

Hatfield Christian Church

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Moved by LOVE
Devotional Workbook

Book 3

Luke

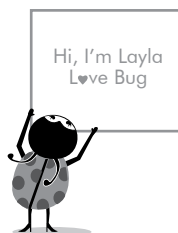
Compiled by the pastoral ladies
of Hatfield Christian Church.

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Greetings fellow disciples of Jesus!

This is our third devotional book from the gospels that we will be reading together, and our prayer is that we will continue to allow the Lord to keep our hearts soft and obedient. We are on a journey this year of being Moved by Love; moved to love God, His ways, His people and His creation. Our focus for the third term is the Gospel of Luke, and it has always struck me as significantly unselfish that both the gospel called by his name and the book of Acts were written by Luke for his friend, 'most excellent Theophilus'.

Grace and peace to you as you read and apply the scriptures.

Hatfield Pastoral Ladies Team

Contents

Chapter 1 – Judging Others	1
Chapter 2 – Forgiven Much	7
Chapter 3 – The Good Samaritan	13
Chapter 4 – Rich toward God	19
Chapter 5 – Keep a look out	25
Chapter 6 – Humility	31
Chapter 7 – The Persistent Widow	37
Chapter 8 – The Pharisee and the Tax Collector	41
Chapter 9 – The Ten Talents	47
Ice Breakers and Creative Ideas	52

Overview of the Book of Luke

Author

The evidence, both inspired and uninspired, overwhelmingly indicates that Luke the physician, the travelling companion of the Apostle Paul, is the author of this third account of the life of Christ. The Book of Acts was written as a companion volume by the same author (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3). Both books contain technical medical language (Colossians 4:14). This third gospel account is also written in the faultless classical style of one with a strong Greek education. The consistent testimony of ancient, uninspired witnesses is that Luke wrote the book as a record of the gospel account as preached by Paul. The traditional view is that Luke, who was not an eye-witness of Jesus' ministry, wrote his gospel after gathering the best sources of information within his reach (Luke 1:1-4).

Date

Luke was written before Acts (1:1). Acts appears to have been written when Paul had completed two years of imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30), i.e. AD 63. While Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years (Acts 24:27), Luke would have had ample time to do his historical research into the life of Christ (Luke 1:3, NASV). Apparently Luke penned his account of Jesus' life around AD 60.

Audience

Both Luke and Acts are addressed to 'Theophilus' (Luke 1:3; Acts 1:1). This is a Greek name meaning 'friend of God'. This was a common name and in Luke the name is prefaced with the designation 'most excellent', a customary title given to rulers, similar to our 'your honour' (Acts 26:25). Theophilus seems to have been a Greek ruler. The Book of Luke was written to appeal to the Greek mindset. It is the only book in the Bible with a formal introduction according to the classical Greek style of writing history (Luke 1:1-4). The author states his subject, his purpose, his method and his audience. Luke is the gospel to the Greeks.

Purpose

The purpose of the book was to **ground** Theophilus and other Greek converts in their faith concerning Jesus Christ (Luke 1:1-4).

Plan

Luke consistently writes in such a way as to appeal to the logical, educated, cosmopolitan Greek mind. Educated Greeks were humanists trained in logic. Luke presents Jesus as the Son of Man. More than any other writer, he emphasizes the Lord's human nature and also records more about Jesus' childhood, describing His natural growth as a normal, albeit perfect, child (Luke 2:40; 51-52). Further he records more about Jesus praying than any other gospel writer, mentioning eleven of the fifteen recorded instances of Jesus in prayer. He emphasizes the place of women and children in Jesus' life and His compassion for the poor, the downtrodden and the sinners. He also stressed Jesus' dependence on the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; 3:22; 4:1,18; 10:21). Luke places great emphasis on Jesus the Teacher. He records 23 parables, 18 of which are not revealed anywhere else.

Luke's gospel introduces the concept of Jesus as man's Redeemer (Luke 1:68; 2:38; 21:28; 24:21). Jesus is our near Kinsman (Hebrews 2:11), '... in all things ... made like His brethren ...' (Hebrews 2:17, NKJV), Who purchased us for the Lord (Leviticus 25:23-55; Ruth 2:1; 3:12).

Of the gospel writers, Luke comes closest to penning a formal biography of Jesus. The purpose of Luke was to write an historical account, while bringing out the theological significance of the history. The author portrays Christianity as divine, respectable, law-abiding and international. Luke gives the fullest account of the life of Christ, revealing a number of events not elsewhere recorded. Certain popular stories on themes, such as the **Prodigal Son** and the **Good Samaritan** are found only in this gospel. It further places special emphasis on **prayer**, the **activity of the Holy Spirit** and **joyfulness**.

The beloved physician reveals a world-wide view. He traces the lineage of Jesus back, not just to Abraham, but all the way to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). Luke alone records several events that demonstrate the Master's interest in Gentiles (Luke 2:10,32; 3:6; 4:25-27; 10:25-37; 17:16; 21:28; 24:21). **Luke's is the gospel of the universal grace of God.**

Like Mark (but unlike Matthew), the intended audience is the Greek-speaking populations of the region. It assures readers that Christianity is an international religion, not an exclusively Jewish wing.

Judging Others

Luke 6:37-42

Objective

To investigate whether we can and should judge others.



Word and Discussion

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” He also told them this parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they both not fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is full trained will be like his teacher. “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye’, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Luke 6:37-42

♥ Loving or judging one another.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

Luke 6:37-38

Some people can be very critical towards others – even Christians have a tendency to be critical of one another. This passage speaks of our attitude toward others, whether they are part of the family of God or not. We are commanded (the Greek word Jesus used here denotes an obligation rather than a choice) not to judge others. God is the Judge. Jesus warns us of the consequences of our actions. We will reap what we have sown. If we judge, we will be judged. Likewise, the same

principle applies when we choose to forgive. Whatever we extend towards others (good or evil), we will receive in return and even in greater measure. Jesus gave us the golden rule, 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you.' We should follow our Father's example and be like Him. Father sends rain on the just and the unjust; He loves sinners as much as He loves His children; He is kind to those who bring Him joy and He is kind to those who grieve Him. We too, should be moved by love in all our dealings with people – whether they are Christians or not. On Judgement Day each of us will have to give an account for ourselves – irrespective of what others have done or failed to do.

'When you judge people, you have no time to love them.'

Mother Teresa

Read Romans 14:1-13

We are all created differently. We have diverse customs, natures and characters. One thing we must not forget is that we are all created in the image of God. How we react towards others is an indication of our relationship toward God. Moved by love, we should always affirm others in fairness and with gentleness.

Are there people toward whom you have been critical or unfair? Perhaps you have been hurt and broken by harsh words? Spend some time asking God to show you areas in your life where forgiveness is needed.

♥ Teaching one another.

He also told them this parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.

Luke 6:39-40

We still hear the expression 'the blind leading the blind' used today to criticize bad leaders and their followers who follow blindly. Many incorrectly assume that Jesus was referring to the Pharisees who were blinded by pride and misleading people. However, Drew Leaver has a very interesting interpretation of this parable. He says:

'Christ's parable wasn't intended to be used as a tool to gauge others leadership, but rather our own. How good a job we do leading others is entirely dependant

on how good a job we do at leading ourselves. If we fail to be good students, we fail to be good leaders. If we fail to be fully trained, our leadership will be incomplete. This is an endorsement for discipleship. If we fail at discipleship, we fail at leadership – we will lead people blindly into a pit, because you can't lead where you haven't been.'

Spend some time meditating on this parable. Are there areas in your walk with Jesus that need attention? Perhaps you need to spend more time with Him, read more of His Word or make time to get involved helping those in need. Ask the Lord to show you where you stand.

The implication of this passage is that whoever you are, be it a teacher or a student, if you are not competent then you will lead others to disaster and to certain death.

Jesus lived what He taught. What steps can you take to become 'fully trained' so that you will not be one of the 'blind leading the blind'?

♥ Judging one another.

'Those who have not yet accepted their own imperfections are the first to judge and criticize the faults of others.'

Sidd G

The Greek word for *judge* also means to *criticize* and it implies a self-righteous spirit which judges others more harshly than itself. It excuses our own faults but not those of others. It emphasizes one sin over another. Other words for *judge* are *condemn, pass or pronounce sentence, rule, value, sit, try, rate, review, evaluate, determine, conclude, discern, decide and examine.*

“Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye’, when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Luke 6:41-42

Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgement ...

John 7:24

Both these scriptures were spoken by Jesus. In the first, He tells us not to judge others. In the second, He says **‘make a right judgement’**. There is a difference between the two. The first judgement – **hypocritical judgement** – is condemned and the second – **righteous judgement/discernment** – is approved and encouraged.

Righteous judgement is based on the Word of God. We need to remember that we are not judging the person or their action, but it is the Word of God that judges.

There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.

John 12:48

We will be judged by Jesus’ words and so we must live by them and judge ourselves by them each and every day.

Are there areas in your life where you have failed to live according to the Word, keeping in mind that we are set free from the Law but still need to obey God’s Word? Ask God to reveal these areas to you; repent and ask for forgiveness.

In 1 Corinthians 5, the Apostle Paul writes about judging Christians who are not living according to the standards that Christ set for them.

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

1 Corinthians 5:12-13

Hypocritical judgement and **self-righteous judgement** are condemned. When we judge others for something we are guilty of, we are being hypocritical. We need to first deal with the sin (plank) in our own life before we can help others with the sin (speck) in theirs. Then we will be able to see more clearly and to help others because of our own experience.

Are there areas in your life where you have been critical towards others and need to first 'take the plank out of your own eye'? Ask God to reveal these areas to you.

Conclusion

As Christians we have a responsibility to judge certain situations. Jesus taught us to do this in regards to false teaching, immoral living and those who prove themselves unworthy of the Gospel.



Prayer Focus

- Pray for one another, that we would not judge inappropriately, hypocritically, unrighteously or in a condemning manner.

Chapter 2

Forgiven Much

Luke 7:41-43 and Luke 15:11-32

Objective

To discover how the gift of forgiveness results in love towards the one forgiving and to ponder the extent of God's forgiving love.

Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 7:41-43

There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. The one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And they having nothing to pay, he freely forgave both. Then which of them do you say will love him most? And answering, Simon said, I suppose that one to whom he forgave most. And He said to him, You have judged rightly.

Luke 7:41-43 (MKJV)

♥ Forgiven much.

To God forgiveness is a very important matter, so much so that it forms an integral part of the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6. Verse 12 says, **'Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'** Verse 14 says if we do not forgive, then our heavenly Father will not forgive us.

Read Luke 6:36-37

The word **debt** means **that which is owed**. It is used to describe:

- a) a **legal debt** (money legally owed)
- b) **sin** which is a debt because it demands payment by way of punishment.

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23 (MKJV)

In this parable we see that the **debt** was not forgiven because the debtors loved their creditor. Rather, it was an act of mercy, grace and compassion from the creditor's side. The **consequence** of this act was the **love** of the debtors because their debts had been forgiven. The lesson Jesus wants us to learn is that **'much forgiveness produces much love'**.

♥ Moved by love.

When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Luke 7:37-38

Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven – for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Luke 7:44-47

This passage is a perfect example of how a person will act when **moved by love**, because her many sins are forgiven.

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:13

Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the Law.

Romans 13: 8 (MKJV)

In 1 John 1:7 and Hebrews 9:26-28 we find the **basis of forgiveness**: The cross and the blood of Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of our debt.

Can you recall a time in your life when you felt God's love drawing you to Him? Share your story. Think and write down ways in which we can express our love to God.

♥ The prodigal son.

Read Luke 15:11-32

We observe the following about the human heart in this parable:

- Firstly, read Luke 15:11-13

Man has a tendency to follow in his own ways.

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

The younger son gave no reason for his request, but took his money and went off **doing his own thing**. We tend to be naturally proud and self-willed. We spend our time, talents, strength and affections on things that rarely profitable. We become lovers of worldly pleasures and passions. Because we are spiritually blind, we do not see what we have in our kind Father's house.

- Secondly, read Luke 15:14-16

The ways of sin bring hardship.

The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

Galatians 6:8

Here we see two disasters striking the son simultaneously. He ran out of money and into a famine. The young man must have been in a desperate situation to even consider the job he took. There is a rabbinic saying, '**Cursed be the man who would breed swine.**' So, under normal circumstances a Jew would have nothing to do with such a job. Seeing that the Jews regarded swine as unclean this story gives us an idea of the degraded condition to which the young son was reduced.

- Thirdly, read Luke 15:17-19

Hardship often brings a turning to God, with true repentance and faith.

Because of disillusionment and hardship, the son had to face the facts of his desperate situation. It brought him to his senses. During this time he contemplated how much his father, brother and even their servants had whilst he was starving. He **recognized** that he had sinned against **God**

and his **father** and that he had forfeited all privileges to be treated as a son. He then showed a life-like example of true repentance. **'He set out to go back'**. Showing his willingness to turn from sin, he humbled himself and acknowledged his transgression.

Read Psalm 69:1-2. Here we see how David cried out for God's help when he was in trouble.

Can we trust God to rescue us in difficult situations? Do you feel qualified to be forgiven and rescued or do you feel it is only for other people?

Remember the promise! In John 6:37 Jesus says, 'All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away.'

- Fourthly, read Luke 15:20-24
The Father's love covers a multitude of sin.

We notice the following significant things in this passage of scripture:

1. The son said he was going back to his father, not his village or home.
2. The father must have been on the lookout for his son, waiting daily for him because he saw him when he was still a far way off.
3. The son was received with the following gifts bestowed upon him:
 - A kiss = forgiveness, not judgement.
 - A ring = authority and honour.
 - A robe = a sign of position.
 - Shoes = no longer a servant, but a son.
 - Fatted calf = a feast for a special occasion.

This passage shows us the infinite love of Jesus Christ towards sinners, His willingness to completely pardon us and welcome us back.

Read Acts 13:39 and Psalm 136:1-3. Ponder on what Jesus did for you that you could not do for yourself and praise and thank Him for His love.

Consider and discuss the results of forgiveness:

- a) Restored relationships (Luke 15:20).
 - b) Peace and joy (Luke 15:23-24 and Romans 4:7-8)
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- Fifthly, read Luke 15:25-32

Self-righteousness hinders us in forgiving those the Father has forgiven.

Looking at the behaviour of the eldest son, we can identify some things that will keep us from experiencing the Father's love:

- Verse 28 – anger
- Verse 28 – pride
- Verse 29 – seeing yourself as a slave and not a son
- Verse 29 – self righteousness
- Verse 30 – jealousy
- Verse 30 – judgemental attitude

Because of these attitudes the older brother could not experience his father's love. Read John 15:15

For God to reveal His heart you must have **eyes** to see Him, **ears** to hear His voice and a **heart** that is obedient and sensitive to Him. The closer you grow in relationship with Him, the more you will have the heart that David had towards God (Acts 13:22).

Discuss how you can cultivate a heart that is loyal to God.

Conclusion

Just as the prodigal son came to the father and experienced much forgiveness because of the extreme love of his father, so we too have a heavenly Father who is waiting for us to come to Him. God's pursuing love continues to believe in you, waits for you and hopes that it is your face He will see coming down the road.



The Good Samaritan

Luke 10:25-37

Objective

To discover who you should consider as your neighbour, and who you should be a neighbour to.



Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 10:25-37

The setting of this parable is the narrow road between Jerusalem and Jericho. In Jesus' day it was notorious for the dangers it posed to travellers passing that way. Jesus' target audience were the Jews and this parable incorporated the religious and ethnic tension groups of the day.

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans).

John 4:9

♥ A testing question and Jesus' response.

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Luke 10:25

The lawyer asked this question to test what kind of answer Jesus would give. In itself, the question revealed that the lawyer had no concept of **salvation by grace**, but expected to earn the right to eternal life through works.

Jesus loved to allow His listeners to **discover** truths and formulate answers to their own questions, as was the case here. Jesus responded to the lawyer in a manner that he would understand best, referring him straight to the Law. Jesus knew that keeping the Law was the appropriate answer and that His audience were concerned about His teachings on the Law.

"What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: "'**Love** the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, '**Love** your neighbor as yourself.'"

Luke 10:26-27

It is interesting that the lawyer quoted something regarding love and not some ritual or set of rules. Four areas are quoted with which we should love God:

1. heart
2. soul
3. strength
4. mind

Consider the four points above and jot down your thoughts on loving God with heart, soul, strength and mind.

♥ Law and grace.

“You have answered correctly.” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Luke 10:28

Jesus is not commending a new system of legalism, but pointing to the end of legalism.

The standard set here, no one can keep. No matter how hard we try to love the Lord and our neighbour, we cannot do it in our own strength. Right here Jesus plays the **Law** against **grace**.

For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

The lawyer wanted a set of rules he could keep in order to inherit eternal life. Jesus is telling him that eternal life is not a set of rules, but to **live in love** is to live the life of God’s Kingdom.

Discuss how you first came to the knowledge of the grace of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ.

♥ Who is your neighbour?

The lawyer wanted to justify himself. He had not understood the implication of his own words, so in verse 29 he went on to ask, **'And who is my neighbour?'** instead of, 'what must I do to be saved?'

The reply that he expected to hear would probably have been 'your relative and your friend.' The lawyer then would have been able to say that he has followed the Law and enjoy honour among the audience. However, Jesus expounds on the law of **love**. He does not answer the question directly and goes on to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan, explaining how **love** is converted into action.

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

Luke 10:30b-35

♥ The man.

Jesus intentionally does not identify the man's nationality. The audience, presumably Jewish, would assume that he was a Jew. Since he is stripped of his clothes and probably unconscious, he is unidentifiable. Historically, a person could be identified in one of two ways: his dress and his speech or dialect. This man could have therefore been any person.

♥ The three passersby:

1. The priest

- When he saw the man, he passed by on the other side.
- How could he have been sure the wounded man was a neighbour since he could not be identified?
- The priest could be risking ceremonial defilement if he touched the man who at first glance appeared dead, as this was forbidden by the Law.

God spoke to Moses: "Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron. Tell them, A priest must not ritually contaminate himself by touching the dead ...

Leviticus 21:1(MSG)

His persuasion of ceremonial purity influenced him.

2. The Levite

- He also was a religious person who might have been expected to help the man. Levites were the descendants of Levi, who assisted the priests.
- He was also interested in ceremonial purity and thought it better not to get involved.
- He also passed by on the other side.

3. The Samaritan

- The audience would have expected the next passerby to be an Israelite layman. They were shocked to hear Jesus' introduction of the Samaritan. Because of the tension between Samaritans and Jews, a Samaritan would have been the last person to help. The Samaritan would also not be from that area, so the half-dead man would not qualify as his neighbour.
- The Samaritan approaches the unidentifiable man and helps him. He was **moved by love** and had compassion on the sufferer. He attended to him in the following way:
 - He used wine to clean his wounds.
 - He used oil to ease the pain.
 - He set him on his own beast to transport him.
 - He brought him to an inn where he took care of him.
 - He gave the innkeeper two silver coins (denarii) and instructed him to look after him. Two denarii was probably enough to pay about two months' board.
 - When the Samaritan left, he offered to pay for any additional costs at his return.
 - The Samaritan had no way of ensuring any return of unused money. It is safe to assume he did not expect it to be returned.

Jesus was like the Samaritan. He loved enough to touch the unclean. He was willing to reach out to the lost, the outcast and the needy. Jesus Himself was an outcast in the eyes of the lawyers, priests, scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees.

The term *Good Samaritan* is still used today as a common metaphor. Have you ever been referred to as a **Good Samaritan**? Take a while, and discuss/write down what you think you might have done in the same situation.

“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

John 13:34-35

♥ A standard too high to reach.

Jesus wraps up His story by asking the lawyer the question, ‘Which of these three do you think was a **neighbour** to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ (Luke 10:36) The lawyer could not even get the word Samaritan out of his mouth. He replied, ‘The one who had **mercy** on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘Go and do likewise.’(Luke 10:25-37)

The lawyer had asked, ‘Who is my neighbour?’ Yet Jesus turned the question to, ‘Who am I a neighbour to?’ The lawyer was confronted with the knowledge that neither the priest nor the Levite fulfilled the Law, which advocates loving your neighbour. The standard – perfect love – is too high.

Conclusion

Jesus wants us to put truth into action. We are neighbours to all whom God loves and He wants us to move in love when we hear Him prompting us to do so.

Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 3:18

Prayer Focus

- Pray that we will have the compassion needed to reach out to the lost and needy. Pray that we are **moved by love** to obey the Lord’s prompting when we feel He is nudging us to reach out to our neighbour.

Rich Toward God



Luke 12:16-21, Luke 16:19-32

Objective

To understand how God wants us to use our material possessions and how we can be rich toward Him.

Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 16:19-31;12:16-21.

♥ A poor rich man and a rich poor man.

“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. “The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ “But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.’

Luke 16:19-26

Jesus uses this parable to contrast two men. The first was a rich man dressed in the finest clothes, living a life of comfort and luxury. The second man, Lazarus, was so poor that he longed for the leftovers and scraps of the rich man’s table. He was in a bad physical condition. The one man had whatever he wanted, while the other had nothing.

The one thing Lazarus did have was grace. When he died, he was carried to Abraham, the father of faith. After his death, the rich man’s feasting was turned into an eternal agony of hell. This passage is even more sobering coming from the lips of Jesus, Who delights in mercy. It is clear from this passage that poverty

does not reflect God's displeasure, just as sure as being wealthy does not mean that one is favoured by God. Remind yourself of this by writing down the names of godly people that you know who are from both sides of the spectrum – wealthy in financial terms and others battling in that area. Write down some of the ways in which these people bring honour to the Lord in their individual circumstances.

Read Jeremiah 9:23-24 and note the Lord's priorities as set out for us:

Let not the wise man boast of his _____
or the strong man boast of his _____
or the rich man boast of his _____,
but let him who boasts boast about this: that he _____
that I am the Lord, who exercises _____,
and _____ on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord.

The rich man, who showed no mercy, asks Abraham to show him mercy by sending Lazarus to refresh him. Abraham points out that the rich man received good things in his lifetime. When he could have spent time in the things of God, he chose nice clothes, merriment, feasting and a selfish lifestyle instead.

♥ Spiritual understanding, but too late.

"He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'
"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'"

Luke 16:27-31

For the first time in this story the rich man now shows interest in someone other than himself as he begs Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his five brothers of what would await them. One of the most terrifying things about those in hell is that they will finally have spiritual understanding without being able to change any of their choices. Abraham's reply that they have the Scriptures implies that the rich man's situation came about because of a neglect of the Scriptures.

The rich man petitioned for Lazarus to go and warn them, reasoning that a visitation from the dead would be able to persuade them. Abraham, however, was adamant that no messenger from beyond the grave would be able to produce the faith that one lacks to believe the Scriptures. Think of how this was proven true when those, who refused to see Jesus in the Scriptures, stayed in their unbelief even after He returned from the dead.

♥ The rich fool.

And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man produced a good crop. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'

Luke 12:16-20

In this parable we are introduced to a wealthy farmer who had a bumper crop, so big in fact that he had storage problems. He decided to build bigger barns, determined to enjoy his life with the security that he would have enough for many years to come. He is not depicted as a murderer, liar, adulterer or thief, yet God calls him a **fool**, which in Greek literally means **without mind, sense or understanding**. Why?

Look at his words: **my** crops, **my** barns, **my** grain, **my** goods and note that he is the only person featuring in his plans. Count the amount of times the word I is used. He lived a selfish life without understanding that his life would come to an end and that he had no security and riches set up that would count for eternity. Nowhere in his planning is there any indication that he was serving God or any other people with his abundant possessions.

What are the material things that are most important to you?

Recommit these to the Lord, recognizing that they are temporary and that they should be used to bless God and others.

Some scriptures to guide our thinking about money and possessions:

- Philippians 4:11-12 – ‘... I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content ...’
- Hebrews 13:5 – ‘Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have ...’
- 1 Timothy 6:10 – ‘For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.’

♥ Being rich toward God.

“This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.”

Luke 12:21

Jesus draws a clear contrast between laying up treasures for oneself and being **rich toward God**. Just as we will be foolish to live for material things, we can be rich in God’s eyes because of the way in which we use our money, time, attention and possessions. Many are willing to give of these to the world and its causes but are stingy when it comes to the things of God.

How has your life been impacted for the Lord by the way that someone else used their material things for the Kingdom?

Remember that even though God gave us many gifts and blessings, He firstly gave us Himself. In the same manner, the greatest way to be rich toward God is to be moved by His love – to love Him back with not only our things and service, but by giving of ourselves.

In his book *When the game is over* it all goes back in the box, John Ortberg says:

‘... you can be rich toward God. Your life – with God’s help – can be a source of pleasure to the God of the universe. You can make God smile. When the game is over, all that will matter will be God’s assessment of our lives. Venture capitalists and Hollywood stars and school janitors and Somalian tribesman will stand in line before him on level ground. Being rich toward God means growing a soul that is increasingly healthy and good. Being rich toward God

means loving and enjoying the people around you. Being rich toward God means learning about your gifts and passions and doing good work to help improve the world. Being rich toward God means becoming generous with your stuff.'

Conclusion

We are again made aware of how temporary possessions are and how they can either be used to bless others or to further a selfish lifestyle. Let's determine to be rich toward God, focussing on things that will count for eternity, using our possessions, time and money in His service, and to be content in whatever circumstances we find ourselves.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for the people you have listed earlier, who are rich in the things of the world, that they will be wise in using their possessions for eternal purposes. Pray too for those struggling financially to experience the Lord's provision and joy that surpasses all circumstances.

Extra Notes

Keep a look out

Luke 12:35-48 and Luke 12:42-48

Objective

To understand how important it is to always be ready for Christ's return and to be found doing His will.

Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 12:35-48

(Extra reading Matthew 24:43-51; Mark 13:33-37)

Our heavenly Father was **moved by love** when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to earth (John 3:16). He will be **moved by love** once again when He sends Jesus to return for us, His bride, at His second coming. When Jesus warns us to be ready, He is doing it out of love – a love that does not want to see us separated from Him for eternity but rather longs for His children to truly know and experience the love that the Father has for us.

The importance of always being ready for Christ's return is highlighted in Matthew, Mark and Luke. There is a strong emphasis on **being ready since** we do not know the time that the Son of Man will return.

It is important to note that many scholars feel that in this parable Jesus was warning his hearers to be ready for any crisis in life and we must face these times as true disciples of Jesus Christ.

♥ Are you ready?

"Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning, like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them.

Luke 12:35-37

Readiness for the return of Christ requires nothing more than a life of **repentance, faith** and **holiness**. The person who is living a life of faith is someone whose 'light is burning'. This faith causes action expressed through the

compassion, love and hope of God. She is moved by His love and is one who guards her 'light' and keeps it burning while eagerly waiting on her Master's return.

True Christians should not only believe in Christ and love Him, but also look and long for His return. **Because Jesus loves us, He is coming again** and we need to be ready every moment of every day!

... live a life of love, just as Christ has loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
Ephesians 5:2

Ponder on romantic love and how you long to see and be with that special person. Some spend hours preparing for the times they will be spending together.

Now think of the day when you will see the Lord face-to-face. How are you doing spiritually? How much time do you spend daily making sure that you are ready for that day?

♥ Be prepared ...

You also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him ...

Luke 12: 40

Jesus uses another image now and reminds us that no house will be broken into if the owner knew when the thief was coming. The house owner would be ready to secure the home from being robbed.

Christ's return at an unexpected time is not a trap or a trick by which God hopes to catch us off guard. In fact, God is delaying His return so that more people will have the opportunity to follow him. Before Christ's return we have time to live out our faith and to be a sign of Jesus' love as we relate to others.

People who are ready for the Lord's return are:

- Not hypocritical but sincere (Luke 12:1).
- Not fearful but ready to witness (Luke 12:4-9).
- Not worried but trusting (Luke 12: 25-26).
- Not greedy but generous (Luke 12: 33-34)
- Not lazy but diligent (Luke 12:37).

'Discover what pleases God and then make them habits.'
Bruce and Stan

If our Lord comes today, will you be ready? If not, what will you change in order to be prepared for His second coming?

♥ The diligent servant and his reward.

The Lord answered. "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

Luke 12: 42-44

Jesus is speaking of His second coming. He is comparing His disciples to servants waiting for their master's return. Each of these servants had their own work to do during their master's absence.

There is a lesson of great importance here in that our faith needs to be **working, practical, diligent** and **useful**. It is not the servant found **wishing** and **professing** that the Lord calls 'blessed' but rather the servant who is found **doing**.

Jesus promises a reward for those who have been faithful to the Master. We are not only rewarded here and now but we will receive heavenly rewards. Our heavenly rewards will be an accurate reflection of what we have done on earth and will be greater than we can imagine.

Jesus calls the man who serves Him, **blessed**. We must all strive to be like Christ, Who went about **doing good deeds**. Likewise, Christ's apostles were men of deeds more than men of words. Allow your life to be filled with the love of Christ and always be willing to share that love. Never underestimate yourself; we are all capable of doing good deeds for our Lord Jesus.

'A Christ- centred life is like a good watch: open face, busy hands, pure gold, and full of good works.'

Anonymous

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

Ask yourself if you are doing good deeds because you feel obligated to or are you doing good deeds because you are moved by God's love?

♥ A warning!

But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers. "That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.

Luke 12:45-48

We learn of the terrible danger for those who neglect their duties. Some say that this refers particularly to **ministers and teachers of the Gospel**, but it would be wise for **all** to heed the warning. In verse 41 Peter asked, 'Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?' Jesus then asks, 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager?' Let us suggest that anyone who holds a position of trust should take this warning to heart.

Jesus rarely uses such harsh wording, hence the need to take note of this warning. The same loving Saviour never shrinks from holding up the judgements of God against those who don't take His counsel seriously. Let us strive to be ready to receive our Master, whenever He may come. We should guard our hearts with a godly jealousy and look out for any sign that we are not ready.

Symptoms to be wary of:

- Lowering of Christian holiness.
- A dislike of Christians who are more spiritually minded.
- Conforming to the world.

A final warning comes in the last verses of this parable where it states that the **more** you have; the **more** will be required of you. This is especially true in the area of our knowledge of God. We will be judged much more harshly than the person who has never heard the Word of God.

Knowing the Scriptures and God's will, take an honest look at yourself and ask the Holy Spirit if you need to make any adjustments. Write down what you feel the Lord is revealing to you.

Conclusion

Jesus has told us how to live until He comes – watching for Him, working diligently and obeying His commandments. God will give us increased opportunities and responsibilities. The more resources, talents and understanding we have, the more we will be required to use them effectively.

Prayer Focus

- Pray for each other to always be ready for the day of the Lord's return. Pray for lukewarm Christians and the lost to experience God's love and power in their lives. Pray for the coming of our Lord!

Chapter 6

Humility

Luke 14:7-24



Objective

To understand that the biblical truth concerning walking the way of humility is God's will and chosen path for His children.

Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 14:7-24.

♥ Invitation to a banquet.

Jesus had been invited to dine at the home of an important Pharisee. In Bible times, the setting for a wedding feast or any banquet was a couch for three people. A number of these would be arranged in a U-shape around a low table with the guests reclining on their left elbows. The central position at the base of the U would be the place of the highest honour. The guest to his right would lay with his head near the host's chest and the one on his left would recline behind him and thus the guests would be arranged in order of importance.

When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 14:7-11

Jesus, observing the arrival of the guests and their scramble for places of honour at the table, rebuked them for their behaviour. He told them they were being presumptuous and their actions could lead to humiliation and shame. He said it would be better to willingly take the lowest place first and then be invited to a place of honour by your host. When someone willingly takes the lower place and then is asked to take a more distinguished position, his humility will gain him all the more honour.

Do not exalt yourself in the king's presence, and do not claim a place among great men; it is better for him to say to you, "Come up here," than for him to humiliate you before a nobleman. What you have seen with your eyes.

Proverbs 25:6-7

♥ The principle of humility.

When Jesus commented on the actions of the wedding guests, He was not giving them a talk on social behaviour – He was teaching them the importance of the godly principle of humility. He calls His people to be genuinely humble. There is great value in humility.

Humble – conscious of one's failings; unpretentious; lowly; deferential; to lower in status.

Collins Dictionary

How would you define humility?

♥ The root of humility

The root of humility is **self-knowledge**. When we honestly **know** ourselves – having examined our own hearts and acknowledging His infinite majesty and holiness and His love and mercy towards us – and we **know** and accept Jesus Christ and the price He paid to redeem us, we realize that we have no reason to be proud. In ourselves we are unworthy to be called children of God. It is a wise woman who knows herself and recognizes this. **Being ignorant of Who God is, is the root cause of pride.**

There are many examples in Scripture where mighty men and women of God came to acknowledge their unworthiness:

- Abraham said of himself, '... **I am nothing** but dust and ashes ...' (Genesis 18:27b).
- Jacob told God that he was **unworthy** of all the kindness and faithfulness God had shown to him (Genesis 32:10).
- Paul, writing to Timothy, stated that the Lord had shown him mercy even though he was the **worst of sinners** (1 Timothy 1:15).
- Elizabeth questioned why she was so **favoured** when Mary came to visit her (Luke 1:43) and Mary was **aware of her humble state** (Luke 1:48).

Humility is strong – not bold; **quiet** – not speechless; sure
– not arrogant.

Estelle Smith

♥ How to retain humility:

Do not presume that you 'know it all' or consider yourself an expert. No matter how much you know, you will never have **all knowledge**.

However much you have **achieved**, ultimately you will have achieved very little when you die one day compared with all eternity.

It matters not how **important** you may believe yourself to be or the high position you may hold in life, when you die or retire one day, someone will replace you and life will continue.

When you compare yourself with the only **Perfect One**, Jesus Christ our Lord, you will see your unworthiness in comparison with the radiance of His purity, love and beauty. Pride will fade and self-satisfaction will go.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

Romans 12:3

♥ The sin of pride.

There are two kinds of pride:

1. A healthy sense of honour, self-respect and personal worth; satisfaction or pleasure in one's own or another's success or achievements.
2. **Excessive self-esteem; conceit; having an inflated sense of one's importance; thinking oneself more worthy of honour than others, haughtiness.**

A man's pride brings him low, but a man of lowly spirit gains honor.

Proverbs 29:23

Consider the difference between these two types of pride, one good and one sinful. Prayerfully ask the Lord to show you where there is sinful pride in your life and deal with it.

Taking the lowest place with the motive to gain promotion is false humility which is equally abhorrent to God. He is not impressed by our status in society or the position we hold in the church, neither is He affected by the opinions of people. The Lord knows our thoughts and sees the motives of our heart. In 1 Samuel 16:7 God's Word says that the Lord does not look at the things man looks at. We look at outward appearances, but He looks at the heart.

But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:6

♥ True humility does not seek a reward.

Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Luke 14:12-14

Jesus did not say we must not extend hospitality towards family and friends, but usually they will return the favour and you will receive your reward from them. He was referring to caring for those in need who cannot repay us for kindness shown to them. In Deuteronomy 15:11 it says that there will always be poor people in the land. He **commands** us to be generous towards the poor and needy. Our reward will be given to us at the resurrection of His saints when Christ returns.

When you do something to help someone, do you expect anything in return?

Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.

James 4:10

♥ Our reward will come at the resurrection.

When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had

been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' "But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' "Another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' "Still another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' "The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' "'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' "Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'"

Luke 14:15-24

A Jewish guest responded to Jesus saying that the man who partakes in the feast in the Kingdom of God will be blessed. He understood that Jesus was referring to the Israelites who were initially invited by God to His banquet and he assumed that all Jews qualified to partake of the feast. But his assumption was wrong. The guests, representing the Jews, had accepted the invitation but later chose to excuse themselves from attending because they were distracted by the cares of the world. The excuses they gave were false. No farmer would buy a field without careful inspection; neither would anyone purchase five yoke of oxen without establishing that they could do the required work. The third man even used Scripture to excuse himself. Deuteronomy 24:5 says a newly married man is excused from going to war, not from social commitments.

Business and relationships are certainly important, but they must never be substituted for God's invitation or used as an excuse to avoid being involved in God's Kingdom. We must not allow any earthly pursuit, however important, to rob us of the great celebration with Jesus. Let nothing stand in the way of following Him. Those who were invited declined because it was inconvenient to their own plans. The servants were sent out to invite the poor, the crippled, the blind, lame and needy.

God's plan for salvation always included the Gentiles and all who would respond to His Son. The guests were not **moved by love** to respond to God's call; they allowed their love for earthly pursuits to replace their obedience to Father.

Have you heard God's call on **your** life? How have you responded?

♥ Humility is a lifestyle of obedience to the Father's call on our lives.

I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet ...

Luke 14:24

God first invited the Israelites to His banquet through Moses and the prophets. The second invitation came from Jesus, His Son. They believed that they were God's chosen people, but they refused to accept His Son and were disobedient to His call. Thus they will not get even a **taste** of His banquet. There will be no second chance. In the same way the master sent his servants to invite the needy, God sent His Son into the world to invite those needy among **both** the Jews and the Gentiles. Humility is a fundamental grace in the Christian faith. It calls us to be obedient to the Father's call and to live a life of humble service – **moved by love** to do His will. Colossians 3:12 tells us to 'clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience'.

Billy Graham once said, 'I've never known a person whom I thought was truly filled with the Holy Spirit who went out and bragged about it or sought to draw attention to himself.'

Conclusion

Jesus is our greatest example of humility and as His followers we are required to be like Him – humble servants of the Most High God, ready and obedient to do His will.

Prayer Focus

- Ask God to reveal areas in your life where there is still pride.
- Invite the Holy Spirit to help you to imitate Jesus, our example of humility (Philippians 2:1-16).

The Persistent, Widow

Luke 18:1-8

Objective

To understand the value of praying without ceasing – persistently, earnestly and without losing heart by placing your faith in God.



Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 18:1-8.

♥ Persistence

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'"

Luke 18:1-5

The word **persistence** means **lasting or enduring tenaciously in spite of opposition, obstacles and discouragements.**

This is portrayed perfectly by this poor widow. The plight of a widow in Bible times was grave. They were powerless and among the most vulnerable in society. Those without sons to take care of them would often fall prey to thieves and other unscrupulous people. Yet this woman did not let her vulnerability get her down nor stop her from seeking justice. She would not let her present circumstances determine her future. She had very little on her side but her persistence. She put that to good use, eventually wearing out the judge – not because he cared or had a change of heart, but because he wanted to get her off his back.-

The judge was not a Jew. He was appointed by the Romans or by Herod who were known to be unscrupulous, unjust and easily bribed. Amongst the Jewish people, elders dealt with disputes. If, however, a dispute was taken to court, three judges would be present – one chosen by the plaintiff, one by the defendant and

a third would be independently appointed.

'I look at a stone cutter hammering away at a rock a hundred times without so much as a crack showing in it. Yet at the 101st blow it splits in two. I know it was not the one blow that did it, but all that had gone before.'

Reader's Digest, Jacob Riis

♥ Pray without ceasing.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 the Word says we must **'pray without ceasing'**. We can liken the persistence of this widow to **'praying without ceasing'**. When Jesus speaks of persistent, earnest prayer He encourages us to continually, with faith, lay our needs and desires before God and not give up when, at first, they don't appear to be answered.

Are there urgent needs and concerns that you can commit to pray persistently for? Write them down.

♥ Persistent prayer builds us up in many ways:

- It brings glory to God. 'He said to them, "When you pray, say: "'Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.' – Luke 11:2
- Persistent prayer depends on God to meet our every need. 'Every desirable and beneficial gift comes out of heaven. The gifts are rivers of light cascading down from the Father of Light. There is nothing deceitful in God, nothing two-faced, nothing fickle.' – James 1:17 (MSG)
- With persistent prayer and confession we are cleansed of our sins. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' – 1 John 1:9 (KJV)
- It is an opportunity to fellowship with God, which renews our strength. 'God – you're my God! I can't get enough of you! I've worked up such hunger and thirst for God, traveling across dry and weary deserts ...' – Psalm 63:1a (MSG)

- In constant fellowship with God, He gives us wisdom for each situation we face. 'If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.' – James 1:5
- It gives us peace beyond all understanding. 'Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.' – Philippians 4:6-7

Can you make some changes to your daily routine to enable you to pray more persistently?

And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"

Luke 18:6-8

If persistence could draw a response from such a merciless man as this judge, how much more will persistent prayer touch the heart of our Father Who is **moved by love** and has compassion for our plight? God's character is loving and just and He honours our prayers.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous one avails much.
James 5:16b (MKJV)

We often find ourselves continually praying but not receiving an immediate answer or the answer we were hoping to hear. We get discouraged and eventually stop praying. Our trust and hope in the Lord fades. In such difficult times our faith is tested. We need to **persevere** and continue to lay our petitions before God – despite the way we feel or the state of our hearts. We need to hold onto the truth that our Father, Who is **moved by love**, is in control of our lives and that He knows what His children need.

In the same way an earthly father does not give his children everything they want because he knows it would be harmful to grant his child's every request, Father God also knows what is good for us in the long run. He knows the future and

He holds our future in His hand. Sometimes He delays the answer, but He knows our only hope is in Him and that we are **strengthened** as we learn to endure hardship.

The Father's heart is also for the unrighteous sinner to whom He gives the opportunity to repent. However, we can be sure that His vindication will come swiftly when He chooses to move on behalf of His children. Jesus promised that He will come again and although He did not tell us **when that time would be**, we should always be prayerfully expectant.

There will always be those who will get discouraged by hardship and trouble and turn away from the Lord. Will we be fervent in our faith at the coming of the Lord? Will we be waiting and praying unceasingly at the time of His coming? This is a choice we each have to make.

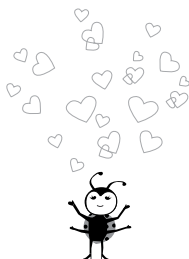
What items have dropped off your prayer list that you need to put back? May you be **moved by love** to become an effective woman of prayer.

Conclusion

Persistent prayer is the demonstration of our faith in God. At times He may delay the answer, but He will always act lovingly, justly and with respect for His people. Persistent prayer is the demonstration of our faith in God's character.

Prayer Focus

- Take the items you have dropped from your prayer list and with new hope and boldness lay them again at the feet of your Father.



The Pharisee & the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9-14

Objective

To understand the attitude of our hearts when we pray and that God is gracious and loving, extending abundant mercy and justification to those who humble themselves before Him.

Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 18:9-14.

To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Luke 18:9-14

This parable explains the attitude of the heart with which we should pray. We see the Pharisee, a religious man whom we would expect in the temple. He is praying with a tax collector, who we would not really expect in the temple due to his dishonest nature and betrayal of his own countrymen.

♥ The Pharisee.

The Pharisee was quite proud to announce the vices from which he abstains.

Write down the vices mentioned in the above verses:

He was also quite pious about the fact that he fasted twice a week (the Law only required once) and that he went beyond the tithing requirement. (The Law only required tithing on certain crops but he tithed even on his garden herbs.) What the Pharisee said about himself was true but the spirit behind his prayer was all wrong.

After mentioning God in his first sentence, the Pharisee does not refer to God again but he speaks about himself for the rest of the prayer.

Carefully consider what your prayer time is like, especially in public. Write down some of your thoughts:

♥ The tax collector.

This man was clearly under great conviction of sin. It was normal to lift one's eyes towards heaven when praying, but according to verse 13 the tax collector's sense of unworthiness prevented him from doing this.

His prayer is simply, **'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'** The verb be merciful means **be propitiated – let thy anger be removed.**

'This publican was a rotter and he knew it. He asked for God's mercy because mercy was the only thing he dared asked for.'

TW Manson

The tax collector's prayer was answered. He went home justified, reckoned as righteous with his sins forgiven. The repentant sinner who humbly asks for God's mercy will find it.

In this parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, Jesus explains that we cannot trust in our **own righteousness**. Our righteous works do not gain us acceptance or worth from God. Pride and **self-righteousness** caused the Pharisee to look down on others, whereas the **humble** cry for help and forgiveness from the tax

collector produced mercy from a God who was **moved by love**.

♥ What is righteousness?

Righteousness according to EW Kenyon means, **'The ability to stand in the presence of God the Father without a sense of guilt or inferiority.'**

Simply put, *righteousness is being in right standing with God.*

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become **the righteousness of God.**

2 Corinthians 5:21 (Emphasis added)

♥ Deeds of righteousness.

We cannot earn our righteousness by our deeds or by obeying laws. We are made righteous **through faith in Jesus** and by His grace.

The Pharisee had performed good deeds (fasting and tithing more than was required of him) yet it was the tax collector who went home justified. The tax collector's faith made him righteous.

Read Isaiah 64:6(a); Romans 1:16-17; 3:20-28; 4:2-3; 10:3-4.

Having read these verses, we see that Jesus has **done it all!** Our good works do not earn us the status of righteousness. We believe in what Jesus has accomplished for us on the Cross and are cleansed from sin and **clothed with His righteousness.**

Meditate on this truth and thank Jesus for what He has done for us. If you are still suffering from guilt or condemnation because of something you have done, why don't you do what the tax collector did – humble yourself before the Lord, repent of your sin and receive His love and forgiveness.

Write out 1 John 1:9, reflecting on God's great love for us:

♥ The gift of righteousness.

God's righteousness is a **gift** that we receive by faith. When we receive this gift:

- sin is forgiven ...
- Christ's righteousness becomes ours ...
- condemnation is over ...
- guilt is gone ...
- inferiority is removed ...
- reigning in life has begun!

(Quoted from Righteousness by Edmund Roebert)

♥ God's abundant mercy.

Read Ephesians 2:4-10. Read and write out Romans 5:8

Mercy is when we don't get what we deserve! A good example is Jesus' response to the thief on the cross. Read Luke 23:39-43. In the same way as the tax collector in the parable, the thief on the cross was **justified** (made righteous) because of God's abundant mercy. We can never deserve it.

Read through the following Scriptures showing the merciful character of our God Who is moved by love for us. Exodus 34:6; Psalm 145:8-9; Hebrews 8:12 and 2 Peter 3:9. What thoughts or feelings do these verses stir in you?

♥ Jesus is looking for humility.

- God exalted Jesus (our example) because of His **humility** – Philippians 2:5-11.
- We must **humble ourselves** – James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:5-6.
- God gives **grace** to and **exalts** the **humble** – James 4:6; Luke 14:11.
- The Pharisee boasted about himself. We are encouraged to **make our boast in the Lord** – 2 Corinthians 10:17; Psalm 34:2.

The tax collector was not concerned about how his prayer would sound in another man's ears or what others might think. He came to God in a spirit of humility seeking forgiveness.

♥ Pride (boasting) is dangerous!

Fill in the missing words:

God resists the _____ , but gives grace to the _____
(James 4:6).

The Pharisee was definitely boastful in his prayer. He prayed to gain recognition in the synagogues and other public places where many would be able to see and hear him. The spirit in which he prayed was false, because he wanted **to be seen by men**. He obviously did this because he wanted to impress people, but by impressing people the Pharisee did not please God.

Conclusion

God is moved by love when we draw near to Him with humble hearts and in the right spirit. He is ever willing to extend mercy to us and to exalt all those who humble themselves before Him.

Prayer Focus

- Let us praise God for His mercy and for His gift of righteousness to us through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 and pray for our nation, South Africa.

Extra Notes

Chapter 9

The Ten Talents

Luke 19:11-27

Objective

To realize that we have a responsibility to develop our talents; to be proven faithful with what God has entrusted to us and to be moved by Christ's love to share these gifts and talents with those around us.



Word and Discussion

Read through Luke 19:11-27

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' "He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. "The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' ""Well done, my good servant!" his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' "The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' "His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' "Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' "His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' "Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' ""Sir," they said, 'he already has ten!' "He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one

who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.”

Luke 19:11-27

There are similarities between this story and the parable of the talents in Matthew 25. It seems that Jesus made use of this basic idea more than once. In Matthew He is concerned with people of different abilities, receiving tasks according to their capabilities. The amounts of money are large and represent serious and important tasks. Where it illustrates that we all have different gifts, the parable in Luke reminds us that we all have one basic task and that is to live out our faith. This parable refers to a nobleman receiving a kingdom and the **attitude** of his servants.

♥ God’s Kingdom.

While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once.

Luke 19:11

Jesus told this parable because He wanted to correct people’s expectations about the Kingdom. They were expecting a physical Kingdom, while Jesus pointed to a place contrary to their expectation – their hearts.

In the *Amplified Bible* Luke 17:21 states that the Kingdom of God is in our **hearts, among us** and **within us** and this is where it needs to grow.

♥ The Nobleman and His instruction to His servants.

He said: “A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. ‘Put this money to work,’ he said, ‘until I come back.’

Luke 19:12-13

This is likened to the work God calls us to do. He has given us certain talents and abilities in order to fulfil our responsibilities. The parable speaks first of the king’s trust in his servants. While he is away, he leaves his **money** with them to use as they think best. This was obviously a test to see if the king’s servants would be **faithful** and reliable in their use of the money entrusted to them.

Identify the gift or talent the Lord has given to you and describe what you are doing with it?

♥ The reward for faithfulness.

“He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. “The first one came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned ten more.’ “Well done, my good servant!’ his master replied. ‘Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.’ “The second came and said, ‘Sir, your mina has earned five more.’ “His master answered, ‘You take charge of five cities.’ “Then another servant came and said, ‘Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.’ “His master replied, ‘I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn’t you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?’ “Then he said to those standing by, ‘Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.’ “‘Sir,’ they said, ‘he already has ten!’ “He replied, ‘I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away.

Luke 19:15-26

The Lord rewards those who are faithful by **commending** and **promoting** them and He punishes those who sit by idly and do nothing with their talents. God honours those who use their talents and gifts by **increasing** their opportunity to serve on a wider scale. Those who are faithful with even a little are entrusted with more!

“His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

Matthew 25:21

Looking at the talents that you have received, do you think God is pleased with what you are doing with them? If not, what steps do you plan to take to rectify this?

Each servant shall receive a reward in proportion to their diligence. In verses 16 to 19 we see that the servant who made an additional ten mina was placed in charge of ten cities and the one who had made an additional five mina was placed over five cities. The Kingdom principle is definitely **fruitfulness**. We need to be bearing fruit in our lives.

What kind of fruit do you bear for God's Kingdom? Discuss.

Consider how you can disciple others in being faithful with the talents they have received.

♥ The consequences of rejecting the nobleman (king).

"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' ... But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them – bring them here and kill them in front of me.'"

Luke 19:14, 27

This verse describes the attitude of the Jews towards Christ, both while He was with them and after He went back to heaven. In the parable some, by their attitudes, rejected the authority of the king and evoked his anger. This is why, at his return, he sent for them to be killed.

We can lose our reward for serving Jesus by our disobedience to His commission or by blatantly refusing to carry out His instruction to develop the talents He has given to us.

Let's revise the three groups of people represented in this parable:

1. Those who opposed Jesus and the Gospel – the Jews who refused to receive the Lord.
2. Faithful Christians – those who took the Gospel to heart and made disciples to the glory of God.
3. Unfaithful Christians – those who make no real use of the Gospel. These are not obvious enemies of God or those who openly disobey His commands but the ones who hide the mina in a piece of cloth.

Conclusion

We need to take seriously the fact that God has entrusted us, His servants, with talents in order to further His Kingdom. The gravity of sitting on your talent has eternal consequences.

Prayer Focus

- As you have identified your talents, now pray for each other to discern opportunities to share these talents and for the boldness to seize those opportunities.

Extra Notes

The Book of Luke

Ice Breakers and Creative Ideas

Week 1 - Judging Others

Ice-Breaker

Many TV programmes feature people breaking each other down, either by confronting them personally or behind their backs. It is supposed to be funny, but in real life it is not funny at all, especially if you are on the receiving end. Share an experience where this has happened to you and how it made you feel.

Ministry Focus

Set out a little plank on your coffee table (a piece from a tomato box would work well) and loosen a small piece to represent a splinter. Draw attention to the huge difference in size and the clear comparison when the lesson gets to the part referring to the plank and the splinter. You may prefer to illustrate this by a comparison between a sock with a little loose thread and another with a big hole in it.

Week 2 - Forgiven Much

Ice-Breaker

Tell the group about a time when you were rescued in or from a difficult or dangerous situation.

Ministry Focus

Find a few old receipts and write Cancelled or Paid over them in big red letters as a reminder of how richly the Father forgives.

Week 3 - The Good Samaritan

Ice-Breaker

Do you know anything about your next door neighbour? See if you can mention three things about them. How about making a point of meeting one of your neighbours this week?

Ministry Focus

Place a box of tissues in view and ask everyone to take a moment to recall a time when a strangers' plight moved their heart with compassion. Ask anyone who would like to share how they have responded in such a situation.

The Book of Luke

Ice Breakers and Creative Ideas

Week 4 - Rich toward God

Ice-Breaker

If you were given R20 000 to further God's Kingdom in any way, how would you put it to use?

Ministry Focus

Set out an empty tray and ask everybody at the end of the lesson to put their wallets on the tray as a sign of surrendering their material blessings and as a commitment to use their riches not only for personal enrichment.

Week 5 - Keep a look out

Ice-Breaker

Discuss your morning routine and how you prepare for the day (starting with brushing your teeth or whatever you do first.)

Ministry Focus

Put an alarm clock within sight and set it so that the alarm goes off some time during the lesson. Explain that this is an illustration of how we should be ready at all times as the alarm could go off at an unpredictable time.

Week 6 - Humility

Ice-Breaker

Have you ever heard of the expression 'pride comes before a fall'? Did you have to learn the lesson of humility the hard way? Share an incident from your childhood when you were showing off in front of friends/family and things did not quite go according to plan.

Ministry Focus

Have two side plates ready; one beautiful plate with a piece of cake or perfectly browned toast and the other with a slice of badly burnt toast. (It would be good to put the burnt toast in a chipped or dirty plate.) Explain that these symbolize pride and humility before the Lord. He definitely has a 'taste' for humility, but will not be involved where pride is, just as one is put off by the burnt toast.

The Book of Luke

Ice Breakers and Creative Ideas

Week 7 - The Persistent Widow

Ice-Breaker

What do you do when your children keep on asking you for something? Do you give in? Do you 'lose your cool'? Do you stick to your original answer and remind them that you had said 'NO!'

Ministry Focus

Set out a telephone guide, with a telephone next to it. Ask everyone to recall previous experiences with persistent callers, some selling timeshare or likely products or others dialling the same wrong number repeatedly. Draw a comparison between the way these calls have worn you out and the principles of persistent prayer as discussed today.

Week 8 - The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Ice-Breaker

Ask two people to enact a conversation between 'proud' people. Then ask two others to enact a conversation between a 'proud' person and a 'humble' person.

Ministry Focus

Set out two brands of tinned food – one 'no name brand' and the other a well-known brand. Place a tin opener on top of the cheaper tin. Explain that these tins reflect the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector. The Pharisee might have looked better, something like the tin of brand name food, but because he thought he was sufficient and acceptable in himself, he was as useless as a tin without an opener.

Week 9 - The Ten Talents

Ice-Breaker

Imagine working in a department with ten others. You realize that you will not be able to reach your target unless you start helping your colleagues who are lagging behind. Your boss notices this and reports to management, where after you are appointed to head up a new division dealing with employee support. Share how you would feel and what you would do if such an opportunity suddenly came your way.

Ministry Focus

Pray that the women in our city will be enthused to share His love through their talents. Arrange a few objects to represent the different talents we have received from the Lord, e.g. a wooden spoon (cooking); a needle and scissors (sewing); a calculator (maths); a music sheet; study books; a tennis ball or running shoes (sport); drawing pencils and a paintbrush (art). Ask your group to identify the talents represented. Think of others you could add to showcase the specific giftings in your group.