

Luke Scripture Study: "Witness to Jesus" Part 2

Luke 10-24

New Revised Standard Version

10 Studies

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– Bob Grahmann, editor

Introduction

This is the second in a series of three small-group Bible study discussion guides (Luke 1-9, Luke 10-24 and selected portions of Acts) which explore the meaning of “witness.” These are designed to accomplish two purposes. One is simply to strengthen believers as witnesses to the work and life of Jesus, both in history and in their lives. The second is to serve as preparation for URBANA® 96. The Gospel of Luke is a fascinating account of Jesus and those who witnessed his life. Luke tells the story of Jesus—and what that story means for us—in an interesting, accurate and reliable way. May God give your small group rich and rewarding insights as you study his Word together!

These guides look at Jesus through the eyes of those who actually witnessed him, and then told their story. The studies use the inductive method, a way of looking into the text for the facts, then pondering what they mean, and then considering what they mean for our situation today.

Notes for the Discussion Leader

- Each study guide will have a copy of the notes and then following a copy of the scripture passage ready to print.
- You only need to print the notes for yourself and the passage for your entire study.
- A printed copy of the scripture passage is helpful for students who may not own a bible.
- *Helpful leader’s notes are in italics throughout the guide*
- Put the questions into your own words if you’d like, yet try to stay within the intent of each question.
- Since the questions are based on the construction of the passage, they will lead the group to major teachings. Decide how much discussion time each group of questions is worth. This will help you pace the discussion.
- Make sure that each study ends with one or two questions of application, even if that means watching the clock and leaving out a few of the suggested questions.
- Pray for the members of your group—that they’ll be prepared and open for the study-discussion, and that God would speak powerfully to them as they dig into his Word together.

Helpful hints for effective discussion:

- Approach the Bible as you would any good primary source: be open to learn.

- Let the text speak for itself rather than depending on something you've heard or read about it.
- Expect the text, rather than the leader, to answer questions that come up.
- Stay in the passage. On occasion, when background information is necessary, the study guide may refer the group to another passage. But that is the only time to go out of the passage. Don't go off on tangents into different passages.
- Stay on the point under discussion.
- Keep in mind that each person's part in the discussion helps the group to learn more. People who talk easily in discussion can provide for quieter people to contribute also. God can use what each one says to help the rest of us. And we can honor each other by listening to each other.
- Begin and end on time.
- The second time the group meets, it may be helpful to run lightly over these guidelines again.

Study 1: Luke 10:1-24

The Seventy: Witnesses on a Mission

Written by John Seiders

Getting Started: Picture yourself ready to go on a mission trip with your church or fellowship. Why would you go? How would you prepare? What would you say to those whom you'd meet? In this passage, Jesus is on his way from Galilee to Jerusalem and has just taught about true discipleship and the kingdom of God. Some of those who heard him and want to follow him are about to be sent out on a mission. In this study we'll explore what it is like to be a witness sent on a mission.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read Luke 10:1-24. In verses 1-12, what do we learn about the seventy followers and the purpose of their mission? How are they to prepare? What is their message? How will their needs be met? (*Note: Some ancient authorities read "seventy-two." Whatever the number, the point is that they were sent ahead of Jesus.*)
2. What do you think Jesus means in verse 3 when he says that he sends them out "like lambs in the midst of wolves?" How can you relate to this metaphor? What are your feelings as you seek to be a witness on campus?
3. In verses 3-7, what is Jesus trying to teach about being witnesses?
4. What does "the kingdom of God" mean in verses 9 and 11? How is it that the kingdom of God comes near? (*Note: The kingdom is the reign or rule of God in the lives of people.*)
5. In verses 10-12 and 13-16, Jesus speaks of rejection. How are these seventy to deal with the rejection they will receive? What or whom are these inhospitable people ultimately rejecting?
6. Verses 17-20 recount the return of those who were sent out. How do they describe their mission experience? What are they excited about? How does Jesus respond to their report?
7. What is to be the source of the disciples' joy? Why? What is the source of Jesus' joy (verses 21-22)? How do we come to know the Father?
8. In a private word to the disciples (verses 23-24), Jesus talks about what they have seen and heard. They were witnesses. What did they see and hear?

In Closing: In what situations is Jesus calling you to bear witness to the nearness of the kingdom of God? What will it mean for you to respond to his call? In what can you rejoice?

Study 1: Luke 10:1-24

1 After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. **2** He said to them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. **3** Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. **4** Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. **5** Whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this house!' **6** And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you. **7** Remain in the same house, eating and drinking whatever they provide, for the laborer deserves to be paid. Do not move about from house to house. **8** Whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; **9** cure the sick who are there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' **10** But whenever you enter a town and they do not welcome you, go out into its streets and say, **11** 'Even the dust of your town that clings to our feet, we wipe off in protest against you. Yet know this: the kingdom of God has come near.' **12** I tell you, on that day it will be more tolerable for Sodom than for that town. **13** "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the deeds of power done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. **14** But at the judgment it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon than for you. **15** And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? No, you will be brought

down to Hades. **16** "Whoever listens to you listens to me, and whoever rejects you rejects me, and whoever rejects me rejects the one who sent me." **17** The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" **18** He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. **19** See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you. **20** Nevertheless, do not rejoice at this, that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." **21** At that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. **22** All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, or who the Father is except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." **23** Then turning to the disciples, Jesus said to them privately, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you see! **24** For I tell you that many prophets and kings desired to see what you see, but did not see it, and to hear what you hear, but did not hear it."

Study 2: Luke 11:53-12:11

Authentic and Hypocritical Witnesses

Written by Jean Duerbeck

Getting started: You've heard it said, "Churches are full of hypocrites." Why is this accusation so common? Could someone accuse you of being hypocritical? Earlier in Luke 11, Jesus upbraided the Pharisees and experts in the Law for their callous and self-centered attitudes, saying they are actually opposing, rather than serving, God. The battle lines are drawn as our passage begins.

Discussion Questions

1. Read Luke 11:53–12:12. Verses 53-54 set the tone for this passage. What words indicate how the Pharisees and teachers feel about Jesus? Describe the scene 12:1. (*Note: It was dangerous to gather large crowds during this period of Roman occupation.*)
2. Jesus first warns about the Pharisees. What is "hypocrisy"? How is their hypocrisy like yeast?
3. Find the contrasts in verses 2-3. What is Jesus saying about secretive acts? Who is the "you" of verse 3? How might these people—and we ourselves—feel about personal secrets being revealed?
4. Next Jesus teaches about fear (verses 4-5). According to Jesus, who is the only one worthy of fear? Why? What do verses 6-7 add about God's character, authority, and care? (*Note: Sparrows were cheap food for the poor.*)
5. According to verses 8-12, what does Jesus promise to those who "acknowledge" him before others? What does it mean to you to acknowledge Jesus before others? How is this being a "witness"?
6. What might cause a person to deny Jesus before others (verse 9)?
7. Verse 10 indicates that there is forgiveness for those who may speak against Jesus, yet not for those who "blaspheme against the Holy Spirit." What is the difference? (*Note: To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit does not mean, as some students fear, a single act of sin or letting a bad word or two about the Holy Spirit slip out. It means consistently denying the Holy Spirit's power working in Jesus [see Luke 11:15-16 for an example of this]. It means to say an eternal "no!" to Jesus, to deny that he is Lord, Savior and God. By definition, a believer committed to Jesus as Lord, Savior and God in daily life has not committed this blasphemy.*)
8. This section indicates that successive generations of believers in Jesus will inherit the battle against hypocritical authorities. What does Jesus promise

when we are forced to be witnesses before rulers and authorities? What is our responsibility?

In closing: Who are the rulers and authorities in your daily life? Describe a situation you are in right now in which you must acknowledge Jesus before others. How might you handle it? Take time to pray for one another.

Study 2: Luke 11:53-12:11

⁵³When he went outside, the scribes and the Pharisees began to be very hostile toward him and to cross-examine him about many things, ⁵⁴lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say. ^{12.1}Meanwhile, when the crowd gathered by the thousands, so that they trampled on one another, he began to speak first to his disciples, "Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees, that is, their hypocrisy. ²Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ³Therefore whatever you have said in the dark will be heard in the light, and what you have whispered behind closed doors will be proclaimed from the housetops. ⁴"I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that can do nothing more. ⁵But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! ⁶Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten in God's sight. ⁷But even the hairs of your head are all counted. Do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ⁸"And I tell you, everyone who acknowledges me before others, the Son of Man also will acknowledge before the angels of God; ⁹but whoever denies me before others will be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven. ¹¹When they bring you before the synagogues, the rulers, and the authorities, do not worry about how you are to defend yourselves or what you are to say.

Study 3: Luke 15:1-2; 11-32

The Prodigal Son: Witness as Story

Written by Bob Grahmann

Getting started: Think of a time when someone extended “grace” to you: they could have blamed you or shamed you but they didn’t. They gave you love and understanding when you deserved something else. How did it feel? This is the story of a father’s grace which witnesses to God’s grace in Jesus.

Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage aloud. Take a look at verses 1-2, which set the scene for all the stories in the chapter. What is Jesus doing, and why are the “Pharisees and teachers of the law” upset about it? How do they show their disgust? (*“Grumbling.”*)
2. In answer to their grumbling, Jesus tells three stories about people or things that are lost and then found, and about the joy that comes when one sinner repents. We are going to look at the third story, about a father and his son, starting at verse 11.
 - a. In verses 11-12, what does the young son ask for? How does he ask? (*Demandingly! Note: Scholars say that asking for one’s inheritance before one’s father has died was unusual in that society, and was quite arrogant and rude.*)
3. How does the father respond in verse 12b? How do you think he feels?
4. Now look at the description of the son’s adventures in verses 13-16. What words in that paragraph describe the fact that he is really a “sinner”? (*Note the words “squandered,” “dissolute [wild, riotous] living,” “feeding pigs.” Look also at verse 30.*) For a Jewish person, what is especially sinful and disgusting about what he does in verses 15-16? (*Pigs were “unclean” animals, and God had forbidden the Jews to eat pork.*) According to verse 16, what effect is the son’s wasteful, sinful lifestyle finally having on him?
5. In verses 17-20, what words and phrases describe what “repentance” is for this young man? (*“He came to himself” [or, “he came to his senses”]; a verbal acknowledgment of his sin in verse 18; an awareness of his unworthiness in verse 19; “set off and went” in verse 20.*) How do your observations describe what true repentance is? (*Seeing one’s sin, seeing one’s unworthiness, confessing sin, turning away from sin.*)
6. Look at the father’s reaction in verse 20. What clues do you find that show the father has been waiting for his son’s return? (*“But while he was still far off, his father saw him . . .”*) In verses 20-24, what strong, emotional words do you see

that describe an extravagant welcome? What did the son do to deserve such a wonderful welcome? Why did the father welcome him like this?

7. Jesus' answer to the grumbling Pharisees and teachers is found in verses 25-32. In some ways the older brother in this story represents them. How does the older brother respond to this wonderful, undeserved welcome? What does the father say in return? Along with verses 7 and 10, how is this an answer from Jesus to the Pharisees who opposed his welcoming of sinners?

In Closing: Think again about the loving father. How does he show God's grace? (*Watching for His son to come back, throwing his arms around him in welcoming love, asking for nothing in return in order to earn or keep his love.*) Put yourself in the son's place. How does it feel to have the heavenly Father hugging you, enclosing you in his loving arms, even though you don't deserve it?

Study 3: Luke 15:1-2; 11-32

1 Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. **2** And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." **11** Then Jesus said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. **13** A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. **14** When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. **16** He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. **17** But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.'" **20** So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. **21** Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—

the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23**

And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; **24** for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.

25 “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** He called one of the slaves and asked what was going

on. **27** He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf,

because he has got him back safe and sound.’ **28** Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. **29** But he answered his

father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours came back, who

has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ **31**

Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is

yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

Study 4: Luke 18:35-43

The Blind Man: A Grateful Witness

Written by Al and Sue Anderson

Getting Started: Have you ever received a product or service so good that you enjoyed telling people about it and encouraged them to get it, too? Think about your favorite movie, book, restaurant or music, or your most enjoyable vacation. Think of places where you have received excellent service. Part of the joy you receive comes in sharing it with others. As a discussion opener, ask people to tell about a wonderful experience they have shared with others. In this passage, a blind man receives the joy of new-found sight. The healing and the new life which this blind man experiences are duplicated many times over as he testifies to God's goodness and leads others to praise God too.

Discussion Questions

1. Read the passage aloud. Who are the characters? What seem to be their primary concerns?
2. In verses 38-39, what does the blind man do to attract Jesus' attention? Why are some members of the crowd angry with him? Why do you think the blind man continues to shout?
3. What does the blind man want in verses 40-42? Why is he healed? In what ways do you see the blind man's faith?
4. What are the changes you see in the formerly blind man in verse 43? What does he do as soon as he is healed by Jesus? How does this affect the people around him?
5. In this passage, what does the blind man know about Jesus? Why is he so excited?
6. What are some of the things Jesus has done for us?

In Closing: Have you experienced this kind of excitement toward Jesus? When and how? What would it be like for us to praise Jesus in such a way that others are encouraged to follow and praise him also?

Study 4: Luke 18:35-43

35 As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. **36** When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. **37** They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." **38** Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" **39** Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" **40** Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, **41** "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord let me see you again." **42** Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." **43** Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Study 5 Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus: A Transformed Witness

Written by Ann Beyerlein

Getting Started: Where do people in our culture turn for help, change or transformation? Jesus is traveling through southern Palestine on his way to Jerusalem. This trip will culminate in his death and resurrection. As he journeys, Jesus makes the most of every opportunity to do ministry. Jericho, a rich agricultural town and popular resort for royalty and priests, was in Jesus' path. Zacchaeus was one of the last people Jesus met before his death. Their encounter illustrates how Jesus can transform a person from the inside out.

Discussion Questions

1. For background, read or skim Luke 18:31-43. What is happening as Jesus approaches Jericho?
2. Read Luke 19:1-10. In the first six verses (19:1-6), what are some things we learn about Zacchaeus?
3. What kind of reputation might a chief tax collector develop in a town like this? (*Note: "The Romans farmed out the task of collecting the taxes in any particular area to the highest bidder. The man did not receive any salary for his work but collected as much money as he could so that he would have a handsome rake-off after paying the government the appointed sum"* [The New Bible Commentary: Revised]. *Tax collectors were despised not only by the Romans, but also by their own people.*)
4. What strikes you about the initial meeting between Jesus and Zacchaeus? What was the reaction of the crowd as they see this relationship develop between Zacchaeus and Jesus (verse 7)?
5. Jesus is a master at building relationships and communicating with people. What does Jesus do to build a friendship with Zacchaeus?
6. What seems to be going on inside Zacchaeus by the end of this encounter (verses 8-10)? How is he transformed by meeting Jesus? What might be some of the far reaching effects of this transformation on both Zacchaeus and the other people in his community?
7. How does this passage illustrate Jesus' life mission as stated in verse 10?

In Closing: How have you experienced the seeking or saving power of Jesus in your life (maybe even in the past week)? What are some ways Jesus has changed you? How can you be a witness to Jesus' transforming power in your life?

Study 5: Luke 19:1-10

¹ He entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today." ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner." ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost."

Study 6: Luke 22:54-62

Peter's Denial: A Negative Witness

Written by Beth Krysl

Getting Started: Think of a time in your life where you "got caught with your hand in the cookie jar" or you did something you swore you would never do. How did you feel? This passage takes place just as Judas comes with a crowd of people to arrest Jesus. Only a few hours earlier, Peter had sworn his loyalty to Jesus and had vowed never to leave him. Now he is about to face a crisis situation. We pick up the story at this point. Have someone read Luke 22:54-62.

Discussion Questions

1. As Jesus is taken away, Peter follows at a distance. What does this tell you about Peter's character?
2. Describe the scene in the courtyard. What is the mood and ambiance of the place?
3. What do you think prompted Peter's denials? What did he fear?
4. What is it Peter denied (see verses 56, 58 and 59)? What did Peter have to lose in being identified with Jesus?
5. How and when are you tempted to avoid being identified with Jesus or his cause? What is it you fear? What is it you would lose?
6. What breaks Peter's string of denial (verses 60-61)?
7. Jesus turned and looked straight at Peter. Why? What kind of look do you think it was? What did it communicate? What "wakes you up" to your sin? How does Jesus look into your life?
8. Once Peter recognizes what he has done, what is significant about his response? Why does he weep? What is your response once you realize your own sin?

In Closing: What can you learn from Peter about dealing with sin and temptation in your own life? In what situation do you need to stand up for Jesus instead of denying him? Pray for each other that God will give you strength in times of crisis.

Study 6: Luke 22:54-62

54 Then they seized him and led him away, bringing him into the high priest's house. But Peter was following at a distance. **55** When they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them. **56** Then a servant-girl, seeing him in the firelight, stared at him and said, "This man also was with him." **57** But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." **58** A little later someone else, on seeing him, said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not!" **59** Then about an hour later still another kept insisting, "Surely this man also was with him; for he is a Galilean." **60** But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about!" At that moment, while he was still speaking, the cock crowed. **61** The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." **62** And he went out and wept bitterly.

Study 7: Luke 23:39-43

The Penitent Thief: A Positive Witness

Written by Arlene Ford

Getting Started: Think of a time when you have been in a “no-win” situation. How did you feel? How did you respond? What was the outcome? Two criminals were in that kind of situation in this passage. Jesus was there with both of them.

Discussion Questions

1. Read the preceding paragraph, verses 32-38, which describes the crucifixion of Jesus. If you were the thieves, what would be your response to Jesus' statement on the cross (verse 34), to what the leaders said in verse 35, to what the soldiers did and said (verses 36-37), and to what the inscription said (verse 38)?
2. What is the attitude of the first criminal (verse 39)?
3. What did the second criminal recognize that the first criminal didn't (verses 40-42)?
4. Both criminals made a request of Jesus. How are the requests different from one another?
5. From what he says to the first criminal and to Jesus, and how he says it, what do you see about the attitude of the second criminal? What feelings does he seem to be conveying?
6. How did Jesus answer the second criminal's request? What does that tell you about Jesus' response to people?
7. What do you think “paradise” is as Jesus uses it in verse 43? (*Note: The word actually appears only two other times in the New Testament—2 Corinthians 12:4 and Revelation 2:7. Originally it meant an enclosed part of a pleasure ground. In the Greek translation of the Old Testament, it was used as a term for the garden of Eden, and in intertestamental times it meant a super terrestrial place of happiness. As used here, it can mean “heaven” or “the presence of God.”*)
8. Think again about the different attitudes displayed by the two criminals. What attitudes typically characterize your requests to Jesus? In what ways do you wish your attitudes and requests could change?

In Closing: How was the second criminal a witness to the first by his words and attitude, even in this seemingly no-win situation? Think of a situation you are facing (or might face) in which the people involved have little hope. How can you be a witness to the love and power of Jesus?

Study 7: Luke 23:39-43

39 One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!" **40** But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" **41** And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong." **42** Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." **43** He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

Study 8: Luke 24:1-12

Witnesses to the Resurrection

Written by Anna Carney

Getting Started: Think of some people who know you well. Would they be more likely to characterize you as skeptical and cynical or as gullible and naive? How do you decide when to take someone at his or her word, when to wait for proof or when to disregard someone's story entirely? Have your group talk about some examples of each. In this study we'll look at how Jesus' closest followers responded to his most outrageous claim—that he would rise from the dead. Their story will help us examine our own belief in Jesus' words and the words of his witness.

Discussion Questions

1. Have the group members read Luke 23:44-56 individually. Ask one person to summarize the events described from the women's point of view.
2. Read Luke 24:1-12 out loud. Have you ever had to deal with the death of a close friend or relative? (*Ask if just one person would share*).
3. Keeping this person's experience in mind, look at verses 1-5, putting yourself in these women's shoes. What do we know about their relationship with Jesus? (*See Luke 8:1-3 for more background.*) How has Jesus' death seemed to affect them?
4. What are the women hoping to do once they reach Jesus' tomb? (*Note: Certain spices and ointments were used in the embalming process.*) What do you imagine they are thinking and talking about on the way?
5. What may have gone through their minds when they found the body missing? What might they have thought or felt when two men "in dazzling clothes" joined them in the tomb? How do you think they reacted to the men's initial appearance?
6. The strange men explain things more fully in verses 6-8. What does Luke mean by "then they remembered his words" (verse 8)? What had caused the women to forget Jesus' words? What helps them remember and believe now?
7. In verses 9-11 the women return to the apostles to share what they had seen and heard. How did the women *expect* the apostles to respond? How *do* they respond? What does the apostles' response tell us about how the apostles have regarded Jesus' words?
8. In verse 12, why does Peter get up and run to the tomb? How does he respond differently from the other ten apostles? Why?

9. What are Peter's options of what to believe once he sees the tomb? What could prevent him, even at this point, from believing in Jesus' resurrection? Based on the last sentence, which option do you think he chose?

In Closing: Do you believe that the things Jesus promises will actually happen? When you encounter words of Jesus that are difficult to believe, how do you respond?

- forget them, as the women did initially
- believe, act and bear witness as the women did after their encounter with the messengers
- disregard them as ten of the apostles did
- insist on finding out for yourself as Peter did

What things block you from believing Jesus' words? Do you really believe them? Will you act on them? Here are references to some of Jesus' more radical statements you might want to discuss in your group: Luke 18:29-30; Matthew 25:45-46; Luke 11:19; Matthew 18:35.

Study 8: Luke 24:1-12

1 But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. **2** They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, **3** but when they went in, they did not find the body. **4** While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. **5** The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. **6** Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, **7** that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." **8** Then they remembered his words, **9** and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. **11** But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. **12** But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Study 9: Luke 24:13-35

Witnesses Whose Eyes Were Opened

Written by Paul Sorrentino

Getting Started: Try to think of a time when you were struggling to understand something and, suddenly, the “lights came on” and everything became perfectly clear. What happened to make the difference? In this study we will look at two disciples who go from confusion to insight in their thinking about Jesus. Have a few people read Luke 24:13-35 or assign parts (narrator; Cleopas and the other disciple; Jesus; the eleven and their companions).

Discussion Questions

1. Place yourself in the scene of verses 13-24. What are these travelers doing, thinking and feeling? Why does Jesus ask the two what they are discussing (verse 17) and “what things” had been going on lately (verse 19)?
2. How would you evaluate the response of Cleopas and the other disciple? What do you think of their “gospel”?
3. In verses 25-27 is Jesus being hard on the disciples? Why or why not? What is he especially concerned about? Why do you think it was “necessary” for the Messiah to “suffer these things and then enter into his glory”? (*Note: “His glory” refers to his resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand.*)
4. Jesus referred to passages throughout all the Scriptures that were about him. What are some of these passages that he might have referred to? (*Note: There are many such passages; you might want to read some verses such as Genesis 3:15; Numbers 21:6-9 [with John 3:14-15]; Deuteronomy 18:15; Psalms 22; 16:8-11; 118:22-23; Isaiah 11:1-7; 53:1-6; 61:1 [with Luke 4:18-22]; Daniel 7:13-14 [with Matthew 26:64].*)
5. In the final verses, how do the disciples come to recognize Jesus? What part did the Scriptures play in their coming to recognize him (verses 27 and 32)?
6. What do you think it means that their hearts “burned within them” when Jesus opened the Scriptures to them (verse 32)? Have you ever experienced this as you engaged the Scriptures?
7. What do the disciples finally come to understand? How do they respond? How have they become witnesses?

In Closing: As you reflect on this passage, what do you see about how Jesus helped two confused people come to see the truth about his resurrection and become witnesses to it? What principles can you use when you speak about Jesus? What difference can the reality of Jesus’ resurrection make to you each day?

Study 9: Luke 24:13-35

13 Now on that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, **14** and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. **15** While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them, **16** but their eyes were kept from recognizing him. **17** And he said to them, "What are you discussing with each other while you walk along?" They stood still, looking sad. **18** Then one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answered him, "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have taken place there in these days?" **19** He asked them, "What things?" They replied, "The things about Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, **20** and how our chief priests and leaders handed him over to be condemned to death and crucified him. **21** But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things took place. **22** Moreover, some women of our group astounded us. They were at the tomb early this morning, **23** and when they did not find his body there, they came back and told us that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who said that he was alive. **24** Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said; but they did not see him." **25** Then he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! **26** Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his

glory?" **27** Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. **28** As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. **29** But they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is now nearly over." So he went in to stay with them. **30** When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. **31** Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. **32** They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" **33** That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. **34** They were saying, "The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!" **35** Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Study 10: Luke 24:36-53

Jesus Prepares His Witnesses

Written by Nina Thiel

Getting Started: Imagine you are the baby-sitters for three small children whose parents are going away for the weekend. You are at their home, and they are leaving in fifteen minutes. What kinds of things do you think they'll tell you? What will you need to know to make it a successful, joyful weekend? In this passage, Jesus isn't preparing baby-sitters, he's preparing witnesses. This is his last recorded interaction with his followers in Luke's gospel. As someone reads Luke 24:36-53, watch and listen for how he prepares them.

Discussion Questions

1. In the preceding passage, two of Jesus' followers have been with the resurrected Jesus, heard him explain his mission from the Scriptures, eaten with him and recognized him. In 24:33-35, these two have returned to Jerusalem to tell "the eleven and their companions" what happened. In the middle of their discussion, Jesus appears. Why does he greet them the way he does?
2. What words and phrases communicate the thoughts of Jesus' followers in verses 37-43? When have you *wanted* to believe something, but *couldn't* believe it at the same time?
3. What are all the things Jesus does to help them *believe* it is really he, risen from death? How does this strengthen your belief in Jesus?
4. In verses 44-47, what does Jesus want his followers to *understand*? How does he help them understand? When have you experienced a similar "breakthrough" in Bible study?
5. In verses 48-49, Jesus lets his followers in on their role in the continuing fulfillment of the Scriptures. What will be involved immediately in being witnesses? What do you expect their "job description" to be once they are empowered by the Holy Spirit?
6. Imagine the parting scene in verses 50-51. What would a blessing from Jesus mean to you if you were there?
7. How do Jesus' followers *respond* to their last interaction with Jesus (verses 52-53)? Why worship? Why obedience (returning to Jerusalem)? Why joy? How does the joy in verse 52 differ from the joy in verse 41? Describe a time when you've felt this way.
8. How did Jesus' followers change from verses 37-43 to verses 52-53? What was the process? How have you seen Jesus use the same progression to prepare

you to be his witness? (Note: The process includes (1) helping you believe Jesus is real; (2) helping you understand the Scriptures concerning him; and (3) helping you respond in worshipful, joyful obedience or action.) What do you need more of in order to take your place joyfully in God's plan to preach "repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name to all nations"?

9. If you didn't know anything about Luke's next book, Acts, what would you expect it to contain, based on the end of Luke?

In Closing: Through the Gospels, we are witnesses to the same things these followers of Jesus saw. Like these followers, we are witnesses to the work he's done in our lives to bring us to *belief, understanding* and *action*. Name one opportunity you'll have this week to "testify" for Jesus as his witness. What are you hoping to say or explain in order to point someone to him? Close in prayer for each other's growth as witnesses in belief, understanding or action and for specific opportunities to testify as Jesus' witnesses.

Study 10: Luke 24:36-53

36 While they were talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." **37** They were startled and terrified and thought that they were seeing a ghost. **38** He said to them, "Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? **39** Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." **40** And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. **41** While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" **42** They gave him a piece of broiled fish, **43** and he took it and ate in their presence. **44** Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, 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 Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, **47** and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. **48** You are witnesses of these things. **49** And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." **50** Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. **51** While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. **52** And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; **53** and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

Create Your Own Bible Studies

If you want to continue with the book of Matthew or create your own studies - here is a helpful guide to get you started.

Inductive Method (OAI): *a way of approaching scripture that is finds clues to uncover a main truth rather than finding multiple scriptures to support a single main point.*

Observation

- Goal is to be emotionally and intellectually engaged by the scripture

Interpretation

- Goal is to come to wisdom and understanding about the meaning of the text for the original audience for those studying it today.

Application

- Goal is to participate with God in the transformational power of the Word.

Writing your Bible Study

Step 1: Preparation

1. Write down all questions that come to mind as you read the passage.
2. Look up any context or definitions that will help interpret the passage.
www.blueletterbible.com or biblegateway.com has dictionaries, commentaries and concordances.
3. Decide how God is calling you to personally or communally live out the passage.
4. Pray for your small group members and for the active response.

Step 2: Discussion Questions

1. Debrief: How did you live out what we studied last week? (You can use this as an icebreaker.)
2. Read the passage as a group.
3. What stands out to you? ...Anyone want to add anything to that? 3. What's one question you have? *(You can write out questions as people share - if you don't know the answer ask the group: Does anyone have thoughts about that question? ...Or you can look up later and answer it the next week.)*
4. What do you learn about what God is like?
5. What one thing do you want to do to live this passage out? *(If there is something you can do together as a small group - suggest that as a discipleship cycle.)*

Step 3: Debrief with co-leader or mentor

1. Write down who attended and **pray** for each person.

2. Figure out who each leader needs to follow up with that week.
3. Discuss where you saw God at work during your small group.

Helpful Hints:

- Call members the day before to invite them. Cast good vision for why come.
- Bring snacks. People come when there is food. We want to physically and spiritually feed them.
- Print out the passage for your group. It helps those who don't come from a Christian background feel welcomed, because owning a bible isn't necessary.