



**Five Gospel Fruits
provided by
THE JESUS SEED**



for Christians to Enjoy



Patrick J. Griffiths



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Provided by the Jesus Seed
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Introduction

Questions to Consider:

1. What place do the “Spiritual Disciplines” have in the life of the believer?
2. By what standards do we measure our own spiritual health and growth? Who sets the standard?
3. How can rethinking the way we view these activities change the way we think about our relationship with God and His view of us?

The purpose of this current study is to help you “stay in *Story*.” For the next several weeks, we will be looking at various means God has put in play to assist us to live in *Story*.

The Big Picture:

God created so that the fellowship He has within Himself would be shared by those He creates for their joy (Hab. 2:14). Thus, He designed us for joy. Moreover, this joy is only possible in Him. The individual mission of His people is to share this simple message with others (Matthew 28:18-20). Enabling us in our own mission can happen through the disciplines. This study is seeking to explain what some of these ‘disciplines’ are from the Gospel of Luke.

The Scripture speaks of believers growing in the true knowledge and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18). The thought of growth presupposes means. Many conclude the means are the spiritual disciplines. Activities such as Bible reading, Christian prayer or meditation/silence, and fasting are part of those means often leveraged by Christians wishing to grow. Yet, do such activities cause growth? The conversation is lengthy, but the premise of these studies is

that all the believer needs they already have in Christ. Thus, growth is simply resting in what is true. The resting can have the appearance of running, wrestling, sitting, standing, and walking, but all such expenditures of energy have as their object Jesus. Who is He, what has He done, and who are His people because of this? Those are the questions the disciplines discover and answer.

The Scripture speaks of such practices where we remember Him for our rest and joy. Often we view these practices, such as going to Church, Scripture and Prayer as chores or duties, when in reality He provides us such activities for our joy. Therefore, is it possible we are reading what the Bible says about these things incorrectly?

One of the questions confronting us when handling the biblical text is its application to us. When reading the Scriptures there is a pattern for understanding the text. **First**, what did the text mean to them/then, the original readers? How did they hear/read that text? There are forces shaping their understanding of the text. Areas such as cultural, historical, literary, and theological [Second Temple / Old Testament] context shape their understanding of the message. **Second**, what does this text teach us about Jesus? If all biblical revelation points to Him, then how does this text reveal Jesus? **Finally**, what does the text mean to us/now? What is the “take away”? The “take away” is more constricted than we often think or wish to make it. If we follow this pattern, we will cut a true path in interpreting and applying Scripture.

The Problem:

Initially, there are several common problems facing us as we discuss this matter.

- First, we think the disciplines will fix what is broken. The impression one has when speaking of the disciplines is fixing and/or changing. We sell them as if the activity will make our relationship with God flourish. Our view of the activity is not thought-based, but emotion-based. We want to feel differently about [fill in the blank]. When people say, “I just don’t feel close to God,” they are “thinking” with their emotions. They want sensory experience. This is why Bible Conferences and Christian Concerts are popular. Yet only Jesus fixes what is broken and what is broken is our relationship with God. In our justification, Jesus fixes our relational brokenness.
- Second, we tend to think the disciplines will change our relationship with God. Such thinking believes the health of our relationship with God is the result of what we do, rather than on what Jesus did. Yet, the intent of the activities we noted enable us to understand just how blessed we are in Jesus.
- Third, if the above two points mark our approach, then we make them man-centered and not God-centered. We teach them as if they are activities we do for God. This walks us into our fourth point.
- Fourth, if the disciplines are in any way horizontal, then they relate to our relationship with “one another.” They are what we do as community. That is not to say we do not do such activities individually or in isolation, but **their design is for community**. Yet, the horizontal never defines or explains the vertical. My relationship with God defines and establishes my relationship with “one another.” Many of us know

people who do these things personally, but have no alignment with a local church. The design of these activities is for community. We know this because the New Testament is a Book of Community.

For example, the Temple was a place of prayer. It was where people prayed to God. They did this as an expression of personal faith, but as part of the believing community. The same is true concerning Scripture. The Hebrew Scripture was in the Temple and read by the priest in the hearing of all. No individual believer had a copy of the Word of God. The same is true concerning the New Testament text. It was not until the middle of the 4th century, we agreed on the New Testament Canon and it was not until the 15th century we had the printing press. Beyond this, it was some time before the populace at large was literate. The point being, the idea of having one's own private time around the word was almost unheard of until the 19th and 20th centuries. What we have made personal and private was corporate and public.

Spiritual growth was a community activity tied to the believing assembly. Thus, when walking with a new believer, initial encouragement should be toward the corporate [i.e. go to church and participate in the family] rather than private [i.e. developing the habit of prayer, bible study, etc.]. Unfortunately, such thinking is foreign to us.

- Fifth, we make them meritorious. We think such activity merits God's favor and blessing.

The disciplines do not secure for us God's favor or blessing expanded on in our introduction. The disciplines help us discover just how blessed and fortunate we already are in Christ. The disciplines enable the people of God to remember the *Story* of God. We handle these activities as if our

relationship with God is a business transaction. We superimpose our sin driven world of conquest and advancement with the spirit world, when the two are not the same. "We put a nickel in and expect a dime back." It is like a gumball machine. We treat the disciplines as if they are the lamp containing the genie and if we rub the lamp out will pop the genie and grant us three wishes. **Friend, if you think God will judge you or withhold His blessings from you for not doing these things, you have the wrong view of your relationship to God.** We do these "things" because they bring us joy. These activities enable us to see how blessed we already are in Christ. **As we will see, we are not in bondage to these things.** They are our servants, not our masters. Friend, the New Testament is not a document describing our work for Him, but His work for us. The disciplines are enabling us to understand the *Story* more fully and thus live out the *Story* in our daily circumstances.

- Sixth, we fail to see how God establishes these activities for our joy and His glory.

Again, the very idea of the "disciplines" sounds more like a "paddle" than a "lollipop." We have made "rabbits feet" out of church attendance, bible reading, prayer, giving, and going when these are things God does for us for our joy. Unfortunately, we use the activities to either feel good about what we do [i.e. works-based righteousness] or produce guilt in others who fail to do them in our prescribed way. **Either end is wrong.**

Initially, let us consider this statement by Tullian Tchividjian on discipleship/sanctification:

What are you learning about life and following Jesus?

[Begin quote] "I'm learning, in the words of Eugene Peterson, that "discipleship is a process of paying more and more attention to God's righteousness and less and less attention to our own." The way many of us think about sanctification is, well, not very sanctified. In fact, it's terribly narcissistic. We spend too much time thinking about how we're doing, if we're growing, whether we're doing it right or not. We spend too much time pondering our spiritual failures and brooding over our spiritual successes. Somewhere along the way we've come to believe that the focus of the Christian faith is the life of the Christian."

"Ironically, I've discovered that the more I focus on my need to get better, the worse I actually get—I become neurotic and self-absorbed. Preoccupation with our performance over Christ's performance for us actually hinders spiritual growth because it makes us increasingly self-centered and morbidly introspective—the exact opposite of how the Bible describes what it means to be sanctified. Sanctification is forgetting about yourself. "He must increase but I must decrease" (John 3:30) properly describes the painful sanctification process. "Decreasing" is impossible for the one who keeps thinking about himself. As J. C. Kromsigt said, "The good seed cannot flourish when it is repeatedly dug up for the purpose of examining its growth." Thankfully, the focus of the Bible is *not* the work of the redeemed but the work of the Redeemer. The gospel frees us from ourselves. It announces that this whole thing is about Jesus and dependent on Jesus. The good news is the declaration of his victory for us, not our "victorious Christian life." The gospel asserts that God's final word over a Christian has already been spoken: "Paid in full." [End of quote]

When we speak of the Christian life, we often reference such thinking as the disciplines of the Christian life. For years, I have questioned our approach to these areas. Even the labeling of the idea as a discipline does not set well with me. Years before I came to understand the power of the gospel, I regularly taught on the importance of the disciplines in the life of the disciple. I want to share with you what I once taught so I can contrast this with where I now am.

Why the disciplines? The disciplines enable the believer to ...

1. Separate from the deeds of the flesh (2 Cor. 7:1).

“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

2. To lay aside the works of darkness (Rom. 13:12).

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12).

3. To put off the old man (Eph. 4:22; Col. 3:9).

“That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22).

“Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9)

4. To make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:14; Gal. 5:13).

“But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*” (Rom. 13:14)

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only *use* not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13).

5. To put to death the deeds of the flesh (Rom. 8:13; Col. 3:5).

“For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5).

Notice something about the five reasons listed; all of them are negative. All of them have as their focus the putting off the old and our war against the sins of the flesh, the world and the devil. None of them speaks of Jesus and His place in the *Story*.

When supporting this idea we often turn to 1 Tim. 4:7. In fact, turn with me to 1 Timothy 4:7 notice what it says: "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness." (NASB). Listen to the strength of the following verses.

“But thou, O man of God, **flee these things; and follow after** righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (1 Tim. 6:11).

²¹ “**If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor**, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work. ²² **Flee** also youthful lusts: **but follow righteousness**, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:21, 22)

“**Follow** peace with all *men*, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).

I want you to notice something. I do not deny the verse, but I do believe we have replaced Jesus with holiness. There is no holiness apart from Him. We do not attain holiness. **Holiness is something received.** Jesus is holiness embodied and when we are in Him, we are holy. I have taught that I do not wake up each day seeking to keep the commands of Scripture. I wake up every day seeking Jesus. I do not think about the commands, I think about Jesus. I recognize there might be a grinding of gears in your thinking right now, but reflect on this for a moment.

When 1 Corinthians 13 speaks of love, is it not speaking of JESUS? When the Proverbs highlight wisdom, are they not speaking to us of JESUS? When Paul tells us to think on these things in Philippians 4:8, is he not inviting us to think of JESUS?

“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

Often, we assume we agree on these things. Nevertheless, I really believe people preach imperatives without preaching JESUS. I believe Christians believe they are good because they obey rather than being good because HE IS GOOD.

Could we not equally read the previous verses in the following manner and still make perfect or better sense of what they are saying if we change but one word?

“Discipline yourself for the purpose of **JESUS**” (1 Tim. 4:7).

“But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after **JESUS**” (1 Tim. 6:11).

²¹“If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, *and* prepared unto every good work. ²²Flee also youthful lusts: but follow **JESUS**, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:21, 22).

“Follow **JESUS** with all *men*, and **JESUS**, without which no man shall see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14).

What are commonly referred to as spiritual exercises are for nothing more or less than to keep us in *Story*. The absence or presence of such activities can be misused by producing guilt by their absence or pride by their presence, but no such activity on our part changes God’s perspective of us or our standing before Him. The cross answers the issue of being better. By engaging in the disciplines/activities, you live life from God’s perspective and in so doing live His freedom, His peace and His rest.

Very popular people have written on these topics and for the most part, I disagree with them. I believe their approach removes from the action the gospel. Much of what these people write in other areas I would agree with, but anytime we deviate from the cross in our personal walk with God I differ with them.

We speak of the disciplines with the intent of growing in **JESUS**. However, what do we mean by Christian growth? Think about this with me for the moment. We mark growth in a child by their ability to do things on their own without help. We speak of growth in terms of independence, the ability to take care of yourself and function without your parents, but is this really our goal in Christian growth? Christian growth is the awareness that everything comes from God, is sustained by God and is for the glory of God.

The Christian life is lived in complete dependence on the person and work of Jesus Christ. Christian maturity does not produce an independent spirit, but a dependent spirit. Christian maturity does not happen in one's absence from the believing community, but rather by their presence in the Christian community. The Christian life is recognizing how every moment and every circumstance is from Him, sustained by Him and ultimately for Him. If this were true, then why would I practice/pursue the disciplines?

Consider with me the use of the word "growth" in the NT. The word we are considering is **auxano**. It is "a prolonged form of a primary verb; to grow ("wax"), i.e. enlarge (literal or figurative, active or passive):--grow (up), (give the) increase."¹

Its first occurrence in the NT is Matthew 6:28 where we read, "And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin" (Luke 12:27). Notice it is a growth without labor. In several passages the word is used agriculturally (Matt. 13:32; Mark 4:8; Luke 13:19).

It is also used of John the Baptizer (Luke 1:80) and of Jesus (Luke 2:40) as they grew as children. John uses the word in his famous statement, "He must increase [grow - come to prominence], but I must decrease [fade into the background]" (John 3:30).

Luke uses the word to describe the spreading of the Word of God in Acts 6:7; 12:24 and 19:20.

- " And the word of God **increased**; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7).

- “But the word of God **grew** and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).
- “So mightily **grew** the word of God and prevailed” (Acts 19:20).

It also is used of numbers expanding and increasing (Acts 7:17, “But when the time of the promise drew nigh, which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt”).

Paul uses the word to describe the consequence of the Word increasing as coming from God (1 Cor. 3:6, 7). Only God can cause/produce “growth.” He echoes this idea in Col. 2:19.

- “And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, **increaseth with the increase of God**” (Col. 2:19).

Paul uses the word in the following manner.

- “Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and **increase the fruits of your righteousness**” (2 Cor. 9:10).
- “Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labours; but having hope, **when your faith is increased**, that we shall be enlarged by you according to our rule abundantly” (2 Cor. 10:15).
- “In whom all the **building fitly framed together groweth** unto an holy temple in the Lord” (Eph. 2:21).
- But speaking the truth in love, **may grow up into him in all things**, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

Peter likewise uses the word in the following two passages.

- “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that **ye may grow thereby**” (1 Pet. 2:2).

- “But **grow in grace**, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Pet. 3:18).

Paul parallels this idea in Colossians 1:10.

- “That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and **increasing in the knowledge of God**” (Col. 1:10). [being fruitful and increasing are in synonymous parallelism]

Notice how Peter also ties growth with Word/knowledge. If understood correctly, there is no growth apart from Word/instruction/knowledge. Hear me, Word/instruction/knowledge do not guarantee growth in the gospel; but without Word/instruction/knowledge ones depth in grace/gospel is strained. **How can you love what you do not know?** If however you’ve placed yourself under the Word, God can use your circumstances to “trigger” application/understanding so that you read your circumstances in the context of it coming from God, sustained by God, and for God.

As I have already stressed, my intent is to reprogram the way we apply the gospel in our relationship with God. Think about how we shape this conversation. Let us begin by writing down ten things that bring you joy; that can or would make you happy. It can be anything. Now, put them in descending order. Now pick out the very best one. Listen to what John the Apostle noted as being his single greatest joy, to hear that his spiritual children walked in truth (3 John 4).

John had seen a lot, but his greatest joy was to know that his spiritual children were living obedient lives. Listen carefully

to 3 John 4. "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth." The idea of "to walk" means, "to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self; to pass one's life."

The source of John's joy was that his spiritual offspring were regulating their lives by the truth of God's Word. Their lives were marked by obedience [I will explain this idea in a moment]. He says the same thought in 2 John 4, "I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father." John's rejoicing was excessive and exceedingly beyond measure. To say the least it brought John great joy to know that his children were obeying the truths of Scripture.

John uses one of our current buzzwords and it is obedience. Another one of those buzz words is discipleship. Yet what is obedience, what is discipleship?

First, what is obedience?

We have made obedience a very dark and foreboding act. By making obedience something we do we strip from obedience the joy it was meant to bring. By telling people they have to obey is like telling a child they have to hug and kiss their sibling or tell them they are sorry for some wrong done. They might "obey" out of sheer fear, but they have no love or joy in the doing of it or telling a child to clean their room. Both acts are necessary, but neither are caused by love but most probably fear. Yet, our obedience is nothing more or less than the fruit of the Holy Spirit. **It is our love for God produced by His love for us that makes our obedience descriptive rather than prescriptive.** In addition, there is also a collective fruit produced by the Holy Spirit in and through His community that we will attempt to note throughout our study. Such fruit is good works and obedience.

Second, what is discipleship?

A disciple of Jesus is one who leaves off his own work and who affirms all that Jesus is and does in his behalf before the Father. There is nothing mysterious about discipleship. You either are or are not a follower of Jesus. The followers of Jesus obey Jesus. Such obedience is a consequence of the relationship not the cause of the relationship. In addition, as it relates to our obedience please keep in mind our previous thought concerning obedience. The thought that we have varying levels or categories of discipleship speaks more to our failure at guarding the front end of the process rather than the process itself. Our failure sadly causes us to question whether someone is actually saved rather than simply being a poor disciple.

In light of this lengthy introduction, I offer you several areas that can enable us in our desire to stay in *Story* and thus savor our joy in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

An additional problem needing addressing is the individual and solitary nature of how we express them. The Bible speaks of communion in community. Salvation rescues individuals for community. Thus the exercising of the disciplines are not so much individual actions as much as community actions. This does not mean the community does this for the individual. However, it does mean the individual is part of a community exercise when they engage in the disciplines. This is a primary thrust of the study.

In this booklet, we will consider five areas in our lives impacted by the gospel. There is already a familiarity to these areas because they make up a large part of our **community** activity. Many label such areas as Christian disciplines. They

are as follows:

1. Jesus and Church
2. Jesus and Scripture
3. Jesus and Prayer
4. Jesus and Generosity
5. Jesus and Mission

If such an approach is wrong, then how are we to understand these areas? You are saved as an individual for community. You are born into a family.

- We gather as community. God created a place where we can gather for our joy.
- We read as community. God gives us the biblical text so we can learn of Him and His work.
- We pray as community. God invites us to pray so that we might know the joy of intimacy.
- We give as community. God gives to us and through us His resources so we might extend His joy.
- We go as community. God works in us and through us to those around us in gathering others for our joy and His glory.

No one in the early church would separate their faith in the Messiah from the gathering of God's people in geographically distinct locations. No one in the early church would have separated his or her personal growth from the community of faith.

Every one of these activities you can do individually. Yet, their design is corporate. Moreover, the "ought" of this is for joy. Unfortunately, we often approach the activities like a triathlon. We swim, bike, and run always attempting to better our time. Nevertheless, the triathlon is not a team sport.

Perhaps the activities are more like basketball. Without a team, the game does not happen. Each person comes with the necessary skills but each have strengths and weaknesses supported by the other players.

The corporate enables us to enjoy all of the activities without us attempting to make weaknesses strengths.

If I make the activity mandatory, you will feel guilty. You will try harder and you will fail. Moreover, I will “pitch” the solution to your failure and we will repeat the cycle. **What is to be normal we often make necessary.** The difference between the two ideas is one of fruit versus work.

The emphasis is not on what we do for God, but on what He does for us. Moreover, we do not believe anything we do merits favor from God. In addition, we also do not believe anything is essential to maintain our relationship to God. The only thing you need is Jesus. Friend, this is hard to grasp.

We teach people how Christ remains faithful even when we are faithless (2 Timothy 2:13). We provide a voice for Christians who are both Sinner & Saint (Romans 7:15-25). We promote the bad news that you are a greater sinner than you think (Isaiah 64:6-7) and the good news that Christ is a greater Savior than you can imagine (Romans 5:6-11).

Furthermore, *He will never let you go* (Hebrews 13:5-6).

- We hold that life is not about what we do for God, but about what God has done for us
- We hold that “Gospel” is not something you can live, but it is something you can believe
- We hold that grace is freely offered to all, and we need it just as much as everyone else²

The disciplines do not make us Christian. Nothing we do or not do makes us any more or less Christian. However, the disciplines are there for our joy/life by increasing our understanding of God's unconditional love for us. The following chapters will explore what Jesus had to say about Church, Scripture, Prayer, Generosity, and Mission primarily using the Gospel of Luke. The intent is to show us what our relationship is to each of these "fruits." May this journey prove to you a source of joy.

¹ *Strong's Greek Dictionary* for **auxano**.

² <http://www.chrightholdfast.org/about/>

Theme:

Our perspective of the gospel affects our understanding of activities some refer to as Christian Disciplines.

Outline:

- I. Crippling perspectives
- II. A proper understanding

Study Guide:

1. What place do the “Spiritual Disciplines” have in the life of the believer?

2. By what standards do we measure our own spiritual health and growth? Who sets the standard?

3. How can rethinking the way we view these activities change the way we think about our relationship with God and His view of us?

Jesus and Church

Questions to Consider:

1. Describe how Jesus honored the Sabbath.
2. What does it mean that the Sabbath is a day of rest?
3. What value is there in attending Church?
4. What place should teaching have in honoring the Sabbath? What should be the subject of that teaching?

Read Luke 4:14-16, 31-33, 44

Introduction:

In all of our following lessons, we will work primarily from the Gospel of Luke.

In light of the introduction in Lesson 1, let us turn our attention to our initial study on the relationship of Jesus and Church. Now, Luke's language is synagogue so we are already making the leap from synagogue to church, but I think we can sustain the jump. We will begin by tracing it through Luke's Gospel.

Initially, let me discuss the relationship between the Temple in Jerusalem and the various synagogues outside of Jerusalem. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus' presence in the temple occurs in the first four chapters and then in chapters nineteen and following. From chapters four through eighteen, Jesus ministers in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. In those chapters, you have the occurrence of the synagogue.

Throughout the life of Jesus, He kept this pattern of attending temple while in Jerusalem and synagogue when outside Jerusalem. Our story opens in the temple with Zacharias

(Luke 1:9, 21, 22). After the birth of Jesus, this pattern continues in the temple with Joseph and Mary carrying out the requirements of the Law by having Jesus circumcised on the eighth day (Luke 2:27, 37). We also see this in their annual visit to Jerusalem during Passover (Luke 2:46). The temple occurs once more in the temptation of Jesus when the Devil brings Him to the pinnacle of the temple (Luke 4:9). It does not occur again until Luke 18:10 when Jesus speaks of, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector."

Once He is in Jerusalem, the temple is prominent in His daily activities (Luke 19:45, 47; 20:1; 21:5, 37, 38; 22:52). It is the place the Jews in Jerusalem would go daily (Luke 24:53).

- ⁴⁵ **Jesus entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling, . . .** ⁴⁷ **And He was teaching daily in the temple;** but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, (Luke 19:45, 47)
- On one of the days while **He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel**, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, (Luke 20:1)
- And while some were talking about the temple, that it was adorned with beautiful stones and votive gifts, He said, (Luke 21:5)
- ³⁷ Now **during the day He was teaching in the temple**, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. ³⁸ **And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.** (Luke 21:37, 38)
- ⁵² Then Jesus said to the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders who had come against Him, "Have you come out with swords and clubs as you would against a robber?" ⁵³ **While I was with you daily in the temple**, you did not lay hands on Me; but this hour and the power of darkness are yours." (Luke 22:52, 53)

- **and were continually in the temple praising God.** (Luke 24:53)

In Jerusalem, there was no need for a synagogue.

In general, synagogues have always been a part of Israel's spiritual formation. Three times a year, the people of Israel would journey back to Jerusalem to celebrate three Feasts [Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths].³ Apart from the pilgrimage, the dispersed Jew would gather on Sabbath **for reading and prayer**. Individually, this gathering would take place in the home. Corporately, this would happen in the synagogue.

Individuals and thus families did not have the Bible in their homes. They would have a verse or two, but the scrolls were in the Temple or the synagogue. Thus, to hear the word read or expounded happened in the Temple or synagogue.⁴ The synagogue became a place of study and Word.

My intent in our examination: **I want us to honor the Sabbath by attending "synagogue" for the study of Scripture.** Before you fall out of your theological chair, let me explain.

There are three elements in Luke's gospel tied together: Jesus honored the Sabbath, attended Synagogue, and taught the Scriptures. Please note the following passages.

- And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, **He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath,** and stood up to read. (Luke 4:16)
- ³¹ And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and **He was teaching them on the Sabbath;** . . . ³³ **In the synagogue** there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, . . . ³⁸ **Then He got up and left the synagogue,** and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-

law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. (Luke 4:31, 33, 38)

- And **He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.** (Luke 13:10)

With this in mind, we will begin by noting how Jesus honored the Sabbath.

I. Jesus honored the Sabbath

There are three prominent elements bubbling to the surface when looking at Sabbath in Luke's Gospel. **First**, the Sabbath was a time for gathering in the synagogue to hear the Word taught. **Second**, Jesus used the Sabbath to set people free. **Third**, the Sabbath was a day of rest. That rest meant something.

Jesus often found Himself in conflict with the religious "gatekeepers." He broke their understanding of the Law, but He did not violate God's intent in the Law.

- ¹Now it happened that **He was passing through some grainfields on a Sabbath**; and His disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating the grain. ²But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" . . . ⁵And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." (Luke 6:1, 2, 5)

It becomes apparent the Lord of the Sabbath does as He desires with what is His.

- ⁶On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. ⁷The scribes and the Pharisees were watching Him closely to see if He healed on the Sabbath, so that they might find reason to accuse Him. . . . ⁹And Jesus said to them, "I ask you, is it lawful to do

good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?" (Luke 6:6, 7, 9)

- ¹⁴ But the synagogue official, **indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath**, began saying to the crowd in response, "There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day." ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, "You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? ¹⁶ And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, **should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?**" (Luke 13:14-16)
- ¹ It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on the Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. . . ³ And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?" . . . ⁵ And He said to them, "Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?" (Luke 14:1, 3, 5)

What Jesus does on the Sabbath carries out God's design for the Sabbath. The Sabbath is to give life, not destroy life. The idea that Sabbath was a day of rest occurs in Luke 23:54, 56.

- ⁵⁴ It was the preparation day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. . . ⁵⁶ Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes. And on the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:54, 56)

The rest was recognizing God finished His work and His people are now free. Jesus visualized this rest by setting people free on the Sabbath. When we set aside the day, we are acknowledging God's *Story* in the midst of a hundred thousand competing idolatrous stories.

"We are commanded to remember Shabbat; but remembering means much more than merely not forgetting to observe

Shabbat. It also means to remember the significance of Shabbat, both as a commemoration of creation and as a commemoration of our freedom from slavery in Egypt.”⁵

The Sabbath teaches God resting on the seventh day. The Jews set the Sabbath apart to remember God’s ownership through His creative activity. Not only did Jesus honor the Sabbath by setting people free, but He also attended synagogue.

II. Jesus attended the Synagogue

A preliminary thought regarding the temple is in order. The temple is where the people encountered God and atoned for their sins. When Gabriel met Zacharias, it was while he served in the temple (Luke 1:5ff). This is not to imply that God did not meet with His people outside the temple. Gabriel also met Mary outside the temple (Luke 1:26ff). There were certain functions within the nation, like sacrifices, that only happened in the temple officiated by the Priests. People would come from all over to participate in the Passover and Joseph and Mary were annual participants at the Feast of the Passover (2:41). Synagogues developed outside of Jerusalem when weekly travel to the temple was prohibitive. In the absence of the Temple, Jewish believers gathered and the gathering was in the synagogue.

“When the institution of the synagogue began to emerge, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing. The first roles of the synagogue were not associated with prayer, but rather with Jewish study and gathering. The first rabbis were not celebrants of religious rites but teachers of religious texts; in fact, the word rabbi means ‘my teacher’. Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the synagogue assumed an additional role as the place of communal prayer.”⁶

“The synagogue is the Jewish equivalent of a church, more or less. It is the center of the Jewish religious community: a place of prayer, study and education, social and charitable work, as well as a social center.”⁷

“At a minimum, a synagogue is a **beit tefilah**, a house of prayer. It is the place where Jews come together for community prayer services. Jews can satisfy the obligations of daily prayer by praying anywhere; however, there are certain prayers that can only be said in the presence of a minyan (a quorum of 10 adult men), and tradition teaches that there is more merit to praying with a group than there is in praying alone. The sanctity of the synagogue for this purpose is second only to The Temple. In fact, in rabbinical literature, the synagogue is sometimes referred to as the ‘little Temple.’ A synagogue is usually also a **beit midrash**, a house of study. Contrary to popular belief, Jewish education does not end at the age of bar mitzvah. For the observant Jew, the study of sacred texts is a life-long task. Thus, a synagogue normally has a well-stocked library of sacred Jewish texts for members of the community to study. It is also the place where children receive their basic religious education. Most synagogues also have a social hall for religious and non-religious activities. The synagogue often functions as a sort of town hall where matters of importance to the community can be discussed. In addition, the synagogue functions as a social welfare agency, collecting and dispensing money and other items for the aid of the poor and needy within the community.”⁸

The Gospel of Luke speaks of Jesus as regularly attending the synagogue and teaching when attending.

- And **He began teaching in their synagogues** and was praised by all. (Luke 4:15)

- ¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. . . . ²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. . . . ²⁸ And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; (Luke 4:16, 20, 28)

The account at Nazareth has several elements of interest. **First**, the formula of Sabbath, synagogue, and Scriptures is present. **Second**, Jesus gives His “stump” speech. He speaks of what He will do. **Third**, the crowd’s response is indicative of their fickle nature. On one hand, they praise Him, and on the other, they wish to kill Him. **Fourth**, the message of forgiveness and freedom is for “all the nations.”

Our journey takes us to Galilee (v. 14), to Nazareth (v. 16), and then Capernaum (v. 31). While in Capernaum, Jesus teaches on the Sabbath in the synagogue. As is common, the audience was “astonished at his teaching or his word possessed authority” (vv. 32, 36; 9:43). In the synagogue, He encounters a demoniac (v. 33). Perhaps the context had degenerated so severely that a demoniac would be comfortable in such a place. If the Temple became a den of robber, it is not difficult to think a demoniac was comfortable in a synagogue. Jesus faced the demons of hell and commanded over them (6:18; 8:29; 9:42).

- ³³ **In the synagogue** there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, . . . ³⁸ **Then He got up and left the synagogue**, and entered Simon's home. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Him to help her. (Luke 4:33, 38)

Verses 14 and 15 have Jesus speaking in all the synagogues of Galilee and verse 44 has Him “preaching in the synagogues

of Judea.” The impression we have is that Jesus went to the synagogue and expounded the Scriptures (Luke 24:27, 32).

It is of interest to see the relationship between the Sabbath in Luke 6:1-5 and the synagogue in Luke 6:6-11. **Jesus did not see the Sabbath or the synagogue as places of bondage or guilt. He saw both platforms as tools and resources for deliverance, freedom, and comfort. Jesus would not put the people of God under the Sabbath or the synagogue. He put the Sabbath and the synagogue in service to the people.**

This same theme occurs in Luke 13:10-17.

- ¹⁰ And He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath. ¹¹ And there was a woman who for eighteen years had had a sickness caused by a spirit; and she was bent double, and could not straighten up at all. ¹² When Jesus saw her, He called her over and said to her, “Woman, you are freed from your sickness.” ¹³ And He laid His hands on her; and immediately she was made erect again and began glorifying God. ¹⁴ But the synagogue official, indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, began saying to the crowd in response, “There are six days in which work should be done; so come during them and get healed, and not on the Sabbath day.” ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? ¹⁶ And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?” ¹⁷ As He said this, all His opponents were being humiliated; and the entire crowd was rejoicing over all the glorious things being done by Him. (Luke 13:10-17)

What a powerful text. The Sabbath and the synagogue are to be places of deliverance. They are havens in a dry and desolate place. We gather and remember for our joy.

What started as a good thing quickly became corrupt. Should

we honor the Sabbath and attend the “synagogue”? Absolutely, even as we see our culture erode and our world encroach, we honor and attend as affirmations. We affirm that we live inside of a greater and grander *Story* than this shadow. Nevertheless, neither one is over us. Both are for our joy. Both enable us to celebrate the gospel and find rest for our weary souls. When we leave church more tired than when we came, something is tragically wrong.

Synagogues had wealthy patrons (Luke 7:5) and various “rulers/officials” (Luke 8:41). It was also possible the religious “gatekeepers” exploited their position by taking the “chief seats in the synagogues” (Luke 11:43). Jesus had very little patience for such things. Such people reversed the equation. They did not serve the Sabbath or the synagogue, but rather used the Sabbath and synagogue to their advantage. Through both platforms, they acquired power over the people and put the people in captivity (Luke 12:11).

- Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love respectful greetings in the market places, and **chief seats in the synagogues** and places of honor at banquets, (Luke 20:46)
- But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. (Luke 21:12)

The synagogue is where the believing Jew gathered to hear from God. It is where they solidified their identity. Yet such places and activities became corrupted and this corruption is with us today. The Sabbath and the synagogue are places where . . .

- The poor hear the gospel
- The captive hear release

- Blind eyes see
- Lame people walk
- Lepers are cleansed
- Deaf ears hear
- The dead are raised up, and
- The oppressed are set free

The Sabbath and the synagogue caused them to remember the *Story*.

Friend, this is no less true for us. The gathered community where there is mutual accountability and responsibility forms identity. It is the gathered community where we openly share and celebrate the Word.

Friend, let us be true to our formation. Let us gather for the breaking of chains and not the cracking of whips. The final element in Luke's equation is teaching.

III. Jesus taught the Scriptures

The synagogue gathering had as its centerpiece the reading and teaching of Scripture. Friend, that is still to be true today. Unfortunately, churches often relegate the Word to short bites that parallel infomercials. The teaching and reading of Scripture should be the highlight of the church gathering.

Throughout Luke's account, Jesus teaches. When He was eight days old, Simeon and Anna spoke prophetic words over Him (Luke 2:22-38). When He is twelve, we read of Him in the Temple "sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions" (Luke 2:46). When Jesus begins His ministry at thirty years of age, we find him "teaching in their synagogues" (Luke 4:15).

Of the fifteen occurrences of the word “teach” in Luke’s gospel, all but two refer to Jesus.

- John taught his disciples (Luke 11:1)
 - It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples.” (Luke 11:1)
- The Holy Spirit teaches in times of persecution (Luke 12:12)
 - for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. (Luke 12:12)

There are two words used by Luke to describe this activity of Jesus. The first is *didasko* and means, “To teach.” The second word is *kerruso* and means, “To proclaim.” If there is a distinction between them, it is this, *didasko* speaks of **the message taught** and *kerruso* speaks of **the manner we proclaim the message**. *Kerruso* is not void of content. There is a message, but it is heralded, proclaimed. We read of *kerruso* in passages like Luke 3:3 to describe John or our Lord’s statement in Luke 4:18.

- And he came into all the district around the Jordan, **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**; (Luke 3:3)
- ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me **to preach the gospel to the poor**; he has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at free those who are oppressed, ¹⁹ **to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord**. (Luke 4:18, 19)

Jesus not only taught in the synagogue, but also preached in the synagogue (Luke 4:44).

- So **He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea**. (Luke 4:44)

- Soon afterwards, He *began* going around from one city and village to another, **proclaiming and preaching** the kingdom of God. (Luke 8:1)

His disciples were to proclaim the message broadly (Luke 8:39; 9:2; 24:47).

- “Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you.” So he went away, **proclaiming throughout the whole city** what great things Jesus had done for him. (Luke 8:39)
- And **He sent them out to proclaim** the kingdom of God and to perform healing. (Luke 9:2)
- and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be **proclaimed** in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)

We are not to drive a wedge between the two. Jesus energetically taught and proclaimed the good news to all with ears to hear the gospel. Let us for a moment note the context in which Jesus taught.

Jesus taught in the synagogue (Luke 4:15, 16, 31-33).

- And He began **teaching** in their synagogues and was praised by all. (Luke 4:15)
- ³¹ And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and **He was teaching them on the Sabbath**; ³² and they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority. ³³ **In the synagogue** there was a man possessed by the spirit of an unclean demon, and he cried out with a loud voice, (Luke 4:31-33)
- **On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching**; and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. (Luke 6:6)

- And **He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.** (Luke 13:10)
- And **He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.** (Luke 13:22)

His accusers note this activity concerning Him.

- But they kept on insisting, saying, **“He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.”** (Luke 23:5)

Jesus taught from a boat (Luke 5:1-11).

- And **He got into one of the boats**, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And **He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.** (Luke 5:3)

Jesus taught in a house (Luke 5:17-26).

- One day He was teaching; and there were some Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was present for Him to perform healing. (Luke 5:17)

The synagogue was not the only place for teaching. Jesus taught wherever opportunity existed. However, Jesus did not replace synagogue teaching with open-air teaching. Modern technology has made biblical instruction available 24/7. Unfortunately, many make such instruction their sole means of instruction and in so doing fail to recognize the place of the church in their spiritual formation. We should use the opportunities available to us, but not at the expense of the gathering. Christian gatherings are not churches. Although there are many reasons why this is so, a strong reason why

such gatherings do not create community or accountability is the inability to mark theological orthodoxy.

Jesus taught in the Temple (Luke 19:47; 20:1; 21:37).

- And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, (Luke 19:47)
- On one of the days while He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, (Luke 20:1)
- Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. (Luke 21:37)

Teaching and proclaiming are activities of His people and should be taking place no less than in the “synagogue.”

Where does this leave us?

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. First, honor the Sabbath by remembering the freedom secured by the cross.
2. Second, guard the gathering as a place of freedom and not bondage.
3. Finally, come hungry to learn. Make the study about God and not you.

³ “There are three Jewish festivals referred to as the ‘Pilgrim Festivals’. Each festival of these three reflects an agricultural theme connected to the produce of the land of Israel. They are called ‘pilgrim’ festivals because in

ancient times, when the Temple still stood in Jerusalem, Jews would make pilgrimage to the Temple in order to pray there on each of these festivals. The three Pilgrim Festivals are Pesach (**Passover**), Shavuot and Sukkot. **Pesach (Passover)**, this festival originally marked the early harvesting of the barley, commemorated by the special offering of the Omer on the second day. The term '*Pesach*' means 'to pass over' and commemorates the release of the Jewish people from bondage in the land of Egypt. Pesach is observed for eight days, (seven in Israel), commencing on the 15th Nissan. The four days in the middle are referred to as *Chol Hamoed* ('weekdays of the festival'). This festival originally marked the early harvesting of the barley, commemorated by the special offering of the Omer on the second day. The term '*Pesach*' means 'to pass over' and commemorates the release of the Jewish people from bondage in the land of Egypt. Pesach is observed for eight days, (seven in Israel), commencing on the 15th Nissan. The four days in the middle are referred to as *Chol Hamoed* ('weekdays of the festival'). **Shavuot [Pentecost]**, the second of the three Pilgrim Festivals is celebrated for 2 days outside Israel (and in Israel for 1 day). The name Shavuot means 'weeks' because it occurs **7 weeks after the 2nd day of Pesach**. It falls on the 6th day of Sivan. The Torah was given to the Jewish people on Shavout. This festival marked the harvest of the wheat crop, the last grain harvest of the season, and the beginning of the fruit harvest. A major feature of the celebration was the ceremony of bringing the "first fruits", or *Bikkurim*, of the harvest to the Temple as an offering of thanks. Originally a harvest festival, **Sukkot** [Feast of Booths] was given added historical significance as a commemoration of the exodus from Egypt, when the Jewish people had to live in temporary dwellings whilst they lived in the desert before entering the Promised Land."

<http://www.bje.org.au/learning/judaism/holydays/festivals/pilgrim.html>

⁴ This same idea occurs in Revelation 1:3 where those who read the Revelation [singular] and who hear [plural] are blessed.

⁵ <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsourc/Judaism/shabbat.html>

⁶ http://www.myjewishlearning.com/practices/Ritual/Prayer/Synagogue_and_Religious_Leaders.shtml

⁷ <http://www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm>

⁸ <http://www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm>

Theme:

Jesus held the Sabbath the Synagogue and the Scriptures in high regard.

Outline:

- I. Jesus honored the Sabbath
- II. Jesus attended Synagogue
- III. Jesus taught the Scriptures

Study Guide:

1. Describe how Jesus honored the Sabbath.

2. What does it mean that the Sabbath is a day of rest?

3. What value is there in attending Church?

4. What place should teaching have in honoring the Sabbath? What should be the subject of that teaching?

Jesus and Scripture

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the focal point of all Scripture? What Scripture would you use to support your answer?
2. Describe what Luke 4:18-19 (or all of Isaiah 61) tells us about Jesus' mission.
3. How might viewing Scripture as pointing to Christ change our view of Bible Study?

Read Luke 4:14-30

Introduction:

In our previous chapter, we considered how we honor the "Sabbath" by resting in the finished work of redemption accomplished by Jesus Christ. We also noted how attending Church is to remind us of this finished work as Scripture is studied. This chapter will focus on the relationship Jesus has to Scripture. The Scriptures preach Jesus for the freedom of His people by reversing the curse brought by sin.

Not only does the reversal of the curse affect our vertical relationship with the Father, but also our horizontal relationship with "one another." Knowing "it is finished" changes how we approach these various activities. Grace enables us to embrace these activities for our joy.

We know Luke's intent is for the reader to know with certainty the truths they have been taught (Luke 1:3, 4). There is a sense in which Scripture is self-authenticating. There is substantial evidence for us to believe what we have is God's Word. Yet, we come by faith believing this is God's Word. As such, it is the God sourced, without error, never leading one astray when properly handled book.

- ³ it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write *it* out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; ⁴ **so that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.** (Luke 1:3, 4)

In the absence of this revelation, we would be in a difficult place. Nevertheless, in God's good providence we have a Word from heaven.

THE BIG PICTURE:

In referring to Luke 4:14-30, let us consider why Luke places this event at the very front of our Lord's ministry. Most commentators agree that Luke's intent was not so much to give a chronological account of Jesus' life, but rather to communicate his primary claim to be the fulfilment of all prophecy. By including this event in Nazareth toward the beginning of his gospel, Luke is telling us how Jesus defined his mission as messianic. We must understand Jesus' ministry in light of this perspective.

Because of the abundance of the subject matter in the Gospel of Luke, we will approach it in the following manner.

I. Jesus "honored" the Scriptures.

Jesus quoted from Scripture often and spoke of their fulfillment in Him.

- (As it is written in the Law of the Lord, "EVERY *firstborn* MALE THAT OPENS THE WOMB SHALL BE CALLED HOLY TO THE LORD") (Luke 2:23)

- **As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet,** “THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, ‘MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT.” (Luke 3:4)
- And Jesus answered him, “**It is written,** ‘MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE.’” (Luke 4:4)
- Jesus answered him, “**It is written,** ‘YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD AND SERVE HIM ONLY.’” (Luke 4:8)
- **For it is written,** ‘HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU TO GUARD YOU,’ (Luke 4:10)
- And **the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him.** And He opened the book and found the place **where it was written,** (Luke 4:17)
- And He began to say to them, “**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” (Luke 4:21)
- **This is the one about whom it is written,** ‘BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER AHEAD OF YOU, WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY BEFORE YOU.’ (Luke 7:27)
- And He said to him, “**What is written in the Law?** How does it read to you?” (Luke 10:26)
- Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and **all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished.** (Luke 18:31)
- Saying to them, “**It is written,** ‘AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,’ but you have made it a ROBBERS’ DEN.” (Luke 19:46)
- But Jesus looked at them and said, “**What then is this that is written:** ‘THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone’? (Luke 20:17)
- And they questioned Him, saying, “Teacher, **Moses wrote for us** that IF A MAN’S BROTHER DIES, having a wife, AND HE IS CHILDLESS,

HIS BROTHER SHOULD MARRY THE WIFE AND RAISE UP CHILDREN TO HIS BROTHER. (Luke 20:28)

- Because these are days of vengeance, so **that all things which are written** will be fulfilled. (Luke 21:22)
- For I tell you **that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me**, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.” (Luke 22:37)
- Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:27)
- They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, **while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?**” (Luke 24:32)
- ⁴⁴Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that **all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms** must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then He opened their minds **to understand the Scriptures**, ⁴⁶and He said to them, “**Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again** from the dead the third day, (Luke 24:44-46)

“In addition to the ‘somewhat more than two hundred and fifty express citations’ in the New Testament, there are numerous allusions of various kinds. In fact, when Old Testament allusions are added to the direct citations, the total number of Old Testament references in the New Testament expands to 401.”¹

“The Gospel of Luke only records nine Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled, while Matthew (the Gospel to the Jews) records twenty-five prophecies; Mark, eleven prophecies; and John, fifteen prophecies. This is more evidence that this Gospel was written with a Gentile audience in mind.”²

“Luke quotes from the Old Testament scriptures some 30 times in the 24 chapters of his book. He had saturated his mind with sacred literature. He cites from eight different Old Testament books; three times, he is quoting from the Septuagint, and the balance is from the Hebrew text.”³

Fourteen times Luke refers to Abraham. Twenty-six times, he uses the phrase, “It is written” or speaks of “Scriptures.” Luke’s use of the Old Testament is formidable.

Jesus saw a link between the written text and fulfillment. We sometimes err in our handling of the written text by making it something other than Christo-centric. What is written of the future is focused on Jesus. When He comes all nations will be benefactors regardless of their ethnicity.

It is startling when one considers the number of Old Testament passages cited by Luke. The Hebrew Scripture saturated Luke. Let us remember, Luke did not have a copy of the biblical text. This is something he would have heard on the Sabbath when he attended synagogue. He thought/meditated on what he heard and it so permeated him that he could recall its truths.

- And He began to say to them, “**Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.**” (Luke 4:21)
- because these are days of vengeance, so that **all things which are written will be fulfilled.** (Luke 21:22)
- Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, **that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.**” (Luke 24:44)

Luke quotes from or references Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus,

Deuteronomy, 1 & 2 Samuel, 2 Kings, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Micah, and Malachi.

In the Gospels, Jesus quotes from the Psalms (11) the most, then Deuteronomy (10), Isaiah (8), and Exodus (7) in that order.⁴

Jesus identified the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God. Unlike any other body of literature or supposed authority, the Scriptures held Him captive. As a church, we have a responsibility to help you understand the Scripture so that you might know God.

Not only did Jesus recognize the Scripture for what it is, He also knew the Scripture.

II. Jesus knew the Scriptures.

Jesus knew the Scriptures thoroughly. Jesus was Bible literate. He handled the Scriptures easily. He was comfortable with them. He was at home with the biblical text/*Story*.

Perhaps we might think He “cheated.” It is like asking the author if he knows what he wrote. Let us hope so. Yet, Jesus knew not only the letter of the biblical text; He knew the spirit behind the text.

III. Jesus understood/explained the Scriptures Messiah-centered (Luke 24:27, 32, 45).

- Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:27)

- They said to one another, “Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, **while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?**” (Luke 24:32)
- Then **He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** (Luke 24:45)

When Jesus read Moses, the Prophets, and the Writings, He read them as testifying of Himself. The writings of the Hebrew scrolls in Jesus’ day were in a different order than our Bibles, but the content is the same. What follows is our ordering, but this does not affect what we are about to consider.

- The first five books are the Pentateuch (Genesis-Deuteronomy).
- The next twelve are the historical books (Joshua - Esther)
- The following five are poetic or wisdom literature (Job-Song of Solomon)
- The next five are the Major Prophets (Isaiah-Daniel)
- Followed by the twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea-Malachi)

When Jesus referenced the various books making up the Hebrew Scripture, He always spoke of their relationship to Himself. They were to obey their words, but it was always in relation to who He is and what He does.

Let us consider what this looks like in Luke.

A. Throughout Luke, he is teaching (Luke 4:15, 31; 5:17; 6:6).

Teaching in Galilee

- And **He began teaching in their synagogues** and was praised by all. (Luke 4:15)
- And He came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and **He was teaching them on the Sabbath;** (Luke 4:31)
- and **they were amazed at His teaching, for His message was with authority.** (Luke 4:32)
- And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. **And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat.** (Luke 5:3)
- **One day He was teaching;** and there were *some* Pharisees and teachers of the law sitting *there*, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and *from* Jerusalem; and the power of the Lord was *present* for Him to perform healing. (Luke 5:17)
- **On another Sabbath He entered the synagogue and was teaching;** and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. (Luke 6:6)
- Soon afterwards, **He began going around from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God.** The twelve were with Him, (Luke 8:1)

Heading to Jerusalem

- And **He was teaching in one of the synagogues on the Sabbath.** (Luke 13:10)
- **And He was passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem.** (Luke 13:22)

Passion Week

- And **He was teaching daily in the temple;** but the chief priests and the scribes and the leading men among the people were trying to destroy Him, (Luke 19:47)

- On one of the days while **He was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel**, the chief priests and the scribes with the elders confronted Him, (Luke 20:1)
- Now during the day **He was teaching in the temple**, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. (Luke 21:37)
- But they kept on insisting, saying, **“He stirs up the people, teaching all over Judea, starting from Galilee even as far as this place.”** (Luke 23:5)

The idea that Jesus taught is not difficult to see. **The question we must ask is, “What did Jesus teach?”**

This leads us to our second observation.

B. Jesus taught Himself as the center of Biblical revelation (Luke 24:27, 44).

- Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, **He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.** (Luke 24:27)
- They said to one another, **“Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?”** (Luke 24:32)
- Then **He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,** (Luke 24:45)

Any other reading of the Bible than seeing Jesus as the centerpiece is a misreading of the biblical text. This is where our interest should peak.

C. Jesus saw Himself as bringing in the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:18, 19 w/ Isaiah 61).

The message Jesus preached brought release to the captive and healing to the broken. Let us listen in on what is the dominate message preached by Jesus. Jesus sets the tone of His ministry in Luke 4:18, 19.

- ¹⁸ “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” (Luke 4:18, 19)

Everything that follows in Luke’s account flows from this idea.

- ³¹ And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:31, 32)
- ⁹ And Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the Sabbath, to save a life or to destroy it?” (Luke 6:9)
- ¹⁸ The disciples of John reported to him about all these things. ¹⁹ Summoning two of his disciples, John sent them to the Lord, saying, “Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?” ²⁰ When the men came to Him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to You, to ask, ‘Are You the Expected One, or do we look for someone else?’” ²¹ At that very time He cured many *people* of diseases and afflictions and evil spirits; and He gave sight to many *who were* blind. ²² And He answered and said to them, “Go and report to John what you have seen and heard: the BLIND RECEIVE SIGHT, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM. ²³ Blessed is he who does not take offense at Me.” (Luke 7:18-23)

- ⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village. (Luke 9:55, 56)
- ¹⁰ For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10)
- ¹⁵ But the Lord answered him and said, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall and lead him away to water him? ¹⁶ And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:15, 16)
- ³ And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” ⁴ But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵ And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” (Luke 14:3-5)

Jesus brings hope, healing, and wholeness to the despair, disease, and dysfunction brought by sin. Only Jesus does this. When Jesus read from Isaiah 61, there was a context for the reading. Listen to Isaiah 61 in its entirety.

Isaiah 61

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
 Because the LORD has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
 He has sent me

to bind up the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives

And freedom to prisoners;
²To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD
 And the day of vengeance of our God;

To comfort all who mourn,
³**To grant** those who mourn *in Zion*,

Giving them a garland *instead of* ashes,
The oil of gladness *instead of* mourning,
The mantle of praise *instead of* a spirit of fainting.
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,
The planting of the LORD, *that He may be glorified.*
4 Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins,
They will raise up the former devastations;
And they will repair the ruined cities,
The desolations of many generations.
5 Strangers will stand and pasture your flocks,
And foreigners will be your farmers and your vinedressers.
6 But you will be called the priests of the LORD;
You will be spoken of *as* ministers of our God.
You will eat the wealth of nations,
And in their riches you will boast.
7 Instead of your shame *you will have a double portion,*
And *instead of* humiliation they will shout for joy over their
portion.
Therefore they will possess a double *portion* in their land,
Everlasting joy will be theirs.
8 For I, the LORD, love justice,
I hate robbery in the burnt offering;
And I will faithfully give them their recompense
And make an everlasting covenant with them.
9 Then their offspring will be known among the nations,
And their descendants in the midst of the peoples.
All who see them will recognize them
Because they are the offspring *whom* the LORD has blessed.
10 I will rejoice greatly in the LORD,
My soul will exult in my God;
For He has clothed me with garments of salvation,
He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness,
As a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
And as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
11 For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
And as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up,
So the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
To spring up before all the nations.

Friend, Jesus brings this “good news” with Him. He is the fulfillment of this promise. Let us not miss this. The

redemptive work of Jesus is better than any physical image used to describe the blessing.

If we were to trace the message of Jesus through Luke's gospel, we would read of victory, good news, and celebration. There is a darkness on all who reject this message, but the one He brings to those that believe is sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the mute, cleansing to the leper, and life to the dead. You can speak of "woe." Nevertheless, the woe is for those who reject Jesus. The woe is never for the afflicted, brokenhearted, captive, prisoner, and mourning, those lying in ashes, and those stricken by a spirit of fainting. To those and us, He brings good news. The idea that church is the place to inflict the saints is completely counter to the ministry of Jesus.

There is a sense that in examining His teaching, one should walk away believing He brought good news to the poor, release to the captive, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed.

- ¹⁸ "THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." (Luke 4:18, 19)

Many suggest Jesus is announcing the Jewish Year of Jubilee. It is a Feast celebrating the cancelation of debt and the restoring of fortunes. **According to Leviticus, slaves and prisoners would be freed, debts would be forgiven and the mercies of God would be particularly manifest.** Leviticus 25:8-13 states:

- ⁸ You are also to count off seven sabbaths of years for yourself, seven times seven years, so that you have the time of the seven

sabbaths of years, *namely*, forty-nine years. ⁹ You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land. ¹⁰ You shall thus consecrate the fiftieth year and **proclaim a release through the land to all its inhabitants**. It shall be a jubilee for you, and each of you shall return to his own property, and each of you shall return to his family. ¹¹ You shall have the fiftieth year as a jubilee; you shall not sow, nor reap its aftergrowth, nor gather in *from* its untrimmed vines. ¹² For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you. You shall eat its crops out of the field. ¹³ 'On this year of jubilee each of you shall return to his own property. (Lev. 25:8-13)

Interestingly the official beginning of the Jubilee Year started on the Day of Atonement, which is symbolic of the atoning of sin for the nation of Israel.

“One of the few things that ancient pagans knew about the Jewish people was that, from the pagans’ point of view, they had a lazy day once a week. From the Jewish point of view, it wasn’t laziness; **it was the chance to celebrate time in a different mode. The Sabbath was the day when human time and God’s time met, when the day-to-day succession of tasks and sorrows was set aside and one entered a different sort of time, celebrating the original Sabbath and looking forward to the ultimate one.** This was the natural moment to celebrate, to worship, to pray, to study God’s law. The Sabbath was the moment during which one sensed the onward movement of history from its first foundations to its ultimate resolution. **If the Temple was the space in which God’s sphere and the human sphere met, the Sabbath was the time when God’s time and human time coincided. Sabbath was to time what Temple was to space.** This sense of looking forward was heightened by the larger sabbatical scheme in which the seventh year was a year of agricultural rest and the seven-times-seventh year the year of jubilee, the

time for slaves to be freed, for debts to be cancelled, for life to get back on track. As we have already seen in this book, the theme of jubilee ties in closely and naturally with the great all-encompassing theme of the Exodus. The jubilee was, as it were, the once-in-a-lifetime 'exodus' that everyone could experience. We don't know whether or to what extent the jubilee as set forth in Leviticus 25 was actually practiced in Jesus' day. But it remained in the scriptures as a reminder that God's time was being marked out week by week, seven years by seven years, half century by half century. Matthew hints at all this in his own way, right at the start of his gospel, by arranging Jesus' genealogy in three groups of fourteen generations (that is, six sevens), so that Jesus appears at the start of the Sabbath-of-Sabbaths moment. And, as we have seen, people in Jesus' day were pondering, calculating, and longing for the greatest super-jubilee of them all, the 'seventy weeks' (that is, seventy times seven years) of Daniel 9:24. The great Sabbath was coming! Soon they would be free!"⁵

Every 7th day is a Sabbath Day.

Every 7th year is a Sabbath Year.

Every 49th year/ 50th year is a Sabbath Year/Year of Jubilee.

"What we witness, therefore, in the genealogies of Matthew and Luke is neither haphazard nor accidental. They reflect diverging Jewish opinions about the time for the advent of the redeemer. The Evangelists intended for us to understand that the birth of Jesus inaugurated the era of redemption—expressed by way of a jubilee chronological framework."⁶

While unnoticed by most modern readers, both Matthew and Luke have gone to great effort to underscore the importance of the very time in which Jesus was born. They present His birth as the fulfillment of the hope for a jubilee

redemption. Against this background Jesus' first public words in Luke's Gospel take on added poignancy as he read from Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of Nazareth: "...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:19; Isa 61:2).

CONCLUSION, Israel was waiting for the seventh year. Jesus brings in the seventh seven.

In Luke's Gospel Jesus is the **SABBATH REST**. He is the **FULLEST AND FINAL EXODUS**. The seventh seven; the year of Jubilee has arrived with the birth of Jesus Christ. He is Daniel's **SUPER JUBILEE**.

Let us continue to consider the preaching of JESUS. Jesus proclaims the good news of God's kingdom.

- ⁴²When day came, Jesus left and went to a secluded place; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away them. ⁴³But He said to them, "**I must preach the kingdom of God** to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴So He kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea. (Luke 4:42-44)
- Soon afterwards, He *began* going around from one city and village to another, **proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God**. The twelve were with Him, (Luke 8:1)

Jesus brings in something new. See also Luke 7:24-28; 11:14-26; 13:18-21; 16:16, 17. **Jesus is the substance eclipsing the shadow**. If one were hungry, a picture would not satisfy the desire. If the choice is between the picture and the reality, the sandwich itself is the only choice satisfying the desire. In the presence of the sandwich, the picture has no need to exist. Jesus is the bright and morning star. In His presence, there is no need for the sun, stars, or moon.

- ³⁶ And He was also telling them a parable: “No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. ³⁸ But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. ³⁹ And no one, after drinking old wine wishes for new; for he says, ‘The old is good enough.’” (Luke 5:36-39)

Notice what happens in Luke 9:22-27, 31, 44, 51, 13:33; 18:31-33; 19:14; 20:14, 15. **It is of interest to note the introduction of the cross in the teaching of JESUS.**

- ²² Saying, “**The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.**” ²³ And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. ²⁵ For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. ²⁷ But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:22-27)
- who, appearing in glory, **were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.** (Luke 9:31)
- “Let these words sink into your ears; **for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.**” (Luke 9:44)
- When the days were approaching for **His ascension**, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; (Luke 9:51)
- Nevertheless I must journey on today and tomorrow and the next day; **for it cannot be that a prophet would perish outside of Jerusalem.** (Luke 13:33)

- ³¹ Then He took the twelve aside and said to them, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and all things which are written through the prophets about the Son of Man will be accomplished. ³² For He will be handed over to the Gentiles, and will be mocked and mistreated and spit upon, ³³ and after they have scourged Him, they will kill Him; and the third day He will rise again.” (Luke 18:31-33)
- **But his citizens hated him** and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We do not want this man to reign over us.” (Luke 19:14)
- ¹⁴ But when the vine-growers saw him, they reasoned with one another, saying, “**This is the heir; let us kill him so that the inheritance will be ours.**” ¹⁵ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Luke 20:14, 15)

We cannot afford to separate His death from the inauguration of God’s kingdom. One of the “mysteries” in the Bible is the cross event. We know it is part of God’s eternal purpose. Even in the absence of sin, Jesus would have died. Jesus’ death would have cemented the relationship humanity has with the Father. **His death would not have been for restoration, but ratification** (Gen. 15:7-21). The covenant God made with humanity would never be broken. Without sin, we remove the cruelty of His death at the hand of sinners.

We also cannot afford to separate His power over disease, death, and demons. His power **AND** authority show Him for what He is, the Son of God/Son of Man.

The Gospel captures release. Anything less than this is to alter what Jesus taught. If this is what Jesus spoke, what should we speak?

IV. His disciples were to do the same (Luke 9:1-6; 24:45-49).

- Departing, they *began* going throughout the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:6; see also Luke 13:22-30; 14:12-24; 15:1-32)

In fact, when they acted counter to this message, Jesus stopped them. Jesus cast His “net” wide. There is a broad invitation for all to come to the Father. Jesus invites everyone to come. His disciples are to do the same.

What is our take away when we consider the relationship Jesus has to the Scripture? I find it rather simple. Nowhere does the Gospel of Luke tell us to read our Bibles every day. Nowhere does the Gospel of Luke say we should memorize the Scripture. Nowhere does the Gospel of Luke say we should study our Bibles. New birth assumes such will be the consequence of the Jesus Seed. What it does say is obey everything the Scriptures taught. This is where we begin to break down in our understanding. What do the Scriptures teach? The Scripture teaches a single *Story* and at the center of the *Story* is Jesus. The Scripture teaches that you are broken and Jesus is the only one who can fix you. You are a sinner and Jesus is your only Savior from sin and death and for joy and glory. Believing this is what it means to obey.

I fully recognize the magnitude of the biblical text, but there is only one *Story* and at the center of this *Story* is Jesus. Everything the Scriptures teach point to Him.

V. Do you believe the Scriptures point to Jesus? Moreover, do you believe Jesus fulfills the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and completes the Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21)?

The Parable of the Soils explains why some embrace Him as the Son of God/Son of Man and others reject Him.

- ⁴When a large crowd was coming together, and those from the various cities were journeying to Him, He spoke by way of a parable: ⁵“The sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell beside the road, and it was trampled under foot and the birds of the air ate it up. ⁶Other seed fell on rocky soil, and as soon as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. ⁷Other seed fell among the thorns; and the thorns grew up with it and choked it out. ⁸Other seed fell into the good soil, and grew up, and produced a crop a hundred times as great.” As He said these things, He would call out, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” ⁹His disciples *began* questioning Him as to what this parable meant. ¹⁰And He said, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is in parables, so that SEEING THEY MAY NOT SEE, AND HEARING THEY MAY NOT UNDERSTAND. ¹¹“Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹²Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved. ¹³Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away. ¹⁴The seed which fell among the thorns, these are the ones who have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with worries and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to maturity. ¹⁵But the seed in the good soil, these are the ones who have heard the word in an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with perseverance. (Luke 8:4-15)

Jesus said His mother and His brothers are those who hear the Word of God and do it.

- ¹⁶“Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. ¹⁷For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. ¹⁸So take care how you

listen; for whoever has, to him more shall be given; and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”¹⁹ And His mother and brothers came to Him, and they were unable to get to Him because of the crowd.²⁰ And it was reported to Him, “Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, wishing to see You.”²¹ But He answered and said to them, “My mother and My brothers are these who hear the word of God and do it.” (Luke 8:16-21)

Jesus said to His disciples, “The one who listens to you listens to me.”

- “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” (Luke 10:16)

Jesus said, “Blessed are those who hear the Word and do it.”

- But He said, “On the contrary, blessed are **those who hear the word of God and observe it.**” (Luke 11:28)

In Luke’s Gospel, doing the Word of God means believing Jesus is the Son of God/Son of Man. Notice the contrast between when Jesus asked his disciples who they say He is (Luke 9:18-20) compared with Herod’s thoughts as to who Jesus is (Luke 9:7-9.) This is the issue. This is what doing the Word looks like. **Who do you say I am?**

You must repent or you will likewise perish. Repent of what? Repent of your rebellion against God and instead trust His Son.

- ¹ Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² And Jesus said to them, “Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? ³ I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and

killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? ⁵I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:1-5)

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Do you affirm faith in the Bible to be the very Word of God?
2. Do you believe the Bible tells the truth about who you are and who Jesus is?
3. Do you believe your only hope from sin and death and for joy and glory is Jesus in His person and work?
4. Learn the Scriptures so that you can come to understand how because of the JESUS SEED you are an **oak of righteousness**, the planting of the LORD, in order *that He may be glorified*.
5. We as a church cannot relent in teaching the single *Story* with the center being Jesus and you the congregant ought to avail yourself of these platforms for your joy and His glory.

¹ <http://www.galaxie.com/article/ctj07-21-03#GCTSVOL07B032>

² <http://www.awmi.net/bible/luk>

³ Aland, Black, *et al.*, Third Edition, of *The Greek New Testament*, 899.

⁴ <http://blog.biblia.com/2014/04/which-old-testament-book-did-jesus-quote-most/>

⁵ N.T. Wright, *Simply Jesus A New Vision of Who He was, What He did, and Why He matters* (Harper One, 2011), 136.

[http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2011/12/27/time-fulfilled-n-t-wright /](http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2011/12/27/time-fulfilled-n-t-wright/)

⁶ <http://notley.net/matthew-1-2/>

Theme:

The Scriptures preach Jesus for the freedom of His people by reversing the curse brought by sin.

Outline:

- I. Jesus “honored” the Scriptures.
- II. Jesus knew the Scriptures
- III. Jesus understood/explained the Scriptures Messiah-centered (Luke 24:27, 32, 45).
- IV. His disciples were to do the same (Luke 9:1-6; 24:45-49).
- V. Do you believe the Scriptures point to Jesus? Moreover, do you believe Jesus fulfills the Seed Promise (Gen. 3:15) and completes the Blood Picture (Gen. 3:21)?

Study Guide:

1. What is the focal point of all Scripture? What Scripture would you use to support your answer?

2. Describe what Luke 4:18-19 (or all of Isaiah 61) tells us about Jesus’ mission.

3. How might viewing Scripture as pointing to Christ change our view of Bible Study?

Jesus and Prayer

Questions to Consider:

1. What is prayer and how have we complicated it?
2. How might we make prayer intentional in our own lives?
3. How might we make prayer intentional together as a community?

Read Luke 4:40-44

Theme: Like Jesus, we should enjoy the fruit of prayer produced by the Jesus Seed.

Introduction:

Most Christians assume they are not praying enough. The perceived problem is probably in the specific area of intercessory prayer, praying for others. Others could be co-workers, fellow congregants, the persecuted church, our political figures, or missionaries and other Christian ministries. You might not mentioned “everyone and their brother,” but this does not mean you are not praying. I work from the premise that you are praying enough and without ceasing. You simply do not realize that what you are doing is prayer.

The Bible speaks of prayer in the same manner we speak of breathing. It assumes His people pray. Luke pictures Jesus in this manner. If prayer is fundamentally communication and our relationship with God is a genuine relationship, then we can assume communication or prayer is happening. Prayer is very much like breathing. There are times when you might have to learn how to breathe properly because of poor habits or ill health. However, if you are living, you are breathing.

The Bible works from the premise that you are praying. In light of your state of prayer, it offers us explanation as to why we pray.

Like many of the fruits produced by the Jesus Seed, we have made something that is to be an enjoyment into a duty and discipline. Rather than normal, it has become necessary. What is to be a lollipop has become a paddle.

Attending Church, reading/hearing the Scriptures, and praying are all fruits produced by the Jesus Seed for His people to enjoy. Each, in their own way, help His people taste and see that He is good. Let us note a word of caution with any descriptive activity. Perhaps such a label needs to accompany all “spiritual” activities. **When considering this area it is important not to become rigid.** The letter of the law will kill prayer. When prayer is no longer enjoyable, then you need to reassess your perspective toward prayer.

So as we explore JESUS and His relationship to PRAYER, let us learn for our enjoyment.

Outline:

Luke does not treat Jesus praying as some unusual anomaly. Jesus praying is no more special or spectacular than Jesus eating, Jesus sleeping, or Jesus teaching. Luke records His prayer life. Let us consider the text. There are five observations we can make concerning JESUS and PRAYER.

I. Sometimes Jesus prayed alone (Luke 4:42; 5:16).

- When day came, **Jesus left and went to a secluded place**; and the crowds were searching for Him, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. (Luke 4:42)
- But **Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray**. (Luke 5:16)

Jesus prayed alone. However, His life was so thoroughly busy that He sought seclusion in order to pray alone.

This wilderness/desert is where John the Baptist lived (Luke 1:80; 3:2, 4) and ministered (Luke 7:24). It is this same wilderness the Spirit drove Jesus into (Luke 4:1) and to which Jesus found personal solitude (Luke 4:42; 5:16) and could be found with His disciples (Luke 9:10). The wilderness is a desolate place (Luke 8:29). The word also occurs for something that is desolate (Luke 13:35). The wilderness was a place capable of holding the vast multitudes gathering around Jesus (Luke 9:12) and where sheep grazed (Luke 15:4).

It is good to have a place where one might be alone with their thoughts. Yet, not only did Jesus pray in an isolated place, He also prayed in the context of a busy life.

II. Jesus prayed in the context of a busy life (Luke 4:42, 43; 5:15, 16).

- ⁴² When day came, **Jesus left and went to a secluded place**; and **the crowds were searching for Him**, and came to Him and tried to keep Him from going away from them. ⁴³ But He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose." (Luke 4:42, 43)
- ¹⁵ But the news about Him was spreading even farther, and large crowds were gathering to hear Him and to be healed of their

sicknesses. ¹⁶ But **Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray.** (Luke 5:15, 16)

It is impossible to comprehend how intrusive the crowds were in the life of Jesus. Nevertheless, He never appears ruffled by their presence. In the midst of His busyness, He would slip away to the wilderness and pray. What a staggering act. As we will note, He often prayed with others present, but he also sought solitude through seclusion.

What we need to do is see how prayer happens in the context of a busy life. Prayer is seeing your story in His *Story*. Occasionally, we separate ourselves from the commotion of life. However, most prayer happens in distraction and busyness. In the midst of our busyness, we turn our attention toward God. The author of Hebrews refers to this as “looking to Jesus” (Heb. 12:1, 2).

III. Jesus prayed before important events (Luke 6:12, 13; 22:41).

It is of interest to see how Luke often positions Jesus praying before pivotal moments such as His selection of the twelve, His transfiguration on Mt. Hermon, and in the Garden of Gethsemane prior to Calvary.

A. His selection of the twelve (Luke 6:12, 13).

- **It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God.** (Luke 6:12)

My take away from this is He spent His sleeping hours, when awake, praying, singing, meditating, and resting. I do not work from the premise that He was fully awake through the

entire night. If such is the case, it is the exception and not the rule.

It would be the same idea of you not able to sleep because of anxiousness brought on by an important or concerning event the next day.

B. His transfiguration (Luke 9:28-37).

- ²⁸ Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray. ²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:28, 29)

In light of Luke 9:27, He separated Himself with Peter, John, and James for revealing His glory to them. It was not prayer that brought the revelation, but praying prepared them for the revelation. Jesus coupled the two events together making them one.

C. His submission to the Father's will (Luke 22:41-44).

- ⁴¹ **And He withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and began to pray, . . .** ⁴⁴ **And being in agony He was praying very fervently;** and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground. (Luke 22:41, 44)

The prayer of Gethsemane reflected the weight of what was about to unfold. Many of us are aware of such praying. We do not choose to stay up all night and spend a sleepless night praying. We do not choose to agonize over something through prayer. The event is the occasion for praying all night or in agony. This is the kind of prayer King Darius offered

when agonizing over Daniel's circumstances in the Lion's Den (Dan. 6:17, 18). It is the same type of situation we find Queen Esther under the threat of national annihilation (Esther 4:15-17). Do you understand the difference? Something weighs on you so heavily that you are overwhelmed. Your only recourse is to pray all night or in agony.

I am of the opinion that Luke records events to note what is normal, not abnormal. These "snapshots" show us what Jesus did as a way of life. As we noted earlier, Jesus sought solitude through seclusion, but He also prayed with others and while in the company of others.

IV. Sometimes Jesus prayed with others present (Luke 3:21; 9:18, 28; 11:1ff).

- Now when all the people were baptized, Jesus was also baptized, and **while He was praying**, heaven was opened, (Luke 3:21)
- **And it happened that while He was praying alone**, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, "Who do the people say that I am?" (Luke 9:18)
- ²⁸ Some eight days after these sayings, **He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.** ²⁹ And **while He was praying**, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. (Luke 9:28, 29)
- **It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place**, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." (Luke 11:1)

Praying with other people can be of equal joy as when one prays alone. Not only did Jesus pray publically, but the Temple is also marked as a place of prayer (Luke 1:10; 19:46).

- And **the whole multitude of the people were in prayer outside** at the hour of the incense offering. (Luke 1:10)
- saying to them, "It is written, '**AND MY HOUSE SHALL BE A HOUSE OF PRAYER,**' but you have made it a **ROBBERS' DEN.**" (Luke 19:46)

Prayer is a part of the believer's life. Again, prayer to God is like breathing to living, it should just happen. Not only did Jesus pray, but He also taught on prayer.

V. Jesus taught on "how" to pray (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8).

In Luke's Gospel, four characteristics are noted. Again, our tendency is to make these benchmarks for effective prayer. This is to over diagnose. These are the simple qualities of biblical praying. They are not things we work to do; they just happen.

A. Submission characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 11:1-13).

- ¹ **It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place,** after He had finished, one of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples." ² And He said to them, "**When you pray,** say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come.'" (Luke 11:1, 2)

The essence of biblical prayer is recognizing one's place before God. It is praying the Jesus prayer, "If possible, let this

cup pass before me. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.”

- saying, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done.” (Luke 22:42)

The extended passage in Luke 11:1-13 speaks of God’s gracious behavior toward us as a loving Father. When we recognize who He is and what He does, our submission to Him is easy and light.

B. Perseverance characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

- Now He was telling them a parable **to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart**, (Luke 18:1)

Zacharias and Elizabeth are examples of people who persevered in prayer (Luke 1:13). Our repetition or persistency does not bind or obligate God. God delights in our desire to trust Him in our asking. He desires for us to ask.

- But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, **for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.**” (Luke 1:13)

C. Humility characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 18:1-8).

- ¹⁰ “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and **was praying this to himself:** ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.’ ¹³ But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even

unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, **'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'**" (Luke 18:10-13)

Biblical prayer prays the sinners' prayer, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner." God always answers the Jesus prayer and the sinners' prayer. A final area brought out by Luke as to our Lord's instruction occurs in Luke 6:28.

D. Intercession characterizes biblical prayer (Luke 6:28).

- bless those who curse you, **pray for those who mistreat you.** (Luke 6:28)
- and **lead us not into temptation.** (Luke 11:4)
- "But keep on the alert at all times, **praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place,** and to stand before the Son of Man." (Luke 21:36)
- ⁴⁰When He arrived at the place, He said to them, "**Pray that you may not enter into temptation.**" . . . ⁴⁶and said to them, "Why are you sleeping? **Get up and pray that you may not enter into temptation.**" (Luke 22:40, 46)

We always come from a position of need. Our natural inclination toward those who mistreat us is one of revenge and justice. Prayer enables us to act toward them in a manner that is gospel-centered and not self-centered.

In light of His betrayal, Jesus invites His disciples to pray they have strength to escape all the trials about to befall them. There is no reason as to why such intercession cannot be ours.

Where does this leave us as to Jesus and prayer?

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Learn to accept prayer for what it is, living your story in light of His.
2. Make prayer something enjoyed, not just endured.
3. When praying/living, do so with submission and humility. See yourself for who you are in light of who He is.
4. Finally, pray for your enemies and that you stand fast in the midst of temptations and trials.

Jesus and Generosity

Questions to Consider:

1. What is the basis for Christian generosity?
2. What might we expect from our generosity?
3. How might we measure generosity?

Theme: God's generous gift of Jesus flows in and through His people enabling them to live generously to those around them.

Introduction:

It is perhaps surprising to realize how much Jesus spoke of money in the Gospel of Luke. We will begin with the obvious passages and then work our way through the indirect statements concerning finances/resources.

There are three large ideas or principles controlling Luke's thoughts. We will consider each within this study.

In looking at the idea of money and Jesus, our intent is to hear the text. One might expect us to touch on personal, regular, local church-driven giving. This, however, is not the intent so our study might not encompass our presuppositions concerning money and giving.

We will endeavor to hear what Luke says Jesus said concerning money and our stewarding of it.

THE BIG PICTURE:

Because we have already jumped into the deep end of the pool as it relates to our thinking on Christian Disciplines, now

would be a good time to see where we are in our progress. Our focus will only be in the area of generosity.

- First, our stewarding of our finances will not fix what is broken in our relationship with God. Only Jesus can fix what is broken in our relationship with God and this He did at the cross.
- Second, no amount of money can change our relationship with God as if our relationship with God exists because of what we do and not on what Jesus did. Yet, the intent of stewarding our finances enable us to understand just how blessed we are in Jesus.
- Third, if the first two thoughts do not control our approach, then we will make our stewarding of finances man-centered, not God-centered. We cannot afford to teach them as if they are activities we do for God. The emphasis is not on what we do for God, but on what He does for us. Moreover, we do not believe anything we do merits favor from God. In addition, we also do not believe anything is essential in our relationship to God. The only thing we need is Jesus. Friend, this is hard to grasp.
- Fourth, if the stewardship is in any way horizontal, then it relate to our relationship with “one another.” It is what we do as community. That is not to say we do not do such activities individually or in isolation, but their design is for community. Many of us know people who are exceptional in their generosity, but have no alignment with a local church. The design of our stewardship is for community. How do I know this? Because the New Testament is a Book of Community.

- Fifth, our stewardship is not meritorious. No amount of generosity on our part can merit His favor and blessing, and no amount of stinginess causes Him to withhold His favor or blessing. All we have from Him is because of Jesus.
- Sixth, God invites us to steward our finances because He establishes the activity for our joy and His glory. The gospel fruit of generosity comes from the Jesus Seed.

We “ought” to be generous for joy. It is only as we fixate on the lavish nature of God’s gifting that we become gracious in our generosity. The stewarding of our finances do not make us Christian. No amount of money can forgive sin or open the doors of heaven. Nothing we do or not do makes us any more or less Christian. However, the stewarding of our finances are there for our joy/life by increasing our understanding of God’s unconditional love for us.

Without further explanation, let us consider Jesus and generosity in the Gospel of Luke.

I. Jesus speaks of God as generous and Himself as the embodiment of God’s generosity (Luke 15:11-32)

Throughout Luke’s account, Jesus speaks of God being generous and He Himself as the embodiment of God’s generosity. Five ideas support this statement.

A. The Good Samaritan is a picture of God (Luke 10:25-37).

We will not study this text in detail, but will make two observations. First, Jesus is the unexpected hero in the story of the Good Samaritan. It is a twist in the story that the reader would not naturally expect. Second, we cannot outspend God (Luke 10:35).

B. The inclusive nature of God’s invitation (Luke 14:12-24).

Those invited are the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind (v. 13). This is in keeping with the target group within Luke. Verse 21 suggests these were not the first ones invited. Do not worry about compensation. It will happen at the resurrection of the just (v. 14).

Verse 16 suggests it is a parable. The intended guests offered three excuses.

¹⁷ and at the dinner hour he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, “Come; for everything is ready now.” (cf. “come” 12:37, 43) ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. (Luke 14:17, 18)

Notice the parallelism between Luke 9 and Luke 14.

Luke 9:57-62	Luke 14:18-20
⁵⁷ As they were going along the road, someone said to Him, “I will follow You wherever You go.” ⁵⁸ And Jesus said to him, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.”	¹⁸ The first one said to him, 'I have bought a piece of land and I need to go out and look at it; please consider me excused.'

<p>⁵⁹ And He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father." ⁶⁰ But He said to him, "Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God."</p>	<p>¹⁹ Another one said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please consider me excused."</p>
<p>⁶¹ Another also said, "I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home." ⁶² But Jesus said to him, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."</p>	<p>²⁰ Another one said, "I have married a wife, and for that reason I cannot come."</p>

Because the Jew rejects the gospel, God invites the Gentile. Although the Jew did not receive Jesus, they criticized His activity among sinners [e.g. Gentiles, Luke 15:1, 2]. Merit is not to drive our generosity. We are to be generous because God is generous.

Jesus illustrates and explains God's generous behavior in three parables demonstrating God's generosity.

C. The Parable of the prodigal God (Luke 15:20-32).

The story of the prodigals finds itself surrounded by several stories.

- 15:1-7 the lost sheep
- 15:8-10 the lost coin
- 15:11-32 the lost sons
- 16:1-13 the wasteful manager
- 16:14-18 lovers of money
- 16:19-31 the rich man and Lazarus

The first three parables in Luke 15 speak to the character and activity of God. God pursues His people for their joy. We note this same principle in Luke 14:21-23. He seeks the lost (Luke 19:10) and joys at their return. Like the Father in the Parable of the Prodigal Son, the Good Samaritan is lavish in his gifting (Luke 10:35). The Father and the Good Samaritan are the same. Each speaks of God's gracious generosity toward sinners.

D. The offering of the Widow (Luke 21:1-4).

A fourth idea revealing the generosity of God occurs in the offering of the widow (Luke 21:1-4).

- ¹ And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury. ² And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins. ³ And He said, "Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them; ⁴ for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on." (Luke 21:1-4)

Is Jesus commenting on the gift of the rich or simply noting the offering of the poor widow? Both gave. His comment is on the nature of the widow's offering. Is He suggesting we should do the same? On the other hand, is He simply commenting by comparing the two? He is not suggesting the rich were to give up everything they possessed. He is suggesting that in comparison to their "great" gift, the widow gave more.

Let us note the fifth and final idea of God's generosity and how Jesus is the embodiment of God's generosity.

E. The death of Jesus on the cross of Calvary (Luke 23:46).

God's generosity is seen in His greatest gift (Luke 23:34, 43, 46). The last act of giving noted in Luke's Gospel is the cross (Luke 23:34, 43, 46).

- But Jesus was saying, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing." And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves. (Luke 23:34)
- And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." (Luke 23:43)
- And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT." Having said this, He breathed His last. (Luke 23:46)

There is no greater or selfless act of generosity than that portrayed at the cross. "For God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Paul notes how God gave selflessly and sacrificially at the cross for sinners who fought against Him (Rom. 5:1-10). Paul notes in Romans 8:32, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

Grace makes us the children of God. God freely gives us all things. Because of who He is and what He has done and does, we are conduits through which the wealth of God reaches into the world of God.

For His people who live the gospel, stewarding His wealth is for His glory and the advancement of His Garden in and

through the world. This has been his plan ever since the Garden of Eden.

In giving humanity His Son as a sin offering, He gave everything. We can be generous without expecting anything in return because of who God is and what He has done. God has already given us all things, thus we are able to say, "Jesus is enough in this life and in the life to come." His people cannot be less than generous because God's generosity flows in them and through them to those around them.

II. As recipients of His generosity, the people of God are generous (Luke 6:37, 38).

This particular section begins in 6:20 and ends in 7:1.

- ¹⁷ **Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place;** and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸ who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. ¹⁹ And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all. ²⁰ And turning His gaze toward His disciples, **He began to say,** "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." (Luke 6:17-20)
- **When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people,** He went to Capernaum. (Luke 7:1)

Some suggest this is part of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Most agree Jesus said the same thing in multiple settings. Thus, we can have the same saying said in different circumstances.

Let us consider the context.

- Verses 20-23 blessed
- Verses 24-26 woe

The blessed are those noted in Luke 4:18, 19. Jesus directs the woes toward the religious establishment. This is consistent throughout Luke's Gospel.

In verses 27-36, we are to love those who treat us poorly. Love our enemies and treating them with mercy are the same actions. Jesus reinforces this idea throughout His ministry. Notice the parallel between 6:34 and 14:12-14. On the cross, Jesus embodies this principle, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:24).

Verses 37 and 38 are a string of parallel ideas in light of what we just read in verses 27-36.

- ³⁷ **Do not judge**, and you will not be judged; and
- **do not condemn**, and you will not be condemned;
- **pardon**, and you will be pardoned.
- ³⁸ **Give**, and it will be given to you.
 - They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over.
 - For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return."

The believer's response is one of generosity. The way Christians live is in direct portion to how God blesses them (Luke 7:40-50). The story in Luke 7 of the harlot who kisses and wipes the feet of Jesus with her tears is another example of God's gracious generosity. We forgive as God forgave us

(Luke 11:4). Christian generosity is proportionate to the depth of one's understanding concerning their sin and damnation.

Jesus begins a parable in verse 39 explaining the lesson in verses 27-38. Verses 39-45 explain why we are to love our enemies and extend mercy to the unjust. The Jesus Seed produces the Jesus Fruit. Only evil trees bear evil fruit.

Verses 46-49 continues explaining why some act in the way they do. It is all about trees and foundations.

The blind, the hypocrite, the bad tree, and the one who builds without a foundation are all the same. They hear the word and do not believe (8:21; 11:28). Those who believe Jesus is the Son of God / Son of Man are those who hear the word and do it. Because of the Jesus Seed, His people do not judge others but are gracious and generous. This is what Jesus does in and through His people for their joy and His glory.

III. Living in His *Story* guards against covetousness and greed (Luke 11:29-12:59).

When we do not live in light of His *Story*, we focus on "building bigger barns" and want our "fair share." We are to watch against such greed. Such thinking robs us of the blessed joy we have resting in His finished work.

Part of our problem in reading Luke is his sequence. We do not always know sequence. When we read a text like Luke 12:13-21, we have to consider the larger context for this text. The larger context will assist in our reading of this text. Let us consider the time flow of our context.

- 11:29 As the crowds were increasing, He began to say
- 11:37 Now when He had spoken, a Pharisees asked Him to have lunch with him
- 11:45 One of the lawyers said
- 12:1 Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together, He began saying to His disciples first.
- 12:13 Someone in the crowd
- 12:22 He said to His disciples
- 12:41 Peter said, "Lord, are you addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?"
- 13:1 Now on the same occasion there were some present

If we follow Luke's thought, our text (Luke 12:13-21) begins in 11:29 and runs all the way through 13:1-9. The surrounding context will color how we understand our text.

In Luke 11:29-54, the religious establishment rejects Jesus.

- ⁵³ When He left there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile and to question Him closely on many subjects, ⁵⁴ plotting against Him to catch Him in something He might say. (Luke 11:53, 54)
- Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of people had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." (Luke 12:1)

In Luke 12:1-12, Jesus tells us not to fear the religious establishment. They cannot damn us to hell.

- Notice the parallel language between 11:33 and 12:2.

- Notice the parallel language between 12:4 and 12:32.
- Notice the parallel language between 12:6 and 12:24.
- Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.” (Luke 12:13)

From this seething mass of humanity, an unnamed individual makes an appeal.

In light of the hostile context (11:29-12:12) and imminent sacrifice (Chapter 9) how are we to view our lives? The passage is large (12:13-59). There are notable parallel verses in our context suggesting this. Notice the following.

- Then He said to them, “**Beware, and be on your guard** against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.” (Luke 12:15)
- ²¹“So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” ²² And He said to His disciples, “For this reason I say to you, do not worry about your life, as to what you will eat; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. ²³ For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing.” (Luke 12:21-23)

This section in Luke (12:22-34) is part of Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:25-34). Matthew’s rendition is different from Luke’s.

- ³¹“But seek His kingdom, and these things will be added to you. ³² Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. ³³ Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. ³⁴ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Luke 12:31-34)

Covetousness stores up treasure for itself. Rich toward God seeks first the kingdom. In this context, selling your

possessions and giving to the poor marks the shift in priority.

What was required of them in their context does not directly apply to us. Notice the sense of urgency throughout our text.

- v. 15 be on guard against every form of greed.
- vv. 22, 29, 32 do not worry, seek, afraid about what you will eat or what you will wear.
Again, this makes perfect sense in light of Luke 9:1-6 and Luke 10:1-12.
- v. 33 the statement in verse 33 matches well with His instruction to the disciples in Luke 9 and 10. Because of where we are in the narrative, this instruction makes sense. Notice, however, the shift in Luke 22:35-38.
- ³⁵ And He said to them, “**When I sent you out** without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “**But now**, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one. ³⁷ For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, ‘AND HE WAS NUMBERED WITH TRANSGRESSORS’; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment.” ³⁸ They said, “Lord, look, here are two swords.” And He said to them, “It is enough.” (Luke 22:35-38)

Luke 12:35 parallels verse 15.

- v. 15 Be dressed in readiness and keep your lamp lit (v. 40)
- v. 35 Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed

Likewise, verse 37 and verse 43 say the same thing.

- v. 37 Blessed are those slaves whom the master will find on the alert when he comes;

- v. 43 Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.

Seeking His kingdom (v. 31) is living in readiness for His coming. Living in readiness battles covetousness.

The ready/faithful slaves are those who believe John and Jesus (vv. 41-44).

The unready/unfaithful slaves are those who reject John and Jesus (vv. 45-48).

The slave who is not ready is the barn builder in verses 16-21.

The barn builder parallels the story of the rich young ruler. Both failed to see the deceptive nature of wealth (Luke 18:18-30).

The rich young ruler was self-righteous. He believed his wealth was a sign of God's blessing and thus was "safe." This is in keeping with Luke 16:14 where the Pharisees are described as those "who were lovers of money." The parable of the rich man and Lazarus also debunks this perspective. Wealth cannot save. Only Jesus saves.

Our Lord's admonition to sell everything and give to the poor is in keeping with Luke 12:33. In Luke 12, the context is one of urgency. Here, the individual was relying on his wealth to save him. His compliance to the Law was only superficial. Jesus uses similar language "treasure in heaven" (18:22) in Luke 12:21, 34. How we view our finances is proportionate to how we view God.

Jesus calls on those who follow Him to give up everything they were hoping in and trust in Him alone (Luke 18:31-34).

Whatever one gives up in this life, eternal life is the recompense (18:30; compare with 14:12-14). The healing of the blind beggar stands in stark contrast to that of the rich young ruler (Luke 18:35-43). One was blind and could see; the other could see but was blind.

The story of Zacchaeus also stands in contrast to the rich young ruler (Luke 19:1-10). Zacchaeus, like the rich young ruler, was rich (19:2 w/ 18:23). Yet, the Law did not bind Zacchaeus. **Grace did what the Law could never do.** Jesus made no demands on Zacchaeus. He loved much because he was forgiven much (Luke 7:36-50).

In returning to our thought in Luke 12, Jesus supports this distinction between believing and unbelieving in verses 49-53.

Verses 54-56 speak of the signs of the master's return (vv. 37, 43) and chides His audience for not understanding where they were in the program of God.

Jesus picks up the question in verses 13 and 14 in verses 57-59. All of this says the same thing. Settle your family disputes **internally, graciously**. Guard against going to the Law, externally. The outcome of the Law is unbending.

What is our take away? Although the context restricts direct application, **we know sin will make us takers whereas grace makes us givers**. Regardless of where we are in God's timetable, we need to see our stories in light of His *Story*.

By living in light of His *Story*, His people seek to be faithful in their daily responsibilities (Luke 16:1-31).

IV. Luke's continued emphasis on stewardship (Misc.)

It is of interest to read in Luke's gospel the role of the servant/slave. Luke 7 tells of a centurion's servant who was dear unto him (Luke 7:2). It is apparent the servant/slave served his master well. Through his service and kind treatment by the master, the servant endeared himself to the master. This servant was good and faithful. The faithful and wise servant is the one who watches and does what his master asks. The parable in Luke 12 portrays this well. The contrast is set between the good and faithful servant who watches and the one who from the wickedness of their fallen heart does not watch and begins to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken" (Luke 12:45).

His behavior reflects his poor stewardship of his master's finances.

In Luke 14, the servants carry out the requests of their master. They are also good and faithful servants. Likewise, in Luke 15:22 the servants carry out the request of the father. This same principle occurs in Luke 17:7-10. Servants, slaves, managers, and stewards are to faithfully carry out the wishes of their master. It appears as if the individual in Luke 16 is not a slave, but a hired employee. Slaves might be managers, but not every manager is a slave.

We do not know if Luke intends a connection between the parables in chapter 15 and what follows in chapter 16.

The point in the parable of the wasteful manager occurs in verses 9-13.

- ⁹ “And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the wealth of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings.” (Luke 16:9)

Luke provides a purpose statement.

- ¹⁰ “He who is **faithful** in a very little thing is **faithful** also in much; and he who is **unrighteous** in a very little thing is **unrighteous** also in much.” (Luke 16:10)

In this text, unrighteous is the opposite of faithful. If one is unfaithful in their stewardship, they are unrighteous. They are the unwise and unjust.

- ¹¹ “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you?” (Luke 16:11)
- ¹² “And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?” (Luke 16:12)

Luke uses “faithful” sparingly.

- And the Lord said, “Who then is that **faithful** and **wise** steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season?” (Luke 12:42)
- He that is **faithful** in that which is least is **faithful** also in much: and he that is **unjust** in the least is **unjust** also in much. (Luke 16:10)
- If therefore ye have not been **faithful** in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? (Luke 16:11)

- And if ye have not been **faithful** in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? (Luke 16:12)
- And he said unto him, "Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been **faithful** in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities." (Luke 19:17)

If you were unrighteous as a steward, why would you receive more responsibility?

- No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Luke 16:13)

Verse 13 draws us into the parable. Be faithful in your stewardship before God. It seems to settle back into the servants in Luke 12:35-48.

Verses 14-17 seem to make application to the Pharisees. They scoffed at His instruction on this matter. They were wasteful stewards who were unwise and unrighteous. They chose to serve money rather than God. Gain and greed consumed them (Luke 12:15). They were the barn builders in Luke 12:13-21.

Verse 18 appears displaced. It is the only time such a statement occurs in Luke. The Pharisees have proven wasteful as managers/stewards of God's Law. Perhaps the context for the statement in Luke's gospel is the overall appeal of the gospel.

- ²⁶ **"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own** father and mother and **wife and children** and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:26, 27)

Perhaps some were using the call to follow Jesus as an excuse to abandon their familial responsibilities. Here, Jesus puts the statements in context. If one is married, then marriage is their calling. Salvation is more important than any familial responsibilities, but one cannot use their desire to follow Jesus as an excuse to divorce their spouse and marry someone who appears more “spiritually” sensitive.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus speaks directly into their situation (Luke 16:19-31). They assume their wealth is a sign of God’s blessing, but the reality is dramatically different. As Christians, we are to manage our finances for kingdom use.

In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus gives a parable stressing the continued need to engage in business until His return. Similar to the above passage, the emphasis is on stewardship.

Verse 11 tells us two things. **First**, the cross is just about one week away (“because He was near Jerusalem”). **Second**, His disciples “supposed that the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately.”

In light of these two things, He tells a parable. A parable has a primary point (v. 13). We cannot seek to give every piece significance. Notice the power of verse 13, “And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas and said to them, ‘**Do business with this until I come back.**’”

This is the point of the parable. In His absence, His people are to steward their responsibilities.

He holds those who are His people responsible (vv. 16-24). On one hand, the good slave hears, "Well done." In addition, they receive more authority (v. 17). On the other hand, the worthless slave does not hear well done and what he did have, he loses (vv. 22-24).

Here is the application of the parable (vv. 25-27).

- ²⁵ And they said to him, "Master, he has ten minas already." (Luke 19:25)
- ²⁶ "I tell you that to everyone who has, more shall be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away." (Luke 19:26)
- ²⁷ "But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." (Luke 19:27)

It appears to echo the same thought in Luke 12:35-48 and in Luke 20:9-18. The Jesus Seed produces in His people the fruit of financial generosity. His people are faithful in so far they watch for His coming.

Part of our ongoing faithfulness is to pay one's taxes. Hoping to catch Jesus in the area of one's loyalties and patriotism, He is challenged as it relates to paying taxes (Luke 20:19-26). The issue of paying taxes is settled in a simple statement, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (v. 25). What is of interest is that both realms have a stewardship. There are responsibilities citizens have toward their political government and there are responsibilities citizens have toward their God.

Shepherding the Sheep: (What is the NEXT STEP?)

1. Learn how generous God is and how Jesus is the embodiment of God's generosity.
2. Learn to see yourself as a conduit through which God's generosity toward sinners' flows.
3. Learn to see your story as a part of His *Story*. Put everything about you inside of His kingdom. This will help you guard against covetousness and greed. See the connective tissue between yourself as an individual and the believing community.

Jesus and Mission

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you define / explain God's Vision in creating?
2. Can you define / explain God's Mission or Means in accomplishing His Vision?
3. How might we as a community of faith be more proactive in carrying out God's Mission in fulfilling His Vision.

Theme: Jesus saves His people to be who they are where they are in the carrying out of His Mission for the fulfilling of His Vision.

Introduction:

My intent in study is to understand the biblical text. The Bible is to shape our worldview and control how we live our lives. The power of Scripture is in God's design. It is not our presuppositions or experiences. God gave us the Bible in order that we might understand His *Story*. It is only as we understand the Bible that we can rightly understand our story.

Even as we have explored our previous four topics of Jesus and Church, Scripture, Prayer, Generosity, and now MISSION, we must allow the Bible to shape and inform our experiences and thinking. If we do not, we are slaves to the immediate and to the emotion.

Let us retain perspective on some basic truths so that a good thing does not go bad.

- First, apart from Jesus, nothing we do will fix what is broken in our relationship with God. Only Jesus can fix what is broken in our relationship with God and this He did at the cross.
- Second, no amount of pious activity can change our relationship with God as if our relationship with God exists because of what we do and not on what Jesus did.
- Third, the Christian life is not focused on what we do for God, but rather what God does for us. Moreover, nothing we do merits favor from God. All we have from Him is because of Jesus.
- In addition, no sin on my part can merit God's disfavor. Jesus took all of my sin and God's resultant wrath for it at Calvary.
- Fourth, if the activity is in any way horizontal, then it relates to our relationship with "one another." It is what we do as community. The design of our activity is for community.
- Fifth, the "ought" of any activity is for our joy. Nothing we do or not do makes us any more or less Christian. However, any activity is for our joy by increasing our understanding of God's unconditional love for us.

Luke's intent (Luke 1:1-4) is for his audience to know with certainty the truth of what they have come to believe. Did Luke succeed?

I am convinced that God does work powerfully through His word and enables us to live lives of purpose in our "regular" moments. Our present study concerning mission has the power to reshape our thinking and refocus our energy as we **be who we are where we are.**

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts form a single unit. **Luke's intent is to show how God's design to bring joy to the nations is in Jesus.** We will not take the time to trace all of this. However, we will consider the overarching idea and then focus on how we individually and corporately are part of this grand narrative.

Before I begin and without going into too great of detail, let us be reminded that God's Vision for His creation is to be a place where He would meet with His people for their joy and His glory. Our Mission is the means of securing His Vision in the world. Our Mission is by His design. What began in the Garden in Eden is to continue to this day. We are to extend the boundaries of God's Garden until the ends touch and secondly, we are to populate the Garden with more people. Through evangelism and church planting, God's Vision for His creation is taking place. What we currently see in our world is the victory of God. God is winning.

What the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts does is trace for us the victory of God through the Mission of God fulfilling the Vision of God. Let us begin our study.

I. The Gospel of Luke - Volume I

It is clear from the beginning of Luke's record that the gospel is for all nations, both the Jew and the Gentile. Consider the following thoughts.

When the angel Gabriel brought the revelation to the shepherds, his word of joy was inclusive and for all the people.

- ⁸In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the

fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰ But the angel said to them, **“Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;”** ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” (Luke 2:8-11)

When Simeon beheld the Christ child, he uttered words of far reaching consequences.

- ³⁰ For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹ Which **You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,** ³² **A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,** And the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:30-32)
- ¹⁴ And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ **“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.”** ²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, “Is this not Joseph's son?” ²³ And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’” ²⁴ And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the

days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and **yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon**, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ **And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.**" ²⁸ And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹ and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, He went His way. (Luke 4:14-30)

Jesus healed Gentiles.

- ¹ When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. ² **And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.** ³ **When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.** ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, "He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵ for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue." ⁶ Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, "Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷ for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes, and to another, 'Come!' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." ⁹ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, "**I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.**" ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health. (Luke 7:1-10)

The parables Jesus taught were inclusive.

- ²² And the slave said, "Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room." ²³ And the master said to the slave, "**Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel**

them to come in, so that my house may be filled." (Luke 14:22, 23)

At His ascension, He gave words to speak of what would unfold and the nations are included.

- ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and **that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:44-49)

There can be little question that in Luke's account we are left with the thought that the Gospel is to be "proclaimed in His name to all the nations." Luke shows how this will happen. In addition, He shows the certainty of it happening in his second volume, the Book of Acts.

II. The Book of Acts – Volume II

Consider how the book opens.

- ⁶ So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸ **but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.**" (Acts 1:6-8)

The Church gathered in Jerusalem (2:1-8:3)

- ¹ When **the day of Pentecost had come**, they were all together in one place. . . ⁵ Now **there were Jews living in Jerusalem**, devout men from every nation under heaven. (Acts 2:1, 5)

The Church scattered into Palestine and Syria (8:4-12:25)

- ¹ Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and **they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles**. . . ⁴ Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ **Philip went down to the city of Samaria** and began proclaiming Christ to them. (Acts 8:1, 4, 5)

The Church advancing to the end of the earth (13-28)

- ¹ **Now there were at Antioch**, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, **they sent them away**. ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, **they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus**. (Acts 13:1-4)
- ³⁰ And **he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters** and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30, 31)

The intent of the narrative in Acts is to show the triumph of God’s purpose in every “uttermost becoming a Jerusalem.” Throughout the Book of Acts, Gentile inclusion is established.

- But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, **to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel**: (Acts 9:15)

- And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, **because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.** (Acts 10:45)
- ¹ And the apostles and brethren that were **in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God.** . . . ¹⁸ When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.** (Acts 11:1, 18)
- ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, **we turn to the Gentiles.** ⁴⁷ For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.** ⁴⁸ And **when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.** (Acts 13:46-48)
- And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and **how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 14:27)
- And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, **declaring the conversion of the Gentiles:** and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (Acts 15:3)
- ⁷ And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, **that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.** . . . ¹² Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, **declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.** . . . ¹⁴ Simeon hath

declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. . . . ¹⁷ That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and **all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.** (Acts 15:7, 12, 14, 17)

- And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: **from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 18:6)
- And when he had saluted them, **he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.** (Acts 21:19)
- And he said unto me, Depart: **for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 22:21)
- **But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles,** that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:20)
- That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and **should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.** (Acts 26:23)
- **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it.** (Acts 28:28)

The Gospel is inclusive. Ethnicity does not define the gospel, only need. Throughout Luke's Gospel, Jesus invites the blind, the deaf, the mute, the leper, and the poor. Such maladies know no boundaries. Thus, Luke's account is to show how the gospel is global and Acts reveals how the gospel has gone global. Yet, **how did the gospel go from point A to point B?** What means has God employed to carry out His Mission in

fulfilling His Vision? Has He used extraordinary means to accomplish His purpose, or are the means more humble? How are we to get the gospel out? Let us now trace the power of the gospel.

With this in mind, let us examine Luke's account and see what we find concerning Jesus and Mission.

III. God's Mission uses ordinary means to spread an extraordinary message.

We will begin by noting the various occupations found in Luke's Gospel. What is of interest are the occupation of those Jesus saves.

- Zacharias, a priest (Luke 1:5)
- Shepherds (Luke 2:8)
- Anna, a prophetess (Luke 2:36)
- Tax collectors (Luke 3:12 [Levi, Luke 5:27; Zaccheus, Luke 19:2]; 7:29)
- Soldiers (Luke 3:14 [Centurion, Luke 7:2]; 7:8)
- Physicians (Luke 4:23; 5:31)
- Simon, John, and James, fishermen (Luke 5:2, 10)
 - Scribes (Luke 5:21 [Lawyers, Luke 7:30])
 - Pupil/Teacher (Luke 6:40)
 - Prostitution (Luke 7:37)
 - Moneylenders (Luke 7:41)
 - Herod's Steward (Luke 8:3)
 - A Sower (Luke 8:5)
 - A Pig Farmer (Luke 8:26-39)
 - An Official of the Synagogue (Luke 8:41, 49)
 - Martha, a Homeowner (Luke 10:38, 39)
 - Rulers and Authorities (Luke 12:11)

- Judges (Luke 12:57-59; 18:2)
- Vineyard (Luke 13:6)
- An Estate owner (Luke 15:12; Nobleman, Luke 19:12)
- A Rich Man w/ Managers (Luke 16:1 [cf. Luke 16:19; 18:23])

Not all who accepted Jesus as the Messiah left their employment to follow Him. Some needed to and they did, but only a handful of people did this (Matt. 5:11, 27). Even in those two situations, we do not know if their departure from their vocation was permanent.

What is the big idea? Jesus expected those whom He saved to **be who they were where they were.**

What I believe we will see are humble means. God has always used the ordinary to do the extraordinary. However, the extraordinary is the gospel, not the size of the ministry or campus or plant or reach. We have made missions and ministry big business. The extraordinary is what God does. If you look around, you will see huge missions, ministries, and churches. I do not doubt that of all it falls inside of His will because He is the God of providence and sovereignty. Nevertheless, I am also convinced that something seems mismatched. Something is wrong when we spend the bulk of energy and resources on maintaining the machinery and not the message. I fully recognize the need to steward what we have and to understand and live in the cultural context we find ourselves, but let us not think “slick” and “program” can replace the simple, but immeasurable power of the gospel.

Stepping out in faith might be getting up and going to work realizing you are doing kingdom work. Stepping out in faith

might be staying in your marriage realizing you are doing kingdom work. Stepping out in faith might be using your desire and skill set in a local church when other more attractive platforms are calling. Yet, stepping out in faith might be doing something completely unpredictable in following Jesus. I cannot tell you what God would have you to do in various situations, but I also know you are in God's will and **His will is for you to be who you are where you are.**

Unfortunately, we have made the will of God and the call of God so mysterious and complicated that we sit polarized and anxious over something that is powerful and natural. What is God's will, what is God calling you to do? **God's will and call is for you to be who you are where you are.**

Jesus did send the twelve in Luke 9:1ff and the seventy in Luke 10:1ff, but the pattern is for those who know Jesus to live Jesus in the context they find themselves.¹ This occurred when John the Baptist addressed his audience in their vocation. He did not tell them to leave their vocation, but to live with kingdom value (Luke 3:10-14).

One of the questions confronting us is, "Does God want me to change vocations or quit my job, enter vocational ministry and/or go to a foreign culture and/or change geographical location?" My response is "maybe," but what I do know is clear. **You are to be who you are where you are right now.**

There is no higher or lower vocation in the mind of God. **All vocations are sacred and missional.** Friend, we have done a disservice by elevating the work of the gospel to the professional and failing to see how **we are the means God has chosen to fulfill His vision in carrying out His mission.**

The Church does have those who change vocations and look to the local, gathered church as their employer. We see this in 2 and 3 John and we see this in the Gospel of Luke with the sending of the twelve and the seventy. Yet, where they were in relationship to the cross is what shaped their “vocation.” However, the Apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila were all bi-vocational.

We use the Apostle Paul as our example. He and his co-laborers, Priscilla and Aquila, made tents while pursuing their primary goal of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:1-5). However, this is not the only instance of Paul’s using Tentmaking. The New Testament specifically reports that Paul worked in Galatia, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Ephesus (1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:7-8; Acts 20:31-35; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6). He used his skill of making tents to carry him into some very difficult mission fields and into areas, such as Corinth, dominated by commerce. For Paul making tents was not just about paying expenses. In Corinth, Paul would preach to the Jews on the Sabbath in the synagogue, and during the week, he worked as a Tentmaker talking to the merchants and travelers. His business or trade was not as much about expenses or negotiating visa requirements in “Restricted Access Countries” as much as it was about opportunity. His trade gave him regular day-to-day contact with merchants and travelers. **This contact furnished him the opportunity to minister, and it furnished him legitimacy because he was providing a needed skill in the community.** Does anyone really believe that Paul worked during the day at his trade and never

shared the Gospel with any of those that came to him for his services? On the contrary, his whole motivation was about opportunity. Our belief is that to the Corinthians, Paul was a Tentmaker. This identity provided greater opportunity than he would have had if he was seen simply as a missionary or pastor. Therefore, his trade, in Corinth, was a tool that provided greater opportunity to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ both during the week and even on the Sabbath in the synagogue. Today Tentmaking has taken on a much broader definition than just referring to the skill of making tents. **A Tentmaker is a Christian man or woman who views work in light of the Great Commission and as an opportunity to serve the Kingdom of God.** Therefore, work is a vital aspect of Christian witness because it provides substantial means of developing relationships, credibility, and contexts for ministry.²

They saw who they were in light of who He is and sought to be who they are where they were.

Is leaving everything to follow Jesus normative? There are two competing ideas as it relates to leaving everything to follow Jesus. **First**, leaving everything is not missional; it is redemptive. The appeal to leave everything is the decision to trust Jesus only, rather than continuing to trust yourself and your own abilities. Everyone saved or will be saved does this. When you accept Jesus as your Savior from sin and death for your joy and His glory, you leave everything to follow Him. Everything you once clung to, you now give up. **Second**, those passages that speak of individuals leaving everything to follow Jesus in mission do so in the context of the looming

cross. What they did is not normative for us now. Such thinking seems so counter to what we have heard for over 100 years in mission speech, but there is no sustainable text warranting such action on our part.

Many Christian authors write in a similar light. Christians who are “sold out” for Christ are elevated as examples for the “average” Christian to emulate. They encourage the reader to make their lives worth something by doing this or that. Although commonly held, is it biblical? This does not mean you cannot follow their suggestions if you so desire, but it is not coming out of the exegete of any biblical text. Every one of these approaches tell you “to try harder to do better.” Every one of these approaches makes you feel like you are not doing enough or that what you are doing or how you are living is not following Jesus. Every one of these approaches leaves you feeling guilty.

Yet in our study of Luke, is this where we find ourselves? Let us consider several of these passages.

- When they had brought their boats to land, **they left everything** and followed Him. (Luke 5:11)

When Peter, James, and John left their work, did they ever return to it? Who was supporting them financially? What about their families? Were these individuals in a place of financial independence? Chances are, they all returned to work. Their leaving of everything spoke of their commitment to Jesus.

- ²⁷ After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁸ And **he left everything behind**, and got up and began to follow Him.

²⁹ And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. (Luke 5:27-29)

Levi, like Zacchaeus, was an individual of means. They probably acquired their wealth through unethical exploitation. Unlike Peter, James, and John they might have been financially independent people. Yet for them to leave their employment would have potentially put their families at risk. Again, their leaving, their actions speak of their relationship to Jesus. They had left “home, wife, etc. for the kingdom.”

How do we explain this behavior of **leaving everything** to follow Jesus?

The language speaks of commitment. Jesus employs this contrast throughout His invitation. In Caesarea Philippi, His disciples identify Him as “The Christ of God” (Luke 9:20). In that setting, He begins to reveal to them that He is going to suffer, die, and rise from the dead in three days (9:22). Their salvation will come through His death. He then says, “Not only must I die in order for you to live, but if you will live, you must also die” (Luke 9:23-26). What this life from death looks like is denial, cross bearing, and following (v. 23). All three statements are synonyms. He explains what this means in verses 24-26.

The contrast between where they are and where He is, is noted by personal preservation (v. 24), physical wealth (v. 25), and social popularity/standing (v. 26). Like the initial three statements found in verse 23, these “things” are all synonymous. The invitation positions these “things” against following Him. We find salvation in following Him. We

cannot follow Him without giving up our confidence in these “things.” We have to stop believing our salvation from sin and death and our standing before the Father is in our ability to save ourselves. We must let go of these “things” and follow Him. To follow Him is to believe He is the One.

This is the first point made earlier: “Leaving everything is not missional; it is redemptive. The appeal to leave everything is the decision to trust Jesus only, rather than continuing to trust yourself and your own abilities. Everyone who has ever been saved or will be saved does this.”

Our second point: “Those passages that speak of individuals leaving everything to follow Jesus in mission do so in the context of the looming cross.” What they did is not normative for us now.

As Jesus sets Himself toward Jerusalem in Luke 9:51, we encounter an interplay between Himself and three disciples.

- ⁵⁹ And He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ But He said to him, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.” ⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:59-62)

Two elements shape our understanding of this passage. **First**, partial commitment will not work. The urgency of the hour demands full commitment. **Second**, the cross event is now pressing in. There is no room for anything but complete focus on this one thing. The sense of urgency changes in Luke 22:35-38. As noted earlier, these two elements are not the same. The

first element defines how we “get saved.” The second element colors where they were in the journey toward Jerusalem. The first element will not change. The second element does.

Notice Luke 14:25-33.

- ²⁵ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to Me, and **does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ **So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.** ³⁴ Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵ It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 14:25-35)

Is Jesus telling us that in order to follow Him we must **literally** hate our closest family members, literally take up a cross, and **literally** give up all of our possessions? Do we see this throughout Luke’s gospel?

All three statements are in parallel. Each one speaks to the same idea. In order to be saved, every other option must be abandoned. One cannot be saved because of lineage/blood

lines. One cannot be saved because of personal ability. Finally, one cannot be saved because of personal possessions. Nothing but Jesus can save one from sin and death. To follow Him is to abandon all other options. It cannot be Jesus plus anything. Jesus is the only mediator between God and man.

The appeal to sell everything has two circumstances. First, if one is looking to their possessions to save them, Jesus says, “sell all and follow me” (Luke 18:22). This is what was said to the rich young ruler.

- When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Luke 18:22)

The second circumstance causing the appeal is the proximity to the cross. We have already noted this in the sending of the twelve (Luke 9:1ff) and the seventy (Luke 10:1ff) and His appeal for His followers not to worry about food or clothing in Luke 12:22-34.

- Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. (Luke 12:33)

The thought of literally giving up everything in our current place in history is overridden by Luke 22:35, 36.

- ³⁵ And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.” (Luke 22:35, 36)

Where does this leave us? What does Jesus expect from you? **He expects you to be who you are where you are.** Does Jesus want you as a Christian to sell your business, give it all to the poor, and go into another geographical location with a different ethnicity and culture in order to plant a church? Perhaps, but not from anything we have seen in Luke's Gospel. What we attempt to do is justify our actions or seek biblical direction by some passage of Scripture when the text cannot support such thinking. The Bible is not an Ouija board or a Magic 8 Ball that gives us direction and answers to our various decisions. Our gathering on Sunday is not a séance where we find God's will.

The Bible is a revelation of Jesus. The Bible tells us what Jesus is doing in and through His church. Let me strive for clarity. **We come to hear God's will and His call and what God's will and call is for your life is to be who you are where you are. God's will and call is doing the hard stuff of getting up every day and living out His *Story* in your story.** God's will and call is for you to be who you are where you are.

The advancement of the Mission did not move forward by the skills of a few professionals, but in the coming and going of the common person.

Think with me on this matter. If every Christian business individual who transferred to China for work began living out the gospel, the mission force would increase exponentially. We can replicate this pattern in every area of the globe.³ Missions must become indigenous. **Missions happens when ordinary people simply be who they are where they are.** There are strategies we might employ as a church to carry out the mission more effectively, but let us not

default to our creative means. **The gospel has gone global through the means of ordinary people simply living out the extraordinary gospel.**

The apologist Tertullian lived at the end of the 2nd century AD. In his work *Apologeticus*, Tertullian defends Christianity, demanding legal toleration and that Christians be treated as all other sects of the Roman Empire. It is in this treatise that one finds the phrase: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (*Apologeticus*, Chapter 50).⁴

ISIS is slaughtering Christians in Iraq and Syria.

- Christians are the most persecuted religious group worldwide. An average of at least 180 Christians around the world are killed each month for their faith. (Source: Open Doors USA)
- Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Christ. (Source: U.S. Department of State)
- One of the worst countries in the world for the persecution of Christians is North Korea. With the exception of four official state-controlled churches in Pyongyang, Christians in North Korea face the risk of detention in the prison camps, severe torture and, in some cases, execution for practicing their religious beliefs. North Koreans suspected of having contact with South Korean or other foreign missionaries in China, and those caught in possession of a Bible, have been known to be executed. (Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)

- In 41 of the 50 worst nations for persecution, Christians are being persecuted by Islamic extremists. (Source: Open Doors)⁵
- When we pray for those in prison for their faith, we remember that the gospel came to us in letters written from jail. When we plead for those whose churches are burned in Egypt, we remember that our hope isn't in building religious empires but in a New Jerusalem we've never seen. **When we weep for those crucified in Syria, we remember that our Lord isn't a guru or a life coach, but a crucified Christ.**
- As we worship this week in freedom and prosperity, let us remember in prayer our brothers and sisters in the Lord, around the world, who are suffering for Jesus' name.⁶

Yet the gospel wins. **There are stories of ordinary people being who they are where they are that we will never hear of**, yet God is working in them and through them to those around them. ISIS will not win. ISIS has already lost. ISIS is simply the serpent's seed raging against the seed of the woman and that battle has already been settled.

Friend, you and I are the ordinary through whom God does the extraordinary work of the gospel in the saving of sinners. He is fulfilling His Vision through you and me.

Many of us have heard the names of such people like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, George Muller, Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Goforth, Amy Carmichael, Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and Eric Liddell. Yet how many of us are familiar with our own church history?

In 1950, John and Esther Fiddler and their family found their way to Waukesha from Chicago where they were members at Moody Church. Earlier, John had been involved in church planting in Argentina, so he took the initiative. In December of 1950, several men met in his home to discuss the need for a Bible-oriented church here in town. That evening a decision was made to form a new fellowship to be called Waukesha Bible Church. At the second annual meeting in November 1952 with membership at 37, a special offering completed payment on the lots. In February 1953, a "Kick Off" dinner was held in the Avalon Hotel and bond subscriptions of \$15,000 were received and groundbreaking was authorized.

How many of us know of Fred Alden, Marion Brooks, Chuck Cronin, Harold and Ruth Elder, or John and Bev Hillmer or the forty-one others who were members of this church in 1954? It does not matter who knows you. Chances are when you die you will soon be forgotten, yet the gospel wins and one day you will stand before God and He will show you what He did in you and through you to those around you to the glory of God the Father.

Shepherding the Sheep (What is the Next Step?)

Each of you by your presence, by your giving, and by your serving are part of something extraordinary. The Gospel of Luke does not ask us to be extraordinary. The extraordinary is the work God does in saving sinners. **The gospel invites us to be who we are where we are and in so doing, the gospel has encircled the globe.** Let us stop thinking we are losing or the devil is winning and start realizing God is winning and His victory is our victory.

Let us go to church and gather with other Christians for our joy.

Let us learn the Scripture for our joy.

Let us pray for our joy.

Let us give for our joy and

Let us live in and out His *Story* in front of the unbelieving for their joy and ours.

What is the ordinary in your life where the extraordinary is taking place? See it, live it, and celebrate it. **Be who you are where you are by seeing your story inside of His.**

¹ When we read Luke 9:1ff, 9:57-62, 10:1ff, and 12:33 and the like, we must place them in the context of Passion Week. Such extraordinary means of selling everything and following Jesus is set in the context of His imminent death. If I had time, and I do not, we would see that the gospel invitation demands this of all and it is what we did when we came to Jesus. However, what they did in following Him in Mission is different from what we do in following Him in Mission.

² <http://www.worldwidetentmakers.com/education/what-is-a-tentmaker>

³ For further study in this area see, *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*, Mark Russell. *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*, Steven Rundle, Tom A. Steffen. *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Missions*, Patrick Lai.

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologeticus>

⁵ <http://erlc.com/issues/quick-facts/persecution/>

⁶ <http://erlc.com/persecution>



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