our readiness to sin on the other. Fear of this kind guards against presumption and must find its place in a right faith. (Morris, p. 227)

What does the *fear of God* look like in your life? How might you live differently if you didn't *fear God*?

On the other hand, are there elements in your life that evidence a faltering or absence of the *fear of God* in you? What can you do to address them?

A Warning to Acknowledge the Son (12:8-12)

The duty of confessing Christ is incumbent on all Christians in every age. Let us never forget that. This is not for martyrs only but for all believers, in every walk of life. It is not just for great occasions but for our daily walk through an evil world. (Ryle, p. 171)

True faith always moves from the heart to the lips. We have already learned this from the mouth of Jesus when he said, *For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory...* (Luke 9:27)

12:8 What are the ways in which we have opportunity to *acknowledge Jesus before men*?

The second half of Jesus' warning (12:9) speaks of one who *denies* Jesus before men (others). Gundry translates this, *But the one disowns me...* (Gundry, p. 286) The point is that this person refuses to be numbered among the disciples of Jesus and *When he stands before God his choice will be ratified.* (Morris, p. 228)

The warning, indeed, is strong. If we will not confess Jesus before others, we are not truly his children.

Is this *acknowledgement* always done with words? Are words necessary to *acknowledge* Jesus?

Share with your homegroup a time when you *acknowledged* Jesus with your words.

How does your life *acknowledge* Jesus?

How can we grow in our enthusiasm and boldness to share our faith with our friends, colleagues, and acquaintances? Share some ideas with your homegroup that have been helpful to you.

12:10 contains an often misunderstood passage about blasphemy. What does it mean to commit the sin of blasphemy? In a word, to blaspheme is to attribute the work of God to Satan (see Matthew 12:31-31, Mark 3:28-29 and Luke 11:14-26). That is, to blaspheme is to reject Jesus! As J. C. Ryle puts it,

The sin to which our Lord refers in this passage appears to be the sin of deliberately rejecting God's truth with the heart, though the truth is clearly known with the head. It is a combination of light in the understanding and determined wickedness in the will... The person whose sins will not be forgiven is precisely the person who will never seek to have them forgiven. (Ryle, pp. 171-172)

Let us take care that we are found among those who seek God and enjoy his mercy.

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 11:53-12:12

- Read out loud the following verse, and take a moment of silence to reflect:

Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our "God is a consuming fire." (Hebrews 11:28-29)

- Spend some time appropriately fearing and revering God. Offer Him your praises.
- Confess the ways we, the American church, have forgotten the fear of the Lord, and been too casual in approaching Him. Confess some sins in the church that demonstrate our lack of appropriate fear of God, including the sin of hypocrisy. (12:1-3).
- Confess how we are intimidated by and fearful of men. Name other things that you fear instead of fearing God.
- Pray for one another, that God would take away your fear of men, and give you great boldness to acknowledge the Son! Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit in each of your homegroup members, and for courage to share Christ where God has called you. Consider repeating Acts 1:8 as a litany in response to individual prayers:

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses...

- Ask for boldness for the churches of our area as they proclaim the kingdom of God.
- Pray for the persecuted church, that they would be strengthened with power, through His Spirit in your inner being... (Ephesians 3:16), fearing God instead of man. Consider some of our missionaries in dangerous places, and the people they serve. Merrill/Teresa Dyck among the Pume in Venezuela, the Palestinian Bible Society in the west bank and Gaza, and Sports Outreach in East Africa and Kenya are just a few examples.



STUDY FOUR: Luke 12:13-34

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Have you ever stopped to evaluate what you want, what you worry about, and why? If you polled twenty people you know, asking what their desires are, what would you discover? Some frequent answers might include physical health, steady emotions, a pleasant living situation, good food, caring friends, a compatible spouse, kids that grow up well, the right job, and a healthy church. Differing answers could be a nice car, a tropical vacation, a more attractive body, a new house, a prestigious university degree, professional advancement, or just a bigger, better, nicer whatever.

What we want is often not necessarily innately bad in and of itself; rather, it is the anxiety we experience, and the sense of security we gain which is problematic. Unfortunately, the predominant perception is that acquiring or achieving any of these goals will improve our lives—making us happy, comfortable, and secure. Wants, desires, and a sense of security can originate both from basic human needs or from perceived needs and wants. In this study, notice what Jesus says about needs, desires, worry, and security.

Luke 12:13-34 contains two sections. The first nine verses show Jesus responding to a request from the crowd with a parable—traditionally referred to as *The Parable of the Rich Fool*. In the final thirteen verses Jesus continues explaining and illustrating how he would have the disciples live.

Read 12:13-34. What stands out? Note the word pictures Jesus employs.

12:13-15 We learn in Luke 12:1 that thousands of people were gathering together and some were trampling one another. Out of this chaos a man emerges demanding that Jesus settle a dispute. Read verses 13-15. What result does the man in the crowd want? What do you think his core values are that compel him to request this from Jesus? What was Jesus addressing when he responded to this man?

Verse 15 reads, *And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."* The word *covet* could be understood as having an envious eagerness to possess something; or being inordinately or wrongly desirous of wealth or possessions.¹

What does Jesus mean when he says, *be on your guard against all covetousness*? Consider the things that you covet, or even strongly desire. What must you do to be on guard against your internal drive for these things?

12:16-19 Read these verses aloud. As you read, place stronger emphasis on the personal pronouns (he, himself, I, me, my, etc.).

What do you learn about this rich man? What does he want or desire that makes him hoard, and be greedy? What impact would these characteristics have on how he treats others?

List some contemporary examples that exemplify what this man did. As a homegroup compare your examples and discuss what issues and themes surface, and whether they are similar or different from the scenario in the passage.

¹ The NIV, NASB, NLT, and *The Message* employ the word *greed* in this context.

12:20-21 This rich fool understood his situation through a limited perspective. Jesus sheds light upon the implications and consequences of the man's actions. What does Jesus make clear? Do you live like the rich fool or do you operate under Jesus' value system? Explain.

Read the second section of our passage, Luke 12:22-34. Notice some themes related to those in the previous parable. How is Jesus' teaching both similar and different in these two portions of Scripture?

12:22-28 What does Jesus instruct the disciples to not be anxious about?

Comment on Hughes' thoughts regarding the outcome of anxiety in the life of a Christian. Why do you either agree or disagree with these statements?

Those who chose to be on the road with Jesus necessarily lived on the edge in respect to their food and clothing... If a disciple worried about [such things] that disciple would soon become neutralized and spiritually ineffective. (Hughes, 2, p. 51)

Worry is not a moral virtue in a disciple of Christ. Worry is not something to be proud of. It is a desiccator, a shriveler. (Hughes, 2, p. 53)

God takes care of ravens and lilies¹. How does God value human beings in comparison to these birds and flowers? How does your answer compare to your own sense of being valued by God?

12:29-32 These verses reiterate Jesus' instruction of the disciples regarding anxiety about what they will eat and drink, but now he presents an alternative. Jesus says, *Instead, seek his [the Father's] kingdom, and all these things will be added to you.* What is the relationship between seeking, wanting or desiring, and anxiety?

Read verse 32. Break out the four aspects of this sentence. How does this verse address what we find in verses 22-31?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

12:33-34 Finally, Jesus teaches the disciples regarding possessions. In verse 31 he tells them that rather than seeking the things of this life they are to seek God's kingdom, and their basic needs will be provided for them. Jesus continues in the following verse saying that *it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* Read verses 33-34. What are the disciples to do, and why?

¹ Ravens were obnoxious, squawking birds that had no sense of what they would eat next. They were scavengers, and were considered unclean. Lilies are understood as *the various bright flowers that dot the Palestinian fields in the spring... [with] ravishing beauty, and the tiniest flowers are often the most ornate in their textures and colors.... The flowers existed without concern or worry, though they were only passing ornaments of the field.* (Hughes, 2, pp. 52-53)

Ponder how the following quotation addresses wants and desires.

To be rightly aware of the values of life will enable a man to put 'things' in the proper place. The possessions of this life belong to this life; and since this life is less important than the next, the things of this life should be valued less than the things of eternity. (Wilcock, p. 135)

Consider Wilcock's statement alongside verse 34, *For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*. Examine your values. What *things* have you addressed, or do you need to address, to put them in the proper place? How is it with your wants and desires? All this considered, what, practically, does it mean for you to seek God's kingdom?

EXTRA CREDIT: Do our money and possessions shape our hearts, or do our hearts govern our use of money and our relationship with material goods? What is the criterion for evaluation?

Commenting on this passage, Marshall offers strong words for us to consider.

The suggestion is that the person who ceases to trust in material things and places his trust in God is promised spiritual blessing in heaven from God. If a person seeks such heavenly treasure, the implication is that his heart, i.e. his affections, is directed in the right way, whereas if a person piles up earthly treasure, the evidence shows that his affections are earthbound and hence his heart is not truly related to God. Hence the saying provides a motive for the preceding command, by showing that the person who continues to hold on to earthly wealth and does not fulfill the command in v. 33 is not really seeking after the kingdom of God. The two attitudes are mutually exclusive. (Marshall, p. 532)

Pray to your heavenly Father and surrender those things, whether big or small, that direct your wants, your desires, and your sense of security away from him. Nurture your heart and affections towards the things of the kingdom of God.

Said the Robin to the Sparrow,
 "I should really like to know
 Why these anxious human beings
 Rush around and worry so."
 Said the Sparrow to the Robin,
 "Friend, I think that it must be
 They have no heavenly Father,
 Such as cares for you and me."
 —Author unknown¹

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 12:13-34

- Celebrate the richness and the provision of God. Consider reading Luke 12:27-32 out loud again. Consider blessing each other with more scriptures, such as the ones below. Remember specific instances of God meeting your needs and proclaim these in prayer.

Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you. (1Peter 5:7)

I am the Lord your God, who brought you up out of Egypt. Open wide your mouth and I will fill it. (Psalm 81:10)

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. (Psalm 33:21-22)

- Confess our attachment to material things, and the things that we worry about. Share your concerns, fears, and worries with each other by naming them aloud in prayer. Confess the weakness of our faith and ask God to strengthen us and help us.
- Pray for each other's needs, and for God's provision!
- Pray for each other, our church and the churches in our town that we may be generous and store up treasures in heaven. Pray that our stewardship of our possessions would cause us to hear, *Well done, good and faithful servant*, when we meet Christ.
- Pray for revival for the church in America, accompanied by increased generosity that gives the gospel credibility and expands the kingdom of God.
- Respond to 12:31 by praying for the expansion of God's kingdom. Name individuals and peoples, and ask God bring them into His kingdom!

¹ Cited in Hughes, 2, p. 52.



STUDY FIVE: Luke 12:35-48

BE READY

Sleepiness. It can cause all kinds of trouble and bring a world of grief. One of the worst environmental tragedies in American history happened on March 23, 1989. At 9:12 p.m. the Exxon Valdez left the Alyeska Pipeline Terminal carrying 53,094,510 gallons of crude oil bound for Long Beach, California. It never made it. Less than three hours after leaving the terminal, the 987 foot long ship ran aground into Bligh Reef, spilling more than 10.8 million gallons of crude oil into the Prince William Sound. The main culprit? Sleepiness. In fact one of the leading causes of automobile accidents in America, over 100,000 accidents annually, are accredited to, you guessed it ... sleepiness.¹

Sleepiness, or the inability to stay awake, is addressed throughout Scripture. Proverbs 6:10-11 says,

A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.

Jesus addressed spiritual sleepiness when he repeatedly returned to the dozing disciples as he was crying out in prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And he said to Peter, *So, could you not watch with me one hour?* (Matthew 26:40)

Here in Luke 12, we find Jesus teaching on watchfulness, alertness, and wakefulness. With the above in mind, read Luke 12:35-48.

What themes stand out to you?

¹ According to the US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

In this passage Jesus paints some very vivid pictures with his parables. Some are easy to receive, and some are difficult to swallow. Describe how you envision the painting of these parables. Are they painted with bright and warm colors, or dark and cold colors? Explain:

Remember, this passage comes right on the heels of Jesus' warning to *watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees*. Jesus' disciples are not to be worldly-minded but to have their focus be on things above. In verses 35-48 Jesus goes a step further to explain not only where our focus should be, but how we should live in light of this focus. As Jesus told the crowd how much more they were worth than sparrows, how foolish it is to count on earthly wealth, and how God feeds even the ravens, so now he tells them how a disciple goes about living out these heavenly-minded principles.

What is the connection between verses 1-34 and verses 35-48?

Luke 12:35-48 is a clear teaching on Christ's return, and a strong warning to the church; both to it's members and it's leaders. When you think about the return of Christ, what comes to mind? Is this event exciting, fearful, vague? Explain:

In verse 35 we read the words, *stay dressed for action*. The Greek word is *perizonnumi*, and is a perfect participle meaning to be dressed and remain dressed. The King James Version translates this word *girded about*. Greek linguist Nigel Turner says the word means to be the kind of person who never needs to be told to gird them up, because he will always live in this condition.¹

¹ Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights Into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1965).

What does it mean for the Christian to stay dressed or to be girded about?

What is Jesus implying when he tells us to keep your lamps burning?

Read verses 35-38 again.

Wedding feasts in the ancient near east lasted several days at the very minimum, usually at least a week, and often up to two weeks of festivities, banquets, and celebration. So when the master leaves to go the wedding feast, the servants have no idea when he might come home. But instead of debating amongst themselves as to what signs he left as to his return, Jesus instead says simply, *Be ready*.

What does readiness look like for the Christian? What does it look like for you?

What is Jesus saying about timing in verse 38?

Read verses 39-40.

Compare those verses with what Paul writes to the Thessalonian church.

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3)

What is Jesus saying about timing in verse 40?

It is directly after this statement in verse 40 that Peter asks Jesus to whom he is speaking. How could the coming of the Lord be like a thief robbing a house?

Read verses 42-48.

Who is Jesus addressing in verses 35-40, and who does he address in verses 42-48?

In the second parable of this section Jesus uses the Greek word *oikonomos*, which means manager, or more literally, steward. This word was used for a trusted slave commissioned with the responsibility of the oversight of the household. It was also used as a synonym for Christian leaders, pastors, and apostles in the church.

John Calvin comments on this section of Luke:

As Christ had formerly exhorted the whole family in general to watch for his coming, so now he demands extraordinary care from the principal servants, who had been appointed over others for the purpose of pointing out, by their example, the path of . . .sobriety, watchfulness, and strict temperance . . . True, indeed, all are enjoined, without exception, to be sober, and to give earnest attention, but drowsiness would be peculiarly disgraceful and inexcusable in pastors. (Calvin, pp. 165-166)

What does Jesus say will happen to the unfaithful *steward* upon the master's return?

Listen to the severity of responsibility in James 5:1-3, which echo the words of Jesus:

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Jesus uses strong language in these verses concerning the undershepherds, the *oikonomos*. Why does Jesus reserve such harsh words for the stewards?

Those who lead spiritually are accountable to God for how they lead, and when that leadership goes awry, it is especially grievous. Why is that?

Jesus finishes with a very familiar phrase. Read verse 48.

Apply this verse to yourself. You live in Santa Barbara, California. Think of the opportunities, the education, the possessions, and the abundance you enjoy.

Write down some of the things that you have been given:

What is God requiring of the *much* he has given you? How might we hold one another accountable to the message of Jesus in this verse?

Darrell Bock comments on this passage:

Eschatology (teaching about the future) in the Bible exists not so much to inform us of the details of the future as to prepare us to serve God faithfully today. (Bock, p. 355)

How do we serve faithfully in light of these verses?

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 12:35-48

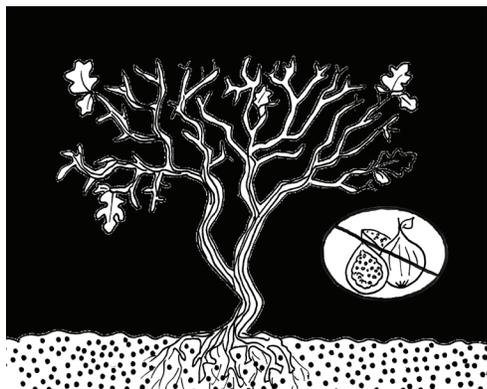
- Acknowledge God as the ultimate Master, the one who created the world, called us to care for it, and will one day return to claim it. Acknowledge Jesus as the one who will return to judge. As you do so, consider the following lines about Jesus from the Apostles' Creed, a historic statement of faith:

He ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

- Consider also the following verses:

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. (2 Peter 3:10-12)

- Confess the ways in which we, like Peter, have fallen asleep. Confess ways in which our mind is on earthly things rather than eternal things. Name your earthly needs, pray for them, and ask God for grace to be a faithful steward.
- Pray for God to transform us from weak and sleepy disciples, into powerful men and women of God the same way he transformed Peter.
- Ask Jesus to teach you to stay awake and pray!
- Pray that your individual homegroup members would be faithful with the gifts and responsibilities entrusted to them by God. (12:48)
- Pray that unreached friends and people groups locally and abroad would hear the message and be ready for Christ's return!



STUDY SIX: Luke 13:1-9

TROUBLE, REPENTANCE AND JUDGEMENT

Sir Isaac Newton's first law of motion indicates that objects that are at rest will remain at rest unless acted upon by some outside force. Therefore, an object that is in motion must have been set in motion by something else. Put more simply, *Where there is smoke, there is fire.*

Yet, when it comes to the realm of sin and suffering, these laws of physics break down. In the first part of this passage, Jesus confronts a Newtonian mentality in the face of great suffering and challenges the assumptions that accompany the events in question.

Read Luke 13:1-5. Write down anything that stands out to you, along with questions or insights you may have.

The specific events at hand are not known outside of this mention in Luke's gospel. The two calamities—one, a horrific atrocity perpetrated by Pilate and the other, apparently, a natural disaster—have shocked the people of Israel and left them to draw their own conclusions as to what these signs might indicate (see 12:54-56). Clearly, their collective reasoning seems to be that great suffering follows great sin.

How does Jesus respond to such thinking?

Jesus tells his audience to repent. What thoughts or images come to your mind when you think of *repentance*? Are they positive? Negative?

Jesus takes a question about suffering and sin and turns it into an opportunity to challenge his hearers to repent. Repentance isn't always fashionable in the contemporary church, but it is a persistent theme of Jesus' ministry in Luke's gospel. How can the church in general, and we as individual Christians, reclaim the centrality of repentance in our evangelism? What is at stake if we don't hold up repentance as central to the gospel?

What does Jesus mean when he says that apart from repentance, *you will all likewise perish* (13:3)? Is he suggesting that they can expect the same type of grisly death at the hands of Pilate or a similar fate by way of natural disaster? If not, then what is he getting at?

Jesus leverages the opportunity afforded by these tragedies to remind the people of the even greater tragedy awaiting all who refuse to repent: ultimate death. Jesus' point is that the reality of mortality—the reminder of physical death—ought to make each person consider the greater reality of immortality and the promise of spiritual death for those who are unrepentant.

The Bible is clear that physical death is a consequence of sin (see Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22). But, this plays out in a corporate sense rather than individual sense. In Adam, all have sinned. Therefore, in Adam, all die. (see Romans 5:12-14, 1 Corinthians 15:21-22)

Though we often like to draw clean conclusions and settle for stock answers, Jesus will not allow his hearers—then or now—to fall prey to a Newtonian mentality. Not all suffering can be neatly and directly traced to individual sin (see Job, John 9). Rather, since in Adam we can all expect physical death, its presence shouldn't surprise us, but rather motivate us to contemplate the greater tragedy of spiritual death.

How should the biblical view of death inform our engagement with the culture? How can Christians speak truth and hope with love in the face of death? Have you seen this done well? Poorly?

As socially taboo as it may seem, Christians—those who know the only true story of hope—must take advantage of the opportunities afforded by death to speak of the One who overcame death and, someday, will return to judge death as the final enemy.

After considering the tragedy of ultimate death and the need for repentance, Jesus turns his attention now to the urgency of his call.

Read Luke 13:6-9. Again, write down the things that stand out to you, questions you have of the passage, or any insights you may have.

What connection do you see between this parable and the message about repentance that immediately precedes it?

The parable of the unfruitful fig tree is unique to Luke, and its most immediate application is to the nation of Israel. The theme of producing fruit was not a new one for the Jews. In Luke 3:8-9, John the Baptist had connected repentance and fruit:

Bear fruits in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Here, Jesus picks up right where John left off and increases the sense of urgency. The landowner has been searching for fruit for many years, but seeing none, has grown weary of the unfruitful tree. The vinedresser, however, asks for additional time, and lays out his plan to provide more care, hoping to bring about the desired result.

In what ways have you seen God tend to the soil of your heart? What circumstances or people did he use to prepare your heart for repentance?

Jesus' point seems to be that God, in his patience, has delayed the coming examination of his people and the resulting judgment, but he will not delay long. The wise response would be to repent and turn to God by accepting and believing his Chosen One. Sadly, the nation of Israel largely spurned this offer of mercy.

The promise of judgment should serve as a motivation for holy living. Take some time to read and savor 2 Peter 3:8-15.

How does the promise of Christ's coming encourage you toward godly living? In what ways can your homegroup help you to lead a life of *holiness and godliness*?

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 13:1-9

- Read Romans 5:12-21 together. Finish by praising God for forgiveness, grace, and hope!
- Ponder the brevity of life and the inevitability of judgment. Read out loud the 4 verses below, and take a moment of silence to reflect.

Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)

As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. (Psalm 103:12)

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

...Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment... (Hebrews 9:27)

- Thank God that for the life we have and the spiritual opportunities we have been given, that we might still have time to repent and serve Him wholeheartedly.
- Acknowledge that God is the potter and we are His clay, and that His judgments are just.
- Pray for each other, that God might lead you to repentance, wherever it is needed. Pray that you would throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. Pray that each of you would be ready for the day of your death, and receive a rich welcome into His eternal kingdom.
- Pray for a spirit of repentance and holiness in our church and churches of our area.
- Pray for individuals you know who have yet to repent and turn to God.
- Pray for repentance among the nations, particularly in places that have experienced war or natural disaster. Consider places like Haiti, Japan, Afghanistan, Indonesia, and Iraq. Pray that the result of these disasters would be turning to the one true God instead of turning to bitterness or false gods.



STUDY SEVEN: Luke 13:22-35

THE NARROW DOOR

As Jesus was making his way toward Jerusalem someone asked him a profound question: *Lord, will those who are saved be few* (13:23)?

This person was asking if at the end of history everyone will be saved? Will God's grace have the last word in the sense that even those who rebel against God in this life will be saved in the next life? Or will only a few people be saved?

These are questions that beguile and trouble believers in every era, including the era of Jesus. The two sections of Luke we will cover in this study provide a remarkably clear answer to these questions.

With the above in mind, read Luke 13:22-35. This passage falls into two parts. Each section is a response to something asked or said.

13:24-30 contain Jesus' answer to the question about how many will be saved.

13:31-35 record Jesus' response to a group of Pharisees who warn Jesus to flee from Herod.

Make some notes that summarize how Jesus answers the question put before him. Why do you think Jesus answers Herod as he does in verses 32-35?

13:24-30

13:32-35

The Narrow Door (13:24-30)

This first dialogue with Jesus would have been shocking to those present. First-century Jews had the conviction that they were all children of God, they would all be saved. It was the Gentiles who were lost, unless they had converted to Judaism. The *Mishnah*, a collection of Jewish writings summarizes Jewish thinking well:

All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written *Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.* And these are they that have no share in the world to come: he that says there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and [he that says] that the Law is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean. (Sanhedrin 10.1)¹

In other words, those speaking with Jesus were sure they were saved. No worries, no headaches. The question concerns outsiders. Will any of them be saved? When we understand this, the answers Jesus gives in our passage are stunning!

13:24-30 Look over the parable and answer the following questions:

What phrase or sentence do you think was most offensive to those listening to Jesus? Explain your answer.

Jesus refers to entering the Kingdom of God through the *narrow door*. Jesus' words are startling, many *will seek to enter and will not be able*. Why not?

Compare verses 25 and 27 in the NIV and ESV. What is the response of the master of the house?

Robert Gundry explains the master's answer. *In that culture, to know someone you had to know where the person was from. Not to know his or her place of origin was not to know the person him- or herself.* (Gundry, p. 294)

How would the master's answer to those knocking have been understood by Jesus' original listeners?

¹ Cited in Hughes, 2, p. 96.

Does Jesus' parable actually answer this person's question? Explain.

What happens to those who do not enter the house?

What two surprises are found in verses 29-30?

How does this parable speak to you personally? Think about your own faith in Jesus. When you became a Christian did you (or do you now) have the sense of entering through a *narrow door*.

13:24 says *strive to enter through the narrow door*. The word *strive*, *agonizomai* in Greek, is the word from which we get the English word *agonize*. Jesus is referring to the effort we exert to yield ourselves to God. As Alexander Maclaren put it, *We are not saved by effort, but we shall not believe without effort*.¹

Describe your own *effort* to enter through the narrow door. Share this with your homegroup.

Respond to the following quotation:

The passage to Heaven is not through the great portal of a palace, but a narrow, low door through which one must humbly squeeze. (Hughes, 2, p. 97)

¹ Cited in Hughes, 2, p. 98. Alexander Maclaren was a 19th century Scottish preacher and commentator.

Compare John 6:27-29. Here, Jesus actually speaks of the *work* of believing. What does it mean to think of our *believing* as a form of work?

This section began with someone asking Jesus about the number of people who would be saved. Jesus' answer emphasizes not the *number* of those saved, but the *time* of salvation. He says, clearly, there will be a time when it is too late, when the door is shut. Jesus makes the same point that the writer to the Hebrews makes, *...it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment...* (Hebrews 9:27). It would be profitable for each of us to ask ourselves, *Have I entered the narrow door?*

The Forsaken City (13:31-35)

In this section some Pharisees warn Jesus to flee because Herod wants to kill him. This is Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus when he was born. This is the Herod who killed John the Baptist.

13:32-33 What do you make of Jesus' initial answer to the Pharisees? Notice how this fits into Jesus' determination to go to Jerusalem (see Luke 9:22, 9:31, 9:51, 9:53).

13:34-35 contains one of Jesus' more famous lines, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem*.

What, specifically, does Jesus say about Jerusalem?

These verses have been called a *pathetic soliloquy*. Jesus' words are simultaneously tender, terrifying, and filled with promise.

Tenderly, Jesus says he has longed to care for Jerusalem, that is, for the people of Israel. He uses the image of a mother hen protecting her chicks under her wings. This is not the first time we find this image of God caring for his people in the Scriptures. Consider:

Psalm 17:8

Psalm 36:7

Psalm 57:1

Psalm 63:7

Psalm 64:4

Psalm 91:4

How does this image of the protective wings of God speak to you personally? When do you find yourself hiding under his wings?

Terrifyingly, Jesus says to a personified Jerusalem *your house is forsaken*. Literally Jesus says, *Your house is being left to you*. This is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 22:5,

But if you will not obey these words, I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

Jerusalem will be devoid of God, uninhabited by God's Spirit! Disaster will be the result. Jesus' prophecy of doom was fulfilled, literally, in A.D. 68-70 when the Romans razed the city to the ground. Rejecting the Messiah had dire consequences for the inhabitants of Israel.

What lesson or lessons can we glean from this terrifying prediction?

Promisingly, Jesus doesn't stop at the beginning of verse 35. He goes on to say,

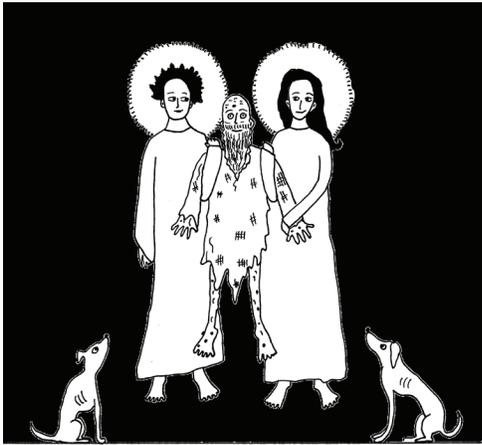
And I tell you, you will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!'

Jesus quotes Psalm 118:26 to the effect that in the future the inhabitants of Jerusalem will welcome him as Lord and Messiah! Interpretations of this cryptic promise abound and we will not wrestle with them here. In the meantime, let us be among those who enter through the narrow door. As the apostle Paul writes, . . . *now is the day of salvation* (2 Corinthians 6:2)!

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 13:22-35

- Give thanks that God has made a way to be saved, and has revealed to us the narrow door!
- Thank God for Jesus, who is the only name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)
- Praise God that in His mercy and patience, He has given us time to enter through that narrow door. Praise Him that now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation (1 Corinthians 6:2)
- Pray for our church and the churches of our area, that we would not be content with cultural Christianity but instead *strive to enter through the narrow door*. Pray that those who are Christians in name only would be stirred to repentance and real faith.
- Pray for individuals you know who have yet to enter through the narrow door. Perhaps for some who once seemed to have entered but have wandered from the faith.
- Thank God that many will come from east and west and north and south to take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. (13:29). Pray for the western church to not be prideful in its spiritual history, but have humility and gratitude for God's work among the nations!
- Pray for the nations of the earth, that the gospel would spread and many would enter through that narrow door. Pray that God would send laborers to the harvest!
- Read 13:34-35 again, and ask Jesus to bless us by gathering us as a hen gathers her chicks, and enabling us to take refuge under His wings (Psalm 91:4). Tell God your needs and concerns, and consider repeating Psalm 91:4a as a litany in response to these individual requests:

He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you will find refuge.



STUDY EIGHT: Luke 16:13-31

RICH MAN, POOR MAN, HEAVEN & HELL

Jesus had a lot to say about money. He spoke often of its effect on people. Jesus pointed out both the danger and blessing of money in our lives. In addition, Jesus was bold in his condemnation of those who trust in or misuse their wealth. In our study of Luke 16:13-31 we begin in the middle of a chapter where much of the entire discussion has been concerned with riches.

Read Luke 16:13-31 slowly. We are starting our study a few verses before the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (verses 19-31). Before going on in this study write down some of your initial thoughts and questions. What puzzles you? What are a few main points that are clear? How is this parable different from other parables we have studied?

The short unit found before our parable, verses 13-18, can be difficult to understand being placed in between two passages that clearly deal with money. Verses 13-14 serve as the bridge between the parable of the dishonest manager (16:1-12) and the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31).

Jesus will often end a parable with an axiom or concluding principle as he does here in verse 13. What is the concluding principle in verse 13 that summarizes the parable of the dishonest manager? Try putting the idea of this verse into your own words.

How does Jesus connect the Pharisees (v. 14) with this summary statement?

In verses 16-18 we come to a section that talks about the *Law and the Prophets* (Old Testament), *the kingdom of God*, and then right to divorce! On a surface reading most of us scratch our heads and say, *What is going on?* Darrel Bock gives us some help in understanding why these verses are inserted between these two parables.

Jesus' remarks about money raise the issue of his authority, since the presence of the kingdom raises the question of the source and allegiances of one's values. The kingdom exposes divided loyalties, for one serves either God or Money (v. 10-13). Idolatries are revealed by its presence, and God hates them (v. 14-15). A key to such values is total integrity, which is why the example of the divorce pledge gets noted in verse 18. The hinge is verses 16-17, where the arrival of the kingdom is linked to the preaching of Jesus. He has the right to call on people to examine how they use resources and to reflect on the nature of their walk with God in terms of integrity. (Bock, p. 425)

Before moving on to look at the rich man and Lazarus take a moment to consider this brief statement on divorce.¹ This comment is inserted between these two parables most likely to illustrate the importance of personal commitments and integrity in the new Kingdom era. What point does this illustration make? Why do you think Luke chose to insert it here?

Why is divorce inconsistent with the Christian life?

The Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31).²

The parable begins with a very vivid contrast between these two men that sets the stage for the rest of the story. Try to get a picture in your mind of these men.

Describe the rich man. What do we learn about him and his character? What do we know about his house? Why is the color *purple* mentioned?

¹ The point of this passage is not to provide a full discussion of divorce. Other passages in the New Testament do consider the grounds for divorce and its implications. See Matthew 5:31-32, 1 Corinthians 7:14-16.

² Bible scholars often discuss whether or not Luke 16:19-31 is a parable. It differs in several regards from other New Testament parables. It is not about a repeatable everyday situation but rather a specific story. It is the only parable in Luke that names any of its characters. For the purposes of our study we will follow the lead of many scholars who do consider this a parable, albeit a unique one.

Now describe Lazarus. What do we know of his condition?

Eventually, both Lazarus and the rich man die. One of the lessons of the parable is that death is the great equalizer. How do the rich man's possessions and status help him in the afterlife?

Consider your own life for a moment. Write a list of some of your most valued possessions in this life (house, car, clothes, sports equipment, jewelry, investments, etc.) Which of the items on your list will you take with you when you die? What is the obvious lesson from these two deaths?

What questions does this parable raise for you about the afterlife? What does the rich imagery of the parable suggest?

The parable clearly teaches two final states for these men. How does the story describe these two destinations? What language is used to paint the picture of *Hades* and *Abraham's side*?

rich man = *Hades* (hell)

Lazarus = *Abraham's side*¹

¹ *Abraham's side* is literally *Abraham's bosom*. This unusual and infrequently used phrase draws attention to Abraham as the father of all who have faith (Romans 4:1-5) and points to the welcoming of Lazarus to the fellowship of other believers who are already in heaven.

We should be careful to not press the details of this story. Nevertheless, we do get an unmistakable picture of heaven and hell, of two ultimate realities. For many this is a troubling teaching in the Bible. How should we respond to those who are troubled? How do you respond?

What should this conversation between Abraham and the rich man teach us? How should this conversation motivate us in our relationships with those who are estranged from God and have no faith in Jesus?

This is not the place to do a complete study of what the Bible teaches about heaven and hell. Our parable can and should stand on its own. However, since we are studying the gospel of Luke (and the life of Jesus) it is important to remember that Jesus had a great deal to say about hell. Many who are new to reading the Bible are surprised by this startling truth. In addition to our passage here in Luke 16, ponder a few of these other statements of Jesus.

Matthew 8:10-12

Matthew 10:28

Matthew 25:41-46

Luke 12:4-5

What does the rich man ask of Abraham concerning his five brothers?

What is Abraham's response?

How do you understand the phrase in verse 26, *a great chasm has been fixed*?

Bock points out the irony of the situation.

There is irony in this reply. What Abraham refuses for the brothers is accomplished for the readers of the parable by warnings issued for them. We hear a person in torment warn us to respond with compassion to those around us. In this parable the grave speaks so that we might hear. (Bock, p. 434)

What is the point of Abraham's response to the rich man's request in verses 30-31? What is the value of having *Moses and the prophets*?

While the parable gives a negative illustration of the lack of compassion on the part of the rich man, it is designed to have us consider how we respond to people like Lazarus. What do we learn about compassion for the poor from this story?¹

Gather up your thoughts from this parable. What are one or two biblical principles that you can apply to your life this week? Be practical in thinking about the application of this story to your life situation. What changes in attitude or life-style does this teaching of Jesus call you to?

¹ Some reading this parable may wonder if it is teaching that God judges us based on what we do. Bock explains. *One troubling aspect of a text like this is that it appears that God's evaluation of us is based on works. But this is not the way to understand the text in light of the entirety of Scripture. The ethical call of God reveals what he expects of people. Other portions of Scripture reveal the way God enables us to accomplish this calling and to reflect his will.* (Bock, p. 435)

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 16:13-31

- Acknowledge that God is worthy of our entire allegiance. Confess your desire and intention to have no other gods that compete with Him (16:13). Tell God the emptiness and futility of serving anyone but Him. Consider reading scriptures that declare this, such as the examples below.

The sorrows of those will increase who run after other gods. (Psalm 16:4)

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some people eager for money, have wandered from the faith, and pierced themselves with many griefs. (1 Timothy 6:10)

But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths but cannot speak, eyes but they cannot see... (Psalm 115:4-5)

- Repent of the ways in which our hearts are divided. Confess our attraction to money. Confess any other sins that draw our hearts away to other gods. In response to these individual confessions, consider repeating Psalm 86:11 as a litany:

Give us an undivided heart that we may fear your name.

- Pray for an undivided heart in our marriages. Pray that God would protect us and keep us from divorce. (16:18)
- Pray that money and comfort would not keep us from heaven as it did the rich man in the story of Lazarus. Pray that God would have mercy on any of us who are following the pattern of the rich man. Ask forgiveness for the ways in which we have received our comfort on earth instead of waited for heaven. Pray for our children and the generation growing up in our church, that they may not be seduced by wealth but develop Godly habits with respect to money early in their lives.
- Ask God to open our eyes and hearts to the Lazarus who may be laid at our gate (16:20).
- Ask God to revive the Western church with a compassion for the less fortunate. Pray that God would be pleased to use our moneys to bring mercy, justice, and good news to the poor around the world. Pray for radical generosity to overcome consumerism and addiction to comfort. Pray that our giving habits and our church budget would be a fragrant and pleasing offering to God.
- Pray for our friends, family, and neighbors, that they may hear the scriptures and respond to them. Pray that we may be in heaven together with them, rather than separated by the great chasm that has been fixed. (16:26)



STUDY NINE: Luke 17:1-19

CHRISTIAN DUTY

Duty. Obligation. Responsibility. These are not words that free-spirited Americans get excited about. We'd much prefer everything in life to be unrestricted, and dream of a world where people *practice random acts of kindness* out of the goodness of our own hearts. Unfortunately, in the real world of fallen people, we at times have to force ourselves to do the things we wish we did naturally. It takes discipline, and at times, a sense of duty to live out our faith. Today's text presents us with some aspects of the Christian life that Jesus expects from his followers as a matter of duty.

Our study this week in Luke 17 comes in two parts: in verses 1-10, we have a section of Jesus' teaching, and then in 11-19, a miracle story. We will find the themes of the first half demonstrated in the second. Read verses 1-10, and as you do write down anything that sticks out to you, any questions you may have, the unifying threads that emerge.

This section is called by some a *greatest hits* of Jesus teaching, as many have a hard time seeing any cohesiveness in Jesus' teachings in these verses.

However, the larger context helps us to frame our passage a little bit. Jesus seems to be concerned to say, *Don't be like the Pharisees!* He then goes on to criticize practices that are usually identified with the Pharisees in Luke: *Lack of regard for the 'little ones' and sinners in their midst, faithlessness, and a heightened, problematic concern for recognition and status.* (Green, p. 611) As we move along in this week's study, keep in mind last week's passage and other things we have learned regarding Jesus' interactions with the spiritual authorities of his time, and how as disciples we are called to live differently.

Temptation to Sin (17:1-4)

In this first section we get two warnings: to be careful to give no offense and to take no offense. (Wilcock, p. 166.) The first is a haunting warning: woe to the one who causes another to sin. The phrase in Greek has a lot more metaphorical unity than what we see in English. It says literally,

It would be impossible for stumbling blocks not to come but... It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck ... than that he should cause one of these little ones to stumble.

It is quite a haunting hypothetical: to have a big rock tied around your neck and then be thrown into the sea! And yet, Jesus says stumbling blocks are sure to come. How can this be? What is the point of his warning?

Have there been times in your life when a fellow believer was a stumbling block to you and caused you to sin? Have there been times in your life when you were that stumbling block? Explain.

Clearly, Jesus does not take sin lightly. Jesus moves quickly to the flip side of things with his instruction on how to engage with sinful brothers and sisters. Look at the order of how things happen in verse 3. How should this inform the way we address sin in the lives of fellow believers? What are the important elements to maintaining holy relationships? Who are the people in your life that you need to forgive? How have you experienced rebuke and/or forgiveness in your life?

Some of us are better at rebuking than we are forgiving; others are better at forgiving than rebuking (even if there is no repentance); and still others are better at just distancing ourselves completely from conflict. Look again at verse 4 as Jesus tightens the screws even further: you are to forgive even if someone sins seven times a day against you. Now it's personal! And yet we are called to still forgive. What is the goal of all of this rebuking, repenting and forgiving?

Believers are to be in community, pursuing holiness together, but maintaining forgiveness as a hallmark of our relationships.

Increase our Faith! (17:5-6)

Jesus' teaching on relentless forgiveness elicits a response from the disciples that many of us might share: *Lord, increase our faith!*

But what is the response that they—and we—get from Jesus?

The mustard seed (for its meager dimensions) and the mulberry tree (for its deep and strong root system) were both referred to proverbially in the first century. Jesus contrasts them to say *that just a smidgen of faith would be sufficient to give rise to practices even more extraordinary than those he has just outlined.* (Green, p. 613.)

Have there been times in your life when the simple commands of Christ seemed impossible, and you felt in need of extraordinary amounts of faith? How were those times resolved in your life?

How can we reconcile these times with this teaching of Jesus without being unrealistic or overly simplistic?

We Are Unworthy Servants (17:7-10)

Jesus' apparent rebuke continues with a series of rhetorical questions. Look at verses 7-9 again. What is Jesus getting at with these questions—what is the point? What does Jesus suggest that they might be asking for?

Read Luke 11:42-44, 18:9-14, and Matthew 23:1-7. How do these pictures of the Pharisees compare to what we see in verses 7-9?

In verse 10, Jesus concludes his rhetorical questions with some instruction on how we are to go about living out our faith. How might this shape the way you think about living out the commands of Jesus?

Respond to the following quote by Darrel Bock:

A 'servant' responds to God without question as a matter of duty. This text, however, should not be left by itself when it comes to the theme of service, for God does honor faithful service (see 12:37). The balance is important, because the servant needs to appreciate what his duty is, while God is clear that service well done is honored. God rewards those who serve without thought of reward. (Bock, 414.)

Healing of the Ten Lepers (17:11-19)

We turn now to the second half of our text, and to the curious placement of this miracle story within a larger section of Jesus' teaching. Read verses 11-19 and write down anything that sticks out to you, questions you may have, or potential connections to the previous ten verses.

There are several differences mentioned in this passage between the one who turned back and the other nine. Compare and contrast the one to the nine, what are the similarities and what are the main differences we see from the text?

In these few verses we see Jesus demonstrating for us the very things he had just taught and the orientation we should have towards him. Just as we are to be generous with our forgiveness, knowing that only one would turn back to glorify God, Jesus nevertheless shows mercy to all ten. Furthermore, as Robert Gundry points out, *In 17:7-10, a slave isn't deserving of thanks for merely obeying orders. Here, though, Jesus [the Master] is deserving of thanks; for he's in charge, as a slave isn't; and he has healed the lepers out of sheer grace, not out of duty.* (Gundry, p. 308.) Finally, the Samaritan leper (or *the foreigner*, as Jesus calls him) demonstrates a level of faith we should have.¹

What can we learn from the Samaritan Leper? How might the grace of *the Master* towards us equip us to live the way Jesus describes in the first half of our passage?

In conclusion to this week's study, ponder and respond to the quote by C.S. Lewis on our Christian duty:

Meanwhile of course we are merely tuning our instruments. The tuning up of the orchestra can be itself delightful, but only to those who can in some measure, however little, anticipate the symphony. The Jewish sacrifices, and even our own most sacred rites, as they actually occur in human experience, are like the tuning: promise, not performance. Hence, like the tuning, they may have in them much duty and little delight; or none. But the duty exists for the delight. When we carry out our "religious duties" we are like people digging channels in a waterless land, in order that when at last the water comes, it may find them ready. I mean, for the most part. There are happy moments, even now, when a trickle creeps along the dry beds; and happy souls to whom this happens often.²

May we find joy in our duty as Christians this week!

1 The end of verse 19 in Greek literally reads, *your faith has saved you*. While commentators and translators debate what the meaning or rendering should be – they nevertheless acknowledge that the Samaritan's faith results in a different kind of healing/saving than the cleansing received by the nine.

2 C.S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, p. 97.

PRAYING THE PASSAGE: LUKE 17:1-19

- Acknowledge that God is God and we are not. He is worthy of our gratitude and worship (17:16), while we are merely His unworthy subjects and servants (17:10).
- Thank God that though we are unworthy and sinful, He is a God of forgiveness!
- Remember how God has cleansed you as He cleansed the 10 lepers. Practice being like the one leper who returned to thank Jesus, and thank Him specifically for how He saved and delivered you!
- Confess our sins, and perhaps ways we have led others into sin. Do this silently first and out loud as appropriate. Examine your own heart, and confess any unforgiveness that is there.
- Pray for our church and the churches of our area, that we may become more holy. Name specific areas of sin our churches need to be cleansed from.
- Pray for the little ones (17:2) among us—the generation growing up in our church. Pray that none of us would cause them to sin or miss the kingdom of God. Pray for holiness among all our youth workers, and for God to keep us from scandal.
- Pray that our ministries and missionaries who work with children would bring them closer to God rather than cause them to sin! Young Life, Goleta Homework Club, Converge Worldwide, Sports Outreach, Querencia, and Child Evangelism Fellowship are just a few examples.
- Ask that our church as a whole and the generation growing up in it would not adopt the spirit of entitlement that pervades our culture, but would adopt the unworthy servant posture (17:10) and the thankful leper posture (17:16), trusting God to lift us up as we humble ourselves before Him (James 4:10).
- Pray that our church would be wise and skillful in both rebuking sin and extending forgiveness to repentant sinners (17:3-4). Pray for the elders as they wrestle with church discipline issues from time to time.
- Finally, exercise the mustard seed faith you have (17:6), by praying big and bold prayers as a homegroup to conclude. Consider beginning some of your prayers with *Lord, I believe...* For example, *Lord I believe that you will build your church in the Muslim world. I believe you will turn persecutors into preachers, just as you did with the apostle Paul.* In addition to Luke 17:6, consider repeating 1 John 5:14 as a litany in response to individual prayers:

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.