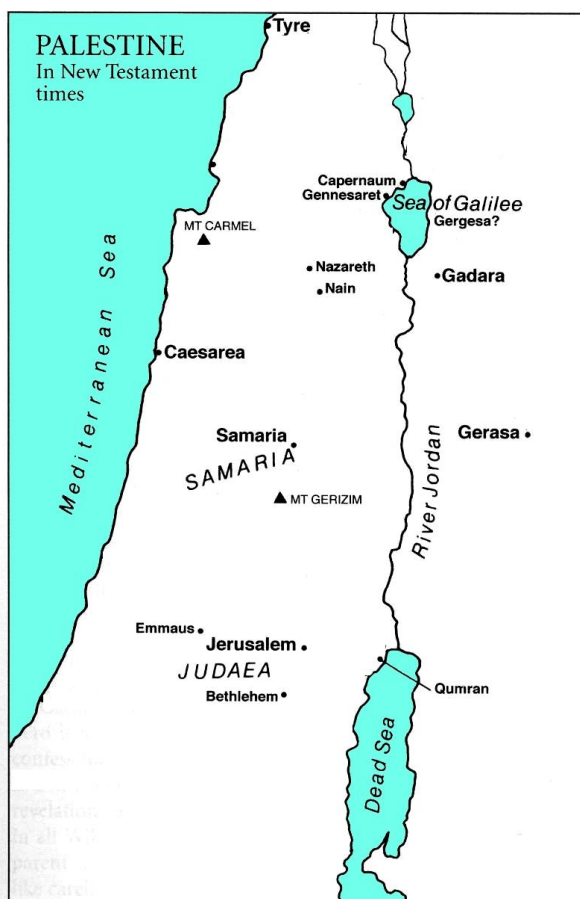


### 9 studies on Luke chs 5 to 8

Luke tells us that he had had a chance to stand back from the extraordinary events that had been going on, to talk to the people involved, to read some earlier writings, and to make his own quite full version so that readers could know the truth about the things to do with Jesus. He was an educated and cultured man, the first real historian to write about Jesus. His book places Jesus not only at the heart of the Jewish world of the first century, but at the heart of the Roman world into which the Christian gospel exploded and which it was destined to change so radically. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p xii.

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: Behold the Son of God by Stephen Gibson (Bible study booklet on Luke chs 3 – 8), my 10 studies on Luke chs 1 to 5, the Bible Brief from The Briefing magazine # 35 & # 342; Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright, The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock, If I were God, I'd end all the pain by John Dickson, 6 Stages of Forgiving Others by Georg Karl, Isaiah Surprising Salvation by Kirk Patston pp 92-93, The New Bible Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Nooma videos "Dust" and "Luggage", part of John Dickson's sermon on 11/5/2008 at St Andrews, Roseville titled "Things you never knew about Jesus – Women", and some of the soundtrack from The Turning by Tim Winton. Ed O'Connor 2014



## Study 1, Luke 5:1–16, Teaching, fishing and healing

### Getting started

1. What do you remember about the events leading up to your conversion?

### Bible

2. Read Luke 5:1-11.  
Simon Peter, his brother Andrew and their partners James and John have fished all night and caught nothing. Now they must wash their nets. If nets were not washed and stretched out to dry they would rot and break.

From Behold the Son of God by Stephen Gibson p 10.

Give 2 reasons why Jesus chose the boat belonging to Simon?

It seems that he'd [Jesus] begun to teach a group by the shore, but the crowd got bigger and bigger and there simply wasn't room. So he improvised. Along the lakeshore close to Capernaum there is a sequence of steep inlets, a zigzagging shoreline with each inlet forming a natural amphitheatre. To this day, if you get in a boat and push out a little from the shore, you can talk in quite a natural voice, and anyone on the slopes of the inlet can hear you clearly – more clearly, in fact, than if you were right there on the shore with them. Jesus was simply exploiting the geography of the area and the ready availability of a boat.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 53.

3. Simon knew that Jesus was no fisherman, but he had enough respect for the teacher not to scoff when Jesus suggested fishing at an absurd time (5:4-5). (Gibson p 10.)  
(a) How did Jesus show to Simon that he had authority over more than religious things (5:6-10)?

(b) Why do you think authority over fish affected Simon so profoundly?

(c) What kind of authority would get your attention that strongly?

4. *When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, 'Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!'* (v8). Simon Peter's words remind us of the experience of others in the immediate presence of God (see Ex 20:18-21, Job 42:1-6, Is 6:1-8) (Gibson p 11.)

(a) When are you in the presence of God?

(b) How do you react? Why?

As long as **Simon's boat** is being used for a pulpit, the owner has no objection to Jesus's saying in it what he likes. But when it reverts to being a fishing-boat, it is Simon's once more, and Jesus no longer has a say in how it is to be used. Fishing is Simon's job. In the same way, people will listen to Jesus, will consider

what he says, and will even ask him to 'make them better' when they are sick; but for him to do as he does in this fourth episode, and to interfere in their job, their home, their leisure, that is another thing altogether. Those matters have nothing, surely, to do with 'religion'.

So Jesus, the carpenter turned preacher, tells Simon, the fisherman, how to fish. We may guess the tone of Simon's answer (5:5), and imagine the expression on his face! . . . Yet the word of power shows that Jesus knows even more about Simon's job than Simon does himself, and it has a very material effect on the brothers' situation (5:6-7).

Many would have to admit that it is at this point that the word of Jesus comes home to them – literally, because it invades the privacy of their own workaday life, instead of staying respectably in a Sunday church service where it belongs.

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 68-69.

5. Read Luke 5:12-16. Jesus' healing of the leper is typical of his personal encounters.  
(a) Why did Jesus first touch the man, then heal him (v13)?

(b) What can we learn from this?

**Local priests** in all the towns and villages acted as teachers and administrators of the law. If someone wanted a clean bill of health, there was a standard procedure laid down in the law (set out in Leviticus 13), and it was the priest's job to examine the person and declare them clean or unclean. Jesus intends to cure the man; but he also intends, of course, that he will be able to rejoin his family, his village and his community as a full and accepted member. He must therefore go to the priest; and, when opportunity occurs (that is, the next time he goes to Jerusalem on pilgrimage), he must make the offering laid down in the law to show his gratitude to God in the appropriate way.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 57.

**The leper** was not just ill; he was outcast. He had not simply lost his health; he had lost his family, his friends, his home, his livelihood. No-one would, indeed no-one was allowed to, associate with him. So we can imagine how with the tingling of his revitalized flesh this man felt a thrill of emotion as Jesus stretched out his hand, and *touched* him'. For it was literally a renewed contact with his fellow man, perhaps the first for many years; and it signaled a coming reunion with family and friends, a reintegration with the society from which the disease had cut him off. It was to bring about a mending of all those broken relationships. . . But one of the great key words of the gospel is 'reconciliation'; and as we are reconciled to God, so we are reconciled among ourselves, and the church whose members are no longer 'lepers' to one another, but united in fellowship and love, is a most powerful testimony to the power of the living God [John 13:35, 1 John 4:8, 12].

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 69-70.

## To finish

6. In keeping vaguely with the leper story . . .  
(a) What is it about some people that you don't like?

(b) How could you get over that enough to start liking them?

## Study 2, Luke 5:17-39, Conflicts over healing, eating and fasting

### Getting started

1. What new thing have you been using that meant leaving behind or replacing the old thing?

### Bible

2. Read Luke 5:17-26.

**The word “Pharisee”** comes from the Hebrew word “to divide, to separate”. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law probably developed out of the ministry of Ezra, the priest, who taught the Jewish people to obey the Law of Moses and be separate from the heathen nations around them (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 8-9). Their great desire was to understand and magnify God’s law and apply it in their daily lives. However, the movement soon became quite legalistic. Furthermore, the Pharisees did not practise what they preached and Jesus exposes both their hypocrisy and the shallowness of their religion.

From Behold the Son of God by Stephen Gibson p 12.

**The Pharisees** were an unofficial but powerful Jewish pressure group through most of the first centuries BC and AD. Largely lay-led, though including some priests, their aim was to purify Israel through intensified observance of the Jewish law (Torah), developing their own traditions about the precise meaning and application of scripture, their own patterns of prayer and other devotion, and their own calculations of the national hope. Though not all legal experts were Pharisees, most Pharisees were thus legal experts.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 312 & 313.

#### **Experts/teachers of the law = scribes**

In a world where many could not write, or not very well, a trained class of writers (‘scribes’ [= teachers of the law]) performed the important function of drawing up contracts for business, marriage, etc. Many scribes would thus be legal experts, and quite possibly Pharisees, though being a scribe was compatible with various political and religious standpoints. They believed that Israel’s law, the Torah, should be applied to every area of life, and so combined in themselves the modern roles of ‘lawyer’ and ‘religious teacher’, and much besides. It is small wonder that such people took offence at what Jesus was saying. If he was right, their entire programme was based on a huge mistake. If they were right, the mistake was his. The fierce opposition between them continues on and off right through to the final showdown in Jerusalem.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 146 & 316.

(a) Why do you think the Pharisees and teachers of the law were there?

(b) What is the point Jesus is making by the question in v23?

(c) How does Jesus prove that he can forgive sins?

(d) How has Jesus proven that he has forgiven *our* sins?

(e) Who is Jesus referring to by using the term “Son of Man” (see Dan 7:9-14)?

Here [Luke 5:17] they [**the Pharisees**] are in force, from all over the small country. This may seem a bit excessive; why should they gather like this to check out a young prophet who is doing and saying strange things? The answer is that their particular cause – for which they were from time to time prepared to take drastic action – was the coming kingdom of God; and if someone else appeared on the scene who seemed to be talking about the same thing *but getting it all wrong*, they wanted to know about it. . .

The Pharisees’ kingdom-plan, in line with plenty of earlier Jewish aims and ideals, was to intensify observance of the Jewish law, the Torah. That, they believed, would create the conditions for God to act, as he had promised, to judge the pagans who were oppressing Israel and to liberate his people. In addition, some of the more militant believed that it was their God-given duty to take the law into their own hands, and to use violence to kick-start the process of revolution. Jesus’ kingdom-vision was very different – almost diametrically opposite, in fact. Since he was drawing crowds and becoming well known, they needed to find out what was going on.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 59 & 60.

3. Read Luke 5:27-39. Why would Levi throw a banquet for Jesus and invite all his friends (v29)?

**Tax-collectors** are never popular, but in Jesus’ day it was worse. They were extortionists. And, more than that: they were working for the Romans, or for Herod, and their necessary contact with Gentiles put them under political suspicion (collaborating with the enemy) and ritual exclusion (they might well be unclean). It’s significant that when Levi throws a party, most of the others present are, like him, tax-collectors. They had to befriend each other, since most ordinary folk wouldn’t have anything to do with them.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 63 & 64.

4. Why are the Pharisees upset with Jesus (vv21, 30 & 33)?

5. How is Jesus like a doctor?

6. Why was fasting inappropriate when Jesus was present (vv33-35)?

**Fasting** in Judaism, and in the various sects and groups of Jesus’ day, was a sign of waiting, of bewailing the present time when God’s kingdom still had not arrived. It was a way of looking back to the disasters that had befallen Israel, and humbling oneself in repentance to pray for God’s mercy.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 64.

7. What does the parable mean when it talks about (a) patches on garments and wine and wineskins?

(b) How does this apply to us?

But – the last line [v39] is unique to Luke, and it's a solemn warning – don't expect the people who have given their lives to the old movements to be happy about **switching allegiance**. They are likely to stay with what they know. They have got used to the old wine and are frightened they won't like the new.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 65.

8. How might v39 affect the way we do evangelism?

### To finish

9. Do you think of yourself as being sick (a sinner) or healthy (righteous)? Why?



- the Pharisees?

4. Read Luke 6:6-11.
  - (a) What did the Pharisees think Jesus was doing wrong?
  - (b) Why did Jesus do what he did?
  - (c) Looking at things with a broader perspective, what is the main point of Luke 6:1-11?
  
5. Do Jesus' actions in Luke 6:1-11 help us work out what we should or shouldn't do on a Sunday? Why/why not?

The earliest piece of evidence relating to the Christian observance of the **first day of the week** lies in 1 Cor 16:1-2 but there is no explicit reference to an actual assembly. Acts 20:7 is more specific and probably reflects the continued Christian use of the Jewish calendar under which the Lord's day would begin at sunset on Saturday. . . . On the other hand, there is no trace in the NT of any sabbatarian controversy. The Lord's day, while fulfilling all the beneficent purposes of God in the institution of the Sabbath for mankind, was kept 'not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit' (Rom 7:6).

From The New Bible Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, p 694.

The **sabbath** day became a very important feature of Jewish religion, and when their vision was clearest the Jews understood that the weekly day of rest was a 'ritual anticipation of the advent of the messianic age' – a kind of picture, in the form of a religious observance, of what the whole of life would once again be like when God's Messiah comes into the world to set things right – and therefore a thing of delight. But it was easy for that truth to become obscured, and for the sabbath to be hedged around with so many 'Thou shalt nots' that instead of a delight it became a misery. It is into this situation that Jesus comes, in Luke 6:1-11, to renew once more the vision of what the Sabbath really is.

This calls in question some of the traditional views about Sunday observance, the kind which lend colour to the ill-natured jibe that when the fourth commandment says "Thou shalt not work on Saturdays", it really means 'Thou shalt not play on Sundays'. We should indeed 'remember the sabbath day, but not as if we were still obeying the law-bound religion of Moses, which ruled that certain activities were wrong on the sabbath but right on any other day. If you apply such rules to the Christian Sunday, you are observing 'days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured in vain', says Paul [Gal 4:10f, Col 2:16f].

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 80-81.

### To finish

6. (a) Say we make rules for ourselves on what we should or shouldn't do on a Sunday. What is good and what is bad about this approach?
  
- (b) Say we decide that you can do anything you like on Sundays. What is good and what is bad about this approach?

### Study 4, Luke 6:12–49, The Sermon on the Plain

#### Getting started

1. What do you expect from the sermon in church?
  
2. How is the sermon better (or worse?) than reading the Bible passage and thinking about it yourself?

#### Bible

3. Read Luke 6:12-26. Jesus prayed all night before choosing the twelve apostles (6:12-16). The context (before and after the present text), suggests reasons. What reasons can you find?
  
4. The crowd of people who have come to hear Jesus came from far and wide (6:17).
  - (a) Why had they come? (6:18-19)
  
  - (b) To whom does Jesus direct his teaching (6:20)? Is this significant? Why/why not?
  
  - (c) What is the connection between selecting the twelve and the Sermon on the Plain?
  
5. Read Luke 6:20-26 again. Jesus begins his sermon by contrasting two kinds of people. He discusses each in four parallel ways. (Gibson p 14.)
  - (a) Who is blessed and why? (6:20-23)
  
  - (b) Who is pitiable and why? (6:24-26)
  
  - (c) Which of this shocking list, particular strikes you? Why?
  
  - (d) In one sentence sum up what Jesus means by 6:20-26.

He gave them clear orders as to how his vision of God's work would go forward. **Four promises, and four warnings**, presented in terms of Israel's great scriptural codes: in the book called Deuteronomy, there were long lists of 'blessings' for those who obeyed the law, and 'curses' for those who didn't. These formed part of the charter, the covenant, the binding agreement between God and Israel. Now, with the renewed Israel formed around him, Jesus gives them his own version of the same thing.

And a radical version it is. It's an upside-down code, or perhaps (Jesus might have said) a right-way-up code instead of the upside-down ones people had been following. God is doing something quite new: as Jesus had emphasized in the synagogue at Nazareth, in chapter 4, he is fulfilling his promises at last, and this will mean good news for all the people who haven't had any for a long time. The poor, the hungry, those who weep, those who are hated: blessings on them! Not that there's anything virtuous about being poor or hungry in itself. But when injustice is reigning, the world will have to be turned once more the right way up for God's justice and kingdom to come to birth.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 71.

6. Read Luke 6:27-36.  
Having turned the world's values upside down, Jesus proceeds to overturn the world's standards of love and fairness. (Gibson p 15.)  
(a) In general, what are Jesus' principles for life?

(b) Explain what you think it means to love your enemies? What motivation does Jesus give us to do it?

**The kingdom** that Jesus preached and lived was all about a glorious, uproarious, absurd generosity. Think of the best thing you can do for the worst person, and go ahead and do it. Think of what you'd really like someone to do for you, and do it for them. Think of the people to whom you are tempted to be nasty, and lavish generosity on them instead. These instructions have a fresh, springlike quality. They are all about new life bursting out energetically, like flowers growing through concrete and startling everyone with their colour and vigour.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 73.

5. Read Luke 6:37-45.  
(a) "Do not judge, and you will not be judged." (v37). How are we to square this off with 6:43-45 where Jesus commands us to discern right from wrong in ourselves and others?

There are two particularly astonishing things about these instructions. First, their **simplicity**: they are obvious, clear, direct and memorable. Second, their **scarcity**. How many people do you know who really live like this? How many communities do you know where these guidelines are rules of life? What's gone wrong? Has God changed? Or have we forgotten who he really is?

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 75.

(b) When are you most likely to be looking for the speck in your brother's eye and miss the plank in your own (6:41-42)?

Perhaps because, with so many of their rules and regulations, they were trying to make Israel holier and holier as a way of separating their nation *from* other nations; but the point of the law and the prophets was to

make Israel the light *to* the nations,. They were **hunting for specks** in each other's eyes with magnifying glasses, but couldn't see that there was a plank – a single massive disobedience – in their own.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 77.

6. Read Luke 6:43-45.  
How are our fruit, heart and mouth connected?
  
7. Read Luke 6:46-49.  
Jesus concludes by warning his listeners of the long-term results of their present choice of lifestyle. The wise builder is the one who hears Jesus' words and puts them into practice. So who is the foolish builder (v49)? (an atheist, a church attender or who?)

### To finish

8. (a) How do you build your life on Jesus' words?
  
- (b) Is it about obeying rules? Why/why not?

## Study 5, Luke 7:1–17, Faith of the centurion and the widow

### Getting started

1. What is faith?
2. What is faith in Jesus?
3. Does faith have quantity i.e. can someone have *more* faith than someone else?  
Give reasons for your answer.

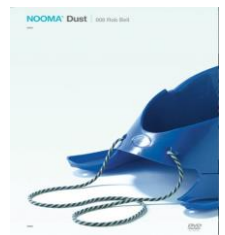
For most Australians **'faith'** means something like 'superstition'. 'Faith' is an irrational, spiritual experience whereby you believe things which you know by your rational mind cannot be true. It is a leap in the dark, not just with a lack of evidence, but when the evidence points in the opposite direction. 'Faith' is a feeling that some people have, but many are not blessed with. . . . In the Scriptures, 'faith' is nothing like this. Biblical 'faith' is firm confidence in a person, or his word, or some fact. 'Faith' is closely associated with the concepts of truth and certainty - it is often a matter of 'faithfulness'.

From The Briefing # 35 Oct 16 1989.

### Video

For a change we could watch a video. The Nooma video, "Dust", only goes for 14 mins and the speaker, Rob Bell, doesn't *only* speak about faith so don't focus only on that. Rob Bell says some other very interesting things as well. We will talk about the video after it has finished and if you have any questions we will deal with them too.

4. What was the main point of the video?



5. Was there anything that surprised you in the video or anything you didn't know before seeing the video?
6. (a) Have you any questions about the video or was there anything you didn't understand?  
  
(b) Did you get the thing with the neighbour shovelling snow?

**Ans.** At the beginning Rob Bell says he wants to be a person who does the right thing, like help your neighbour shovelling snow. But he doesn't do that. At the end of the video his neighbour has cleared her drive *and* her neighbour's drive. The neighbour has done the right thing and set the example of love and grace.

(c) Do you know why the video was called "Dust"?

7. Did you agree with Rob Bell's thoughts on faith?  
 (a) "It is good to have faith in God but God has faith in us. God chooses us because he has faith that we can be like Jesus."

(b) Rob Bell says Peter started sinking because he lost faith in *himself*. Agree or disagree? Why?

8. What was good about the video?

9. What was not so good about the video?

"**May you** believe in God and may you come to see that God believes in you. May you have faith in Jesus and may you come to see that Jesus has faith that you can be like him, a person of love and compassion and truth, a person of forgiveness and peace and grace, joy and hope and may you be covered in the dust of your rabbi, Jesus."

### **Bible**

10. Read Luke 7:1-10.  
 Only twice do the Gospels record that Jesus was "amazed" (Mark 6:6 and here in 7:9). What was it about the centurion that so amazed Jesus? (Gibson p 16.)
11. Read Luke 7:11-17.  
 Visualise the two processions in verses 11-13 meeting just outside the town gate.  
 (a) Why is there no request for help, no sign of faith from the widow?

(b) Why did Jesus raise the young man (7:13-15)?

(c) What does this focus suggest about another dimension of faith in God's power?

(d) What response did the crowd give and why? (compare 7:16-17 with 1 Kings 17:9 and 17-24)

12. Jesus news is for "the poor" (according to Luke 4:18).  
Who are the poor who receive Jesus' ministry in:  
(a) 7:1-10?

(b) 7:11-17?

### **To finish**

13. Why are some people superstitious?

14. What would you say to someone who said believing in Jesus was superstition?

## Study 6, Luke 7:18-35, Doubt of John the Baptist

### Getting started

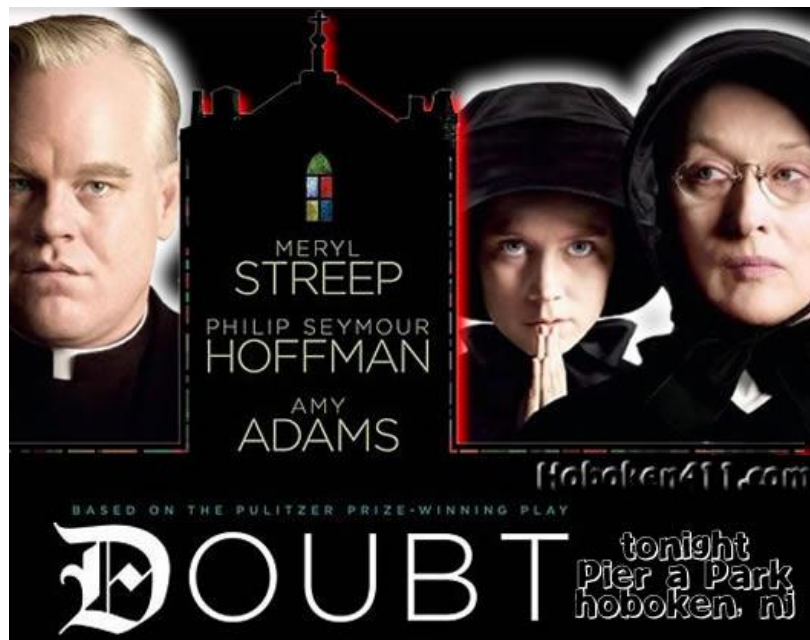
1. Is it ok to have doubts? Why/why not?

My strength – if it can be called that – is in **my capacity to doubt**. There is hardly a belief which others hold sacred that I have not at one time or other seriously questioned. Some I have rejected forever. I don't know if this is due to a religion-less upbringing, a suspicious personality or just plain pride, but for some reason I find it difficult to believe in something strongly if I have not spent time doubting it just as vigorously. . . .

This is not to say I don't attempt to answer my own questions – I do. In fact, that's the beauty of doubt. It forces you to sit loosely enough to your 'beliefs' that you begin to look at them objectively. It makes you investigate, search out, and once you're done, either to stop believing or to start believing with fresh conviction.

From If I were God, I'd end all the pain by John Dickson pp 9-10.

- 2.



In the film “Doubt” Sister Aloysius, played by Meryl Streep, is the headmistress of a boy’s Catholic school. She and Sister James, played by Amy Adams, have doubts about Father Flynn, played by Philip Seymour Hoffman, because they see and hear things that hint at his mis-dealings with a particular boy at the school. Sister Aloysius does everything in her power to get rid of Father Flynn and even lies to help her case against him. She succeeds in removing Father Flynn but by the end of the movie Sister Aloysius has doubts about her own salvation.

We could have doubts about our own salvation if we took this line of questioning:

Am I a Christian?

Was I fair dinkum when I made a commitment to follow Jesus?

How can I call myself a Christian with all the terrible things I've done and continue to do?

When I examine my motives I wonder if I am doing things for God's glory or for my own glory in order to make myself look good?

What is the assumption that lies beneath all these questions?

**Answer:** It's all about me. It's all about what I've done and what I think.

But in deciding whether or not I'm a Christian it's not about what I've done, it's about what Jesus has done.

The questions we should be asking are:

*Did Jesus die on the cross for the sins of his people?*

The answer is yes and it's all about what Jesus has done.

*Did Jesus rise again from the dead?*

The answer is yes and it's all about what Jesus has done.

You can believe those things and still not be a Christian because there is one more step.

*Repent and follow Jesus as Lord.*

And even this is all about Jesus because Jesus chooses his people (see John 15:16 and Matt 11:27). God draws us to Jesus (see John 6:44). God is in control of all things, even our thinking, and when we decide to repent and follow Jesus as Lord, God is behind that decision. God is in control of our decision to make Jesus our Lord.

Our faith is based on Jesus and what he's done and not on what we do.

## Bible

3. Read Luke 7:18-23.

**Herod Antipas**, though officially a 'tetrarch' – a kind of second rank prince – was working on rebuilding the Temple, which was itself a way of claiming royal status. King Solomon, after all, had been the first Temple-builder, and some of Israel's greatest kings had rebuilt or restored the Temple. Herod was hoping to inherit his father's title, king of the Jews.

But John had other ideas. The true Messiah, the true king of the Jews, was coming, and his coming would bring devastating judgment. The idea of the Messiah as judge as well as saviour is an important part of mainstream Jewish expectation; the Messiah would bring God's justice to the world, and this would involve naming and dealing with evil. . .

Herod Antipas had had an affair with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, after which she had divorced Philip (it was unheard of in Jewish law for a wife to divorce her husband) and married Antipas. John's denunciation of this flagrant and incestuous adultery was not simply a moral criticism. Part of the point was that if Herod had any pretensions to being the true king of the Jews, behaviour like that would prove him a sham. The Lord's anointed would never do such a thing. Like Elijah opposing Ahab (1 Kings 17 – 18), John spoke out fearlessly against Herod, and took the consequences. . . .

John, in prison, was clearly puzzled. Jesus wasn't doing what he had expected. If Jesus really was the Messiah, why wasn't he establishing the sort of messianic kingdom John wanted – presumably including liberation for prisoners like himself?

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 36, 37 & 87.

(a) What do John's disciples want to know?

(b) Why do they ask that question (v 20)?

(c) How did Jesus respond (vv 21-23)?

(d) How does Jesus respond to our doubts?

4. Read Luke 7:24-35.

Jesus highly commends John's unique work in salvation history. But he has harsh words for the Pharisees and experts in the Law, comparing them to petulant children whom nobody can please. (Gibson p 17.)

(a) If John the Baptist had doubts, yet was a great man of God, how does that make you feel?

(b) Do you feel like "a reed swayed by the wind" at the moment? Why/why not?

When Herod Antipas chose the symbols for his coins, just a few years before the time of Jesus' public ministry, his favourite was **a typical Galilean reed**. You would see whole beds of them swaying in the breeze by the shores of the sea of Galilee. A reed would symbolise the beauty and fertility of that area.

'What did you go out to see?' asked Jesus to the crowds who had gone to be baptized by John, and were following him. 'A reed swaying in the breeze?' They would have got the message. Were you looking for a new king – another one like old so-and-so up the road? If they missed the point, the next line brought it closer [to] home. Were you looking for someone wearing the latest splendid fashions? If so, you were looking in the wrong place: the royal palace is the place for luxurious clothes. Well then, what were you looking for? A prophet! Yes indeed, but something more than just 'a' prophet. This was a special prophet indeed. This was the Advance Guard, the Preparer.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 86, 87.

(c) Read Psalm 13 to see how David turns his doubts and frustrations into a prayer to God.

### To finish

5. What would you say to a Christian friend who says because of doubts they have stopped coming regularly to church?

## Study 7, Luke 7:36-50, Forgiveness

### Getting started

1. Have you ever been badly hurt or wronged by someone? How did you feel?

### Video

Another Nooma video by Rob Bell, this one, called “Luggage”, is on forgiveness. We will talk about the video after it has finished and if you have any questions we will deal with them too.

2. What do you think is the take home message from the video?



3. (a) How did you feel about the ending (the car gets hit by a truck)?

(b) What was the point he was making?

4. Rob Bell said that you haven't truly forgiven someone unless you can wish them well. Agree or disagree? Why/why not?
5. How do we forgive someone?

Willingness, ability, decision, action, overcoming, re-labelling, wishing them well.  
From 6 Stages of Forgiving Others by Georg Karl.

**“May you** forgive as you’ve been forgiven.  
May you give to others what’s been given to you.  
May you set someone free and find out it was you.  
May you do it today because you might not have the chance tomorrow.”

### Bible

6. Read Luke 7:36-50

Despite the Pharisees’ public rejection of Jesus (7:29-35), one of them, Simon, invites him to **dinner**. A drama unfolds, involving some terrible table manners by both Simon and the gate crashing sinful woman. In those days dinners were not private. Uninvited guests could have entered and listened but a prostitute would not have been welcome. People did not sit at the table, but reclined on low couches, leaning on the left arm with the head towards the table and the feet stretched out. Normally the head was anointed by the host when a guest entered the house; the feet were touched only when washed by the lowest servant of the house. A woman almost never unbound her hair in public. (Gibson p 18.)

7. The woman’s faith in Jesus is obvious. But Simon shows signs of some kind of faith in Jesus (verses 36a, 39, 40b).  
(a) How does Jesus proceed to draw out his faith?

(b) Simon may have invited Jesus as some sort of test. What ended up happening?

8. What does Jesus teach us about:  
(a) sin? (v41a)

(b) our amount of sin? (v41b)

(c) our ability to solve our own sin problem? (v42)

(d) the link between love and forgiveness? (v43)

(e) peace (v 50)?

9. The woman showed great love to Jesus and Simon showed little. What had each done or failed to do?  
(a) the sinful woman (7:36-38).

(b) Simon (7:44-46).

**The balance of the scene** is superb, with Jesus keeping his poise between the outrageous adoration of the woman and the equally outrageous rudeness of his host – and yet coming up with something fresh, something which, to the onlookers, was just as outrageous as the behaviour of the other two. The story sweeps to and fro between the three of them with passion and power.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 90.

10. (a) On what basis is the woman ‘forgiven’ and ‘saved’?

(b) What would have to change for Simon to be ‘forgiven’ and ‘saved’?

### To finish

11. (a) Out of these three – sin, death & peace – which is the biggest issue for non-Christians today? Why?

(b) Out of these three – sin, death & peace – which is the biggest issue for Christians today? Why?

(c) What are the implications of these answers in how we speak to people?

## Getting started

- ## Bible

<u>Soil</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
(c) the thorns	(v14)

(d) the good soil (v15)

3. As the crowds grow, Jesus increasingly teaches in parables.  
(a) What are his reasons (8:8b-10)?

(b) How is the Parable of the Sower about other parables?

(c) How are parables an effective test of a listener's sincerity?

**Luke 8:10 quotes Isaiah 6:9.** The book of Isaiah begins with a description of the wickedness of the people of Judah and God's impending judgement of them. Isaiah volunteers for the task of preaching to these people. Usually a prophet's words were to convince the people of their sin and cause them to repent but God tells Isaiah that his preaching will only confirm their hard heartedness and blindness. As a parable preacher, Jesus saw himself performing the same function as Isaiah: preaching to make people blind and to confirm their hard-heartedness. This worked itself out in at least two ways. As Jesus' ministry came to an end, his act of cleansing the temple and the tearing of the temple curtain at his death were signals that the end of national Israel had come. Like Isaiah, Jesus was at work as Israel was coming to an end. From another point of view, Jesus worked to bring himself to an end! The parables confused and provoked people who turned on him and killed him. Jesus, as the true Israel, fell under the judgement of God. This was as God had planned and, strangely, just what he wanted.

From Isaiah Surprising Salvation pp 92-93 by Kirk Patston.

#### To finish

4. (a) Do you know people who you thought were interested in Christianity but they seem to have drifted away?
- (b) Do any of the reasons given in this passage apply to people you have known?
- (c) Do you know of other reasons that people drift away?
- (d) In this context what does the expression "drifting away" mean?

## Study 9, Luke 8:16-56, The lamp, Jesus' mother and brothers, miracles

### Getting started

1. How would you explain to a non-Christian what it felt like to be born again?

"It was like a hot knife going into me like I was butter and this knife was opening me up and suddenly I could see all this possibility in the world and, something more than that, there was hope and beauty where all I felt before was hollow." Sherry (Miranda Otto) to Rae (Rose Byrne) in the car in the film "The Turning".

Notice the author, Tim Winton, doesn't use Christian clichés when Sherry describes how it felt and when Rae does use a cliché she immediately explains what it means in ordinary language i.e. "the moment you suddenly got it, the change, the moment you turned or whatever you guys call it."

2. What are people afraid of?

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### Bible

3. Read Luke 8:16-18.  
Jesus' second parable of the lamp reinforces his teaching in the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15). Consider your habits of listening to God's truth. What helps you to retain it and persevere in it?
4. Read Luke 8:19-21.  
Luke uses the family episode as a live illustration of listening to God. (Gibson p 21.)  
What does Jesus highlight by this illustration?

That's how important the kingdom is: it's even more important than the claims of **family**, which are themselves the most important normal claims a person can have. It isn't that Jesus is being like a careless businessman who undervalues his family because he's so focused on the next big decision. Jesus is like the most caring family person you can imagine, who nevertheless knows that hearing and doing God's word is even more important. . . . Jesus knowing that his family didn't understand his vocation (but hoping that they would come to do so in time), couldn't allow them to distract and divert him from the vital and urgent work he was undertaking.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 98.

5. For each of the 3 passages below, what elements of fear are involved and what do each of these incidents say about Jesus?  
(a) Luke 8:22-25.  
- fears  
  
- Jesus

(b) Luke 8:26-39.

- fears

- Jesus

The word 'Galilee' referred to various parts of the area, depending on how the borders were redrawn with successive political settlements; but it mostly meant the area to the north and west of the lake. [See map on page 1.]

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 100.

In the ancient world ills of the first kind were called, out of mere ignorance, demon-possession; in fact they were probably epilepsy and similar disorders. Such at least was the view of a more recent and more sophisticated ignorance! With today's widespread interest in the occult, he would be a rash man who would now simply deny the older diagnosis. Perhaps the men of the Bible were right after all when they spoke of two distinct and equally real afflictions, 'diseases . . . and demons also' (Luke 4:40-41).

From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock p 67.

(c) Luke 8:40-56.

- fears

- Jesus

Purity taboos were vital simply to maintain public health. The Jewish scriptures and subsequent traditions had codified and elaborated them into almost an art form. And two of the most obvious sources of pollution were: corpses, and women with internal bleeding.

In other words, a first-century reader coming upon this double story would know very well that Jesus was, apparently, incurring double pollution. In the first case he couldn't help it; the woman came and touched him without his knowing either that she was doing it or what she was suffering from; but officially he had become 'unclean' none the less. That is partly why the woman hoped to remain hidden, and why she was shy about coming forward, and then crushingly embarrassed when eventually she had to.

From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 104.

## To finish

6. We've been looking at various types of fear. How does Jesus ease or extinguish those fears?