

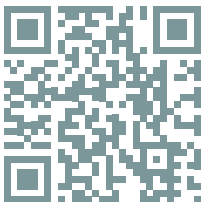
Parables
in the book of Luke
STUDY GUIDE

Weeks
6-11

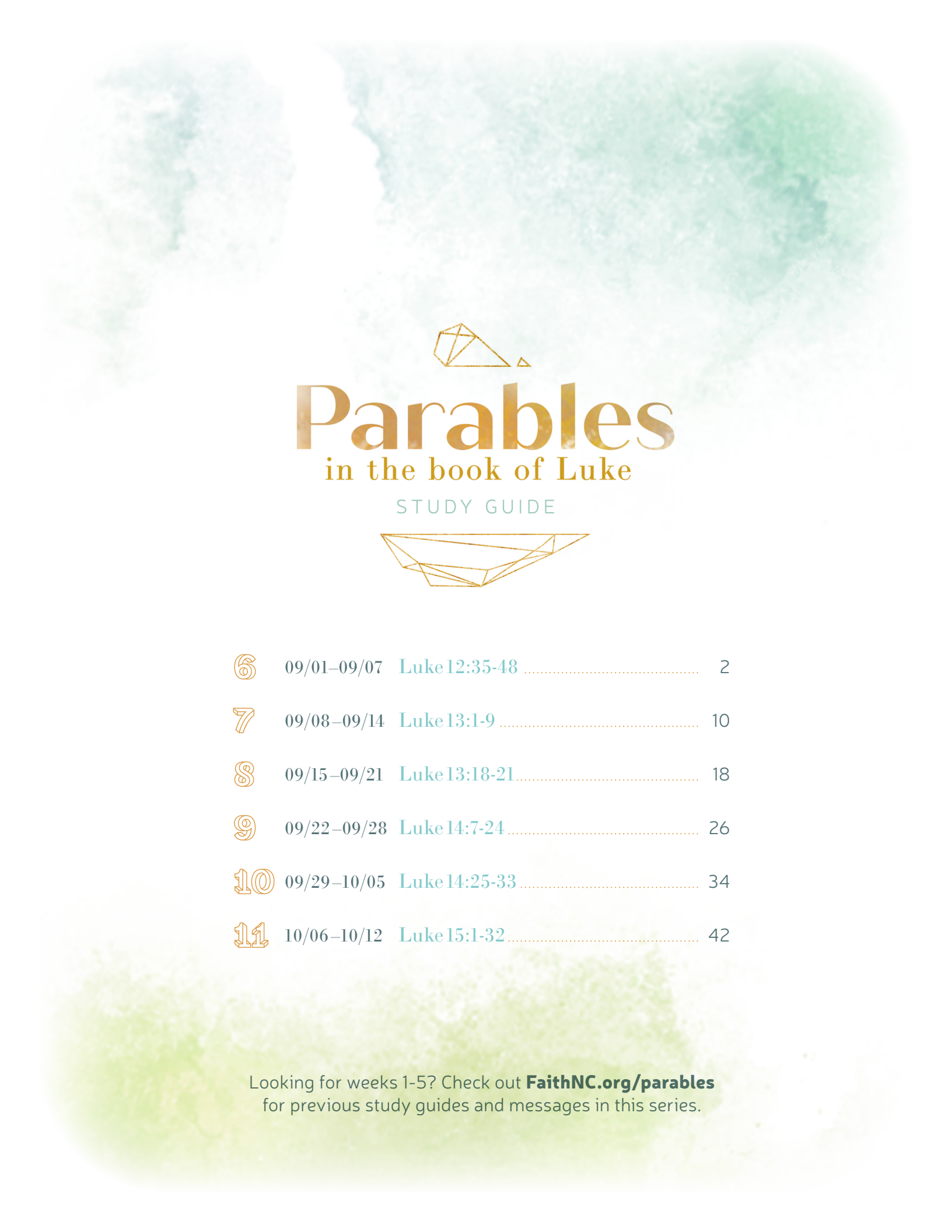
What is a Parable?

Throughout his earthly ministry, Jesus proved Himself to be the master teacher, and His preferred teaching method comes in the form of parables. A parable is a carefully designed metaphor in the form of a story. These stories make up over a third of the recorded sayings of Jesus found in the Bible. Jesus' use of these stories was intended to help his listeners understand spiritual truths by using real world images and scenarios. Professor and preacher Robert Smith, Jr. offers helpful insight on Jesus' use of parables when he writes, "The parables are saturated with doctrine, but they are theology in pictures... When Jesus used parables as a teaching device He was essentially using [stories] to illustrate and unfold sacred secrets of the kingdom of God. These parables were intended to do more than inform the mind; they were intended to provide the hearers with a picture to hang on the walls in the gallery of their minds." ¹

¹ Robert Smith Jr., *Doctrine that Dances: Bringing Doctrinal Preaching and Teaching to Life* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2008), 67-68.



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Parables

in the book of Luke

STUDY GUIDE



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Looking for weeks 1-5? Check out **FaithNC.org/parables**
for previous study guides and messages in this series.

Week 6

Luke 12:35-48

“Be ready for service and have your lamps lit. ³⁶ You are to be like people waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet so that when he comes and knocks, they can open the door for him at once. ³⁷ Blessed will be those servants the master finds alert when he comes. Truly I tell you, he will get ready, have them recline at the table, then come and serve them. ³⁸ If he comes in the middle of the night, or even near dawn, and finds them alert, blessed are those servants. ³⁹ But know this: If the homeowner had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

⁴¹ “Lord,” Peter asked, “are you telling this parable to us or to everyone?”

⁴² The Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible manager his master will put in charge of his household

servants to give them their allotted food at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying his coming,’ and starts to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, ⁴⁶ that servant’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unfaithful. ⁴⁷ And that servant who knew his master’s will and didn’t prepare himself or do it will be severely beaten. ⁴⁸ But the one who did not know and did what deserved punishment will receive a light beating. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be expected.

Week 6

SEPTEMBER 1-7

- ☐ Luke 12:35-48
- ☐ Ezekiel 33:1-9
- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

DAY 1 — Read Luke 12:35-48

What is the illustration that Jesus uses in this parable? Who are Christians compared to in verse 36? What quality is celebrated by Jesus in verses 37-38?

Why is the unpredictability of the master's return significant in this parable? If the master finds his servants living faithfully at his return, how does he treat them according to verse 37? What does this teach you about Jesus' return, and if you are a believer, how should it affect your daily life?

How would you describe the difference between a faithful and unfaithful servant according to verses 42-48? Having heard the gospel, how does the warning in verse 47 impact how you live?

Ezekiel 33:1-9

The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, speak to your people and tell them, ‘Suppose I bring the sword against a land, and the people of that land select a man from among them, appointing him as their watchman. ³ And suppose he sees the sword coming against the land and blows his ram’s horn to warn the people. ⁴ Then, if anyone hears the sound of the ram’s horn but ignores the warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his death will be his own fault. ⁵ Since he heard the sound of the ram’s horn but ignored the warning, his death is his own fault. If he had taken warning, he would have saved his life. ⁶ However, suppose the watchman sees the sword coming but doesn’t blow the ram’s horn, so that the people aren’t warned, and the sword comes

and takes away their lives. Then they have been taken away because of their iniquity, but I will hold the watchman accountable for their blood.’

⁷ “As for you, son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. When you hear a word from my mouth, give them a warning from me. ⁸ If I say to the wicked, ‘Wicked one, you will surely die,’ but you do not speak out to warn him about his way, that wicked person will die for his iniquity, yet I will hold you responsible for his blood. ⁹ But if you warn a wicked person to turn from his way and he doesn’t turn from it, he will die for his iniquity, but you will have rescued yourself.

DAY 2 — Read Ezekiel 33:1-9

What is the role of the watchman mentioned in verses 2-3? What determines if a watchman is useful or not according to this entire passage?

In what circumstance would the watchman be held responsible for an attack against those he's watching over? In what circumstance would those who are warned be held responsible for their fate (v. 4)?

How does this passage in Ezekiel compare to the parable in Luke 12:35-48? What do these passages together tell you about your responsibility to both respond to the gospel and share it with others?

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

About the times and the seasons: Brothers and sisters, you do not need anything to be written to you. ² For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. ³ When they say, "Peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, like labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. ⁴ But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the dark, for this day to surprise you like a thief. ⁵ For you are all children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or the darkness. ⁶ So then, let us not sleep, like

the rest, but let us stay awake and be self-controlled. ⁷ For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. ⁸ But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled and put on the armor of faith and love, and a helmet of the hope of salvation. ⁹ For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰ who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. ¹¹ Therefore encourage one another and build each other up as you are already doing.

DAY 3 — Read 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

What is the “day of the Lord” that Paul mentions referring to in verse 2? How should the suddenness of that day influence how we live today (vv. 6-7)?

Why does Paul describe Christians as “children of the light and children of the day” (v 5)? What other passages of Scripture come to mind when you hear this theme of God’s holiness being associated with light?

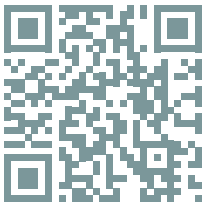
As children of the light who are called to be alert and self-controlled, how are we called to live among one another (v. 11)? How does this warning of the last day compare to Jesus’ teaching in Luke 12:35-48?

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Week 7

Luke 13:1-9

At that time, some people came and reported to him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² And he responded to them, “Do you think that these Galileans were more sinful than all the other Galileans because they suffered these things? ³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well. ⁴ Or those eighteen that the tower in Siloam fell on and killed—do you think they were more sinful than all the other people who live in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as well.”

⁶ And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree that was planted in his vineyard. He came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ He told the vineyard worker, ‘Listen, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree and haven’t found any. Cut it down! Why should it even waste the soil?’

⁸ “But he replied to him, ‘Sir, leave it this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. ⁹ Perhaps it will produce fruit next year, but if not, you can cut it down.’”

Understanding This Parable

Verses 1-4 mention two events that provide some context for the parable that Jesus tells in this passage. In verse 1, Pontius Pilate apparently had some Galilean Jews killed in the temple area, and that is why it is said that their blood “had mixed with their sacrifices.” In verse 4, Jesus mentions eighteen people who were killed when a tower collapsed on them. In both cases, people in the ancient world assumed that these deaths would have been consequences for specific sins. In response to this widespread belief, Jesus tells the parable of the fig tree found in verses 6-9.

Week 7

SEPTEMBER 8-14

- ☐ Luke 13:1-9
- ☐ Isaiah 5:1-7
- ☐ John 15:1-8

DAY 1 — Read Luke 13:1-9

How does Jesus respond to those who reported of the Galileans' deaths? What question does Jesus ask and answer in verses 2-3? How does He double down on this in verse 4? What does this reveal to you about the problem of humanity?

What is the fig tree representative of in this parable (v. 6)? How does the vineyard worker's response to the owner's order to cut down the tree help you understand Christ's intercession for humankind's disobedience?

What kind of fruit should be evident in a believer's life (see also Gal. 5:22-23)? How does this fruit begin to grow according to Jesus' warning in verses 3 and 5? What does the vineyard worker's final effort to cause the tree to produce fruit tell you about the urgency of Christ's call to repentance (v. 9)?

Isaiah 5:1-7

- I will sing about the one I love,
a song about my loved one's vineyard:
The one I love had a vineyard
on a very fertile hill.
- ² He broke up the soil, cleared it of stones,
and planted it with the finest vines.
He built a tower in the middle of it
and even dug out a winepress there.
He expected it to yield good grapes,
but it yielded worthless grapes.
- ³ So now, residents of Jerusalem
and men of Judah,
please judge between me
and my vineyard.
- ⁴ What more could I have done for my vineyard
than I did?
Why, when I expected a yield of good grapes,
did it yield worthless grapes?
- ⁵ Now I will tell you
what I am about to do to my vineyard:
I will remove its hedge,
and it will be consumed;
I will tear down its wall,
and it will be trampled.
- ⁶ I will make it a wasteland.
It will not be pruned or weeded;
thorns and briers will grow up.
I will also give orders to the clouds
that rain should not fall on it.
- ⁷ For the vineyard of the Lord of Armies
is the house of Israel,
and the men of Judah,
the plant he delighted in.
He expected justice
but saw injustice;
he expected righteousness
but heard cries of despair.

DAY 2 — Read **Isaiah 5:1-7**

Consider the images in this passage and those used in Luke 13:1-9. What similarities do you see? Is it a fair assumption of the vineyard owner in Isaiah that his vines would yield good grapes given the work he did to prepare the field (v. 2)?

What question does the Lord ask in verse 4? Do you ever feel as if God has not done enough or could do more for you? Does that feeling change when you consider the sacrifice and suffering of Christ on the cross? Why or why not?

Compare the beginning of this passage to the end in verses 5-7. How does the unfruitfulness of the lives of God's people lead Him to respond in judgment? What do these passages in Luke and Isaiah tell you about the danger of spiritual complacency?

John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. ² Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. ⁴ Remain in me, and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me. ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in

me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me. ⁶ If anyone does not remain in me, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers. They gather them, throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you. ⁸ My Father is glorified by this: that you produce much fruit and prove to be my disciples.

DAY 3 — Read John 15:1-8

Consider the images Jesus uses in this teaching to His disciples. Who is represented by the gardener? The branches? The vine?

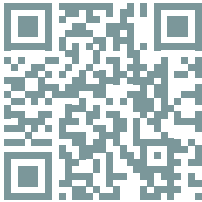
What does it mean to “bear fruit” as mentioned throughout this passage? What is the key to producing fruit as taught by Jesus in verses 4-5? Is there anything that’s hindering your connection to Jesus? How does the “remaining in Jesus” in this passage connect to the “repentance” He calls us to in Luke 13?

What is the warning given for those who do not produce fruit? How does this warning in verses 2 and 6 compare to the warnings given in both the Luke and Isaiah passages you read earlier? What do all of these passages together reveal to you about God’s character and your need to know Him?

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Week 8

Luke 13:18-21

He said, therefore, “What is the kingdom of God like, and what can I compare it to? ¹⁹ It’s like a mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his garden. It grew and became a tree, and the birds of the sky nested in its branches.”

²⁰ Again he said, “What can I compare the kingdom of God to? ²¹ It’s like leaven that a woman took and mixed into fifty pounds of flour until all of it was leavened.”



SEPTEMBER 15-21

☐ Luke 13:18-21

☐ Acts 1:1-11

☐ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

DAY 1 — Read Luke 13:18-21

What two illustrations does Jesus compare the Kingdom of God to in this parable? Do these feel like appropriate things to describe the Kingdom of God? Why or why not?

What does the parable of the mustard seed and leaven tell you about the growth and advancement of God's Kingdom? How does the picture of the fully grown tree and fifty pounds of leavened flour help you understand the nature and speed of God's work in transforming lives through faith in Christ?

How can you participate in the advancement of God's Kingdom in small, faithful ways while entrusting Him with the growth?

Acts 1:1-11

I wrote the first narrative, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach ² until the day he was taken up, after he had given instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. ³ After he had suffered, he also presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

⁴ While he was with them, he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for the Father's promise. "Which," he said, "you have heard me speak about; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit in a few days."

⁶ So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?"

⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

⁹ After he had said this, he was taken up as they were watching, and a cloud took him out of their sight.

¹⁰ While he was going, they were gazing into heaven, and suddenly two men in white clothes stood by them.

¹¹ They said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up into heaven? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come in the same way that you have seen him going into heaven."

DAY 2 — Read Acts 1:1-11

Summarize the events described in verses 1-3. What is the command that Jesus gives to the disciples in verses 4-5? How is their lack of patience revealed in verse 6? Do you ever struggle to wait on the Lord's promises to be fulfilled?

What is Jesus' command to the disciples in verse 8? When He gives this command, there are only 11 disciples. Does this seem like a reasonable outcome given the number of followers that Jesus has at this time? What is the key to their ability to be His witnesses (v. 8)?

After Jesus' ascension into heaven, what do the angels say to the disciples in verse 11? Compare this small group of men to the number of Christians that exist today. How does the growth of the Kingdom that we have seen throughout history compare to the parables of the mustard seed and leaven in Luke 13?

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

For my part, brothers and sisters, I was not able to speak to you as spiritual people but as people of the flesh, as babies in Christ. ² I gave you milk to drink, not solid food, since you were not yet ready for it. In fact, you are still not ready, ³ because you are still worldly. For since there is envy and strife among you, are you not worldly and behaving like mere humans? ⁴ For whenever someone says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not acting like mere humans?

⁵ What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. ⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷ So, then, neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸ Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. ⁹ For we are God’s coworkers. You are God’s field, God’s building.

DAY 3 — Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9

What prevented Paul from speaking to the Corinthians as mature Christians (v. 1)? What were the signs of their spiritual immaturity according to verses 3-4? Is there any spiritual immaturity in your life that you need to grow out of as you grow into Christlikeness?

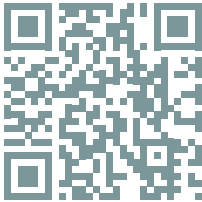
Who is it that causes Christians to grow spiritually according to verses 5-6? Consider Paul's illustration in verse 9 that you are "God's field." In what ways is the Lord growing you in holiness right now?

Like the growth of a mustard seed and the leavening of bread, much of the growth that happens in Christians may be slow and not initially seen. How can you trust God to do the work of transforming your life and the lives of others even if it may be slow and initially unseen?

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Week

9

Luke 14:7-24

He told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they would choose the best places for themselves: ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, don’t sit in the place of honor, because a more distinguished person than you may have been invited by your host. ⁹ The one who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give your place to this man,’ and then in humiliation, you will proceed to take the lowest place.

¹⁰ “But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when the one who invited you comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ You will then be honored in the presence of all the other guests. ¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

¹² He also said to the one who had invited him, “When you give a lunch or a dinner, don’t invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors, because they might invite you back, and you would be repaid. ¹³ On the contrary, when you host a banquet, invite those who are poor, maimed, lame, or blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

¹⁵ When one of those who reclined at the table with him heard these things, he said to him, “Blessed is the one who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!”

¹⁶ Then he told him, “A man was giving a large banquet and invited many. ¹⁷ At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who were invited, ‘Come, because everything is now ready.’

¹⁸ “But without exception they all began to make excuses. The first one said to him, ‘I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. I ask you to excuse me.’

¹⁹ “Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m going to try them out. I ask you to excuse me.’

²⁰ “And another said, ‘I just got married, and therefore I’m unable to come.’

²¹ “So the servant came back and reported these things to his master. Then in anger, the master of the house told his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the city, and bring in here the poor, maimed, blind, and lame.’

²² “‘Master,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, and there’s still room.’

²³ “Then the master told the servant, ‘Go out into the highways and hedges and make them come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, not one of those people who were invited will enjoy my banquet.’”

DAY 1 — Read Luke 14:7-24

Paraphrase the situation that Jesus describes in verses 7-11. Has there been a time when you thought of yourself more highly than you should have? What was a social implication of doing this according to verse 9? What is the spiritual implication of not being humble?

If verses 7-11 impact the way we view ourselves, how do verses 12-14 influence the way we view others? What kinds of people should we be hospitable and kind towards according to verse 13? Why, according to verse 14? How do your motives in serving others align with these verses?

How do those invited to the banquet respond to the invitation in verses 16-24? Were any of their excuses valid? How does this story illustrate the kinds of things that distract us from accepting the invitation into God's Kingdom?

Philippians 2:1-11

If, then, there is any encouragement in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ² make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility consider others as more important than yourselves. ⁴ Everyone should look not to his own interests, but rather to the interests of others.

⁵ Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus,

⁶ who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited.

⁷ Instead he emptied himself by assuming the form of a servant, taking on the likeness of humanity.

⁸ And when he had come as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross.

⁹ For this reason God highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name,

¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven and on earth

and under the earth—

¹¹ and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

DAY 2 — Read **Philippians 2:1-11**

Whose mindset and attitude are Christians called to adopt in these verses? How would you summarize that attitude in one word? Why?

What does it mean that Jesus “existed in the form of God, [but] did not consider equality with God as something to be exploited” (v. 6)? What does that tell you about Jesus’ nature (who He is) and His character (how He lives)?

How does Jesus ultimately showcase His humility according to verse 8? What was the result of this according to verses 9-11? If we are commanded to have this same type of humility, what does it look like for you to be sacrificial in every area of your life for others?

James 2:1-9

My brothers and sisters, do not show favoritism as you hold on to the faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ. ² For if someone comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and a poor person dressed in filthy clothes also comes in, ³ if you look with favor on the one wearing the fine clothes and say, “Sit here in a good place,” and yet you say to the poor person, “Stand over there,” or “Sit here on the floor by my footstool,” ⁴ haven’t you made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

⁵ Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Didn’t God choose the poor in this world to be rich in faith and

heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? ⁶ Yet you have dishonored the poor. Don’t the rich oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷ Don’t they blaspheme the good name that was invoked over you?

⁸ Indeed, if you fulfill the royal law prescribed in the Scripture, Love your neighbor as yourself, you are doing well. ⁹ If, however, you show favoritism, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

DAY 3 — Read James 2:1-9

What is James warning believers against in these verses? What is causing this kind of favoritism according to verses 2-4? Why is this such a bad thing? How does this kind of attitude compare to the people mentioned in Luke 14:7-11?

According to verse 5, has God shown merit-based favoritism? What kind of people does God honor according to this same verse? How is this treatment of kindness different from the sin of favoritism described earlier?

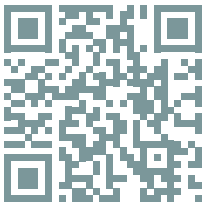
If you were to bring all of your wealth, achievement, and knowledge before God, how impressed do you think He would be with you? Consider the kinds of people that were invited to the banquet in Luke 14:12-14, the mindset we're called to adopt in Philippians 2, and now this warning against favoritism in James. What is the attitude that we should have before God according to all of these passages?

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Week 10

Luke 14:25–33

Now great crowds were traveling with him. So he turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, and even his own life—he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “For which of you, wanting to build a tower, doesn’t first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, after he has laid the foundation and cannot finish it, all the onlookers

will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man started to build and wasn’t able to finish.’

³¹ “Or what king, going to war against another king, will not first sit down and decide if he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² If not, while the other is still far off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace.

³³ In the same way, therefore, every one of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.

- ☐ Luke 14:25-33
- ☐ Genesis 22:1-18
- ☐ Ephesians 4:17-24

DAY 1 — Read Luke 14:25-33

Which of the things mentioned in verses 25-27 has the highest probability of limiting your relationship with Jesus: your family, your relationships, or the love of your own life? What does Jesus mean when He calls us to “bear our own cross” (v. 27)? Are there any desires or parts of your life that you need to submit to the authority of Jesus? If so, will you submit them to Him?

How do the illustrations of the builder and the king highlight the seriousness of following Jesus (vv. 28-33)? What are things you have considered as worthy costs to give to follow Jesus? Does following Jesus cost us everything or nothing?

What does it look like practically to “renounce all [your] possessions” to be Jesus’ disciple (v. 33)? How can you regularly assess your priorities to ensure that nothing is placed above Jesus in your life?

Genesis 22:1-18

After these things God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham!"

"Here I am," he answered.

² "Take your son," he said, "your only son Isaac, whom you love, go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about."

³ So Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took with him two of his young men and his son Isaac. He split wood for a burnt offering and set out to go to the place God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. ⁵ Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go over there to worship; then we'll come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and laid it on his son Isaac. In his hand he took the fire and the knife, and the two of them walked on together.

⁷ Then Isaac spoke to his father Abraham and said, "My father."

And he replied, "Here I am, my son."

Isaac said, "The fire and the wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." Then the two of them walked on together.

⁹ When they arrived at the place that God had told him about, Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood. He bound his son Isaac and placed him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Then Abraham reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!"

He replied, "Here I am."

¹² Then he said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy or do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me."

¹³ Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram and offered it as a burnt offering in place of his son. ¹⁴ And Abraham named that place The Lord Will Provide, so today it is said, "It will be provided on the Lord's mountain."

¹⁵ Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "By myself I have sworn," this is the Lord's declaration: "Because you have done this thing and have not withheld your only son, ¹⁷ I will indeed bless you and make your offspring as numerous as the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your offspring will possess the city gates of their enemies. ¹⁸ And all the nations of the earth will be blessed by your offspring because you have obeyed my command."

DAY 2 — Read **Genesis 22:1-18**

What does God ask Abraham to do in verse 2? Is this a surprising request? Why or why not?

How does Abraham respond in verse 3? What would you do if you were in Abraham's shoes? While walking in obedience, what does Isaac and Abraham's conversation in verses 7-8 tell you about Abraham's faith?

What happens after Abraham builds the altar in verses 9-14? What does this reveal about God seeing the whole event play out? How does this story put into perspective what Jesus is calling believers to in Luke 14 when He says we should "count the cost" of being His disciple?

Ephesians 4:17-24

Therefore, I say this and testify in the Lord: You should no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thoughts. ¹⁸ They are darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them and because of the hardness of their hearts. ¹⁹ They became callous and gave themselves over to promiscuity for the practice of every kind of impurity with a desire for more and more.

²⁰ But that is not how you came to know Christ, ²¹ assuming you heard about him and were taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²² to take off your former way of life, the old self that is corrupted by deceitful desires, ²³ to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴ and to put on the new self, the one created according to God's likeness in righteousness and purity of the truth.

DAY 3 — Read Ephesians 4:17-24

What does Paul say about why the Gentiles (that is, “unbelievers”) live unrighteously in verses 17-19? How can living exactly the way you want prevent you from living for God’s glory?

What is the command that Paul gives in verses 22-23? Whose likeness is the new self created after according to verse 24? How does this “taking off” of the old self compare to Jesus’ call to leave everything behind to follow Him?

Are there any deceitful desires (v. 22) lingering in your heart that are at odds with your new self that is committed to Christ? How does “bearing your own cross” from Luke 14 reflect this process of putting off the old self described here in Ephesians?

Message Notes _____

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Week 11

Luke 15:1-32

All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

³ So he told them this parable: ⁴ “What man among you, who has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it? ⁵ When he has found it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, ⁶ and coming home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, saying to them, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!’ ⁷ I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don’t need repentance.

⁸ “Or what woman who has ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹ When she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, because I have found the silver coin I lost!’ ¹⁰ I tell you, in the same way, there is joy in the presence of God’s angels over one sinner who repents.”

¹¹ He also said, “A man had two sons. ¹² The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.’ So he distributed the assets to them. ¹³ Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. ¹⁵ Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. ¹⁷ When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my fa-

ther’s hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! ¹⁸ I’ll get up, go to my father, and say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. ¹⁹ I’m no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.’”

²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. ²¹ The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I’m no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father told his servants, ‘Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let’s celebrate with a feast, ²⁴ because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. ²⁷ ‘Your brother is here,’ he told him, ‘and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “Then he became angry and didn’t want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he replied to his father, ‘Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.’

³¹ “‘Son,’ he said to him, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Week 11

OCTOBER 6-12

- ☐ Luke 15:1-32
- ☐ Ezekiel 34:1-16
- ☐ Matthew 23:1-15

DAY 1 — Read Luke 15:1-32

What is the setting for Jesus' telling this parable according to verses 1-2? Based on these verses, what do you think the common theme is that ties these three stories (the lost coin, lost sheep, and prodigal son) together?

What (or who) do the lost coin, sheep, and son represent in these stories? What is the reaction of their owners/parents when each of these are restored to them? According to verses 7, 10, and 24, what spiritual reality are these characters in the story helping you to understand?

How does the "older son" react when he learns of his brother's return in verses 25-31? Compare this son's reaction to the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees in verses 1-2. What is Jesus communicating to them by telling this parable? Are you more prone to view people like Jesus or the scribes and Pharisees?

Ezekiel 34:1-16

The word of the Lord came to me: ² “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy, and say to them, ‘This is what the Lord God says to the shepherds: Woe to the shepherds of Israel, who have been feeding themselves! Shouldn’t the shepherds feed their flock?’ ³ You eat the fat, wear the wool, and butcher the fattened animals, but you do not tend the flock. ⁴ You have not strengthened the weak, healed the sick, bandaged the injured, brought back the strays, or sought the lost. Instead, you have ruled them with violence and cruelty. ⁵ They were scattered for lack of a shepherd; they became food for all the wild animals when they were scattered. ⁶ My flock went astray on all the mountains and every high hill. My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and there was no one searching or seeking for them.

⁷ “Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. ⁸ As I live—this is the declaration of the Lord God—because my flock, lacking a shepherd, has become prey and food for every wild animal, and because my shepherds do not search for my flock, and because the shepherds feed themselves rather than my flock, ⁹ therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord!

¹⁰ “‘This is what the Lord God says: Look, I am against the shepherds. I will demand my flock from them and prevent them from shepherding the flock. The shepherds will no longer feed themselves, for I will rescue my flock from their mouths so that they will not be food for them.

¹¹ “‘For this is what the Lord God says: See, I myself will search for my flock and look for them. ¹² As a shepherd looks for his sheep on the day he is among his scattered flock, so I will look for my flock. I will rescue them from all the places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and total darkness. ¹³ I will bring them out from the peoples, gather them from the countries, and bring them to their own soil. I will shepherd them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines, and in all the inhabited places of the land. ¹⁴ I will tend them in good pasture, and their grazing place will be on Israel’s lofty mountains. There they will lie down in a good grazing place; they will feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵ I will tend my flock and let them lie down. This is the declaration of the Lord God. ¹⁶ I will seek the lost, bring back the strays, bandage the injured, and strengthen the weak, but I will destroy the fat and the strong. I will shepherd them with justice.

DAY 2 — Read Ezekiel 34:1-16

Who are the shepherds that God addresses in verses 1-9? Who is their flock? Is God pleased or displeased with these shepherds? Why?

Based on verses 2-4, what should the shepherds have been doing for the flock of Israel? How does God respond to their negligence of His sheep according to verse 10? What does this lead God to do in verses 11-16?

Compare God's pursuit of His sheep to the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15. What do these passages together reveal about God? How are you encouraged knowing that God shepherds you as you are in Christ?

Matthew 23:1-15

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples:

² “The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses. ³ Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don’t do what they do, because they don’t practice what they teach. ⁴ They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves aren’t willing to lift a finger to move them. ⁵ They do everything to be seen by others: They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. ⁶ They love the place of honor at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues, ⁷ greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by people.

⁸ “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ because you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. ⁹ Do not call anyone on earth your father, because you have

one Father, who is in heaven. ¹⁰ You are not to be called instructors either, because you have one Instructor, the Messiah. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

¹³ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.

¹⁵ “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

DAY 3 — Read **Matthew 23:1-15**

How would you describe Jesus' attitude towards the Pharisees in these verses? How is it that the religious leaders would "tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people's shoulders" (v. 4)? Is this literal, or is Jesus using figurative language to describe something else?

How would you summarize the primary complaint that Jesus has against the scribes and Pharisees in these verses? If someone were to examine your life, where would you fail to be a faithful witness to our holy God? How can you depend on the Lord rather than simply trying to do better (v. 12)?

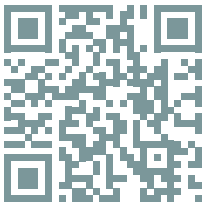
Compare this rebuke of the Pharisees to the attitude they display in Luke 15:1-2. How did these religious leaders tend to respond to sinners? How should we respond to sinners in light of these warnings from Jesus and the parables in Luke 15?

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