

9 studies on Luke chs 9 to 12

“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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Notes

1. In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: Stephen Gibson's Bible study booklet on Luke chs 9 - 13 from term 3, 2002; Bible Briefs from The Briefing magazine # 310 and # 324; the Pathway Bible Guide, Following Jesus by Gordon Cheng; Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright, The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock, The Message of John by Bruce Milne, The New Bible Dictionary, the Life Application Study Bible and The Shack by Wm. Paul Young.

2. Some groups may find the studies too long for the time allocated. My suggestion is for individuals to do the whole study before you meet but if the group runs out of time then skip to the “To finish” questions for the last few minutes. Or if the group gets involved in a particularly interesting and relevant point then run with it rather than feel obliged to complete all the remaining questions.

3. Throughout the studies I've added paragraphs to fill in the extra detail that I thought would help groups better understand the Biblical text.

4. I'm always trying to improve Bible studies so your comments, good or bad, and ideas about future studies may help produce better studies. Please write down any thoughts you have and send them to me at edwardeoconor@hotmail.com.

Ed O'Conor June 2009

Study 1, Luke 9:1-27, 12, 5000, Deny Self

INTRODUCTION

Earlier chapters of Luke give us a picture of who Jesus is. People asked the question (4:22, 5:21), supernatural voices from both heaven and hell answered it (3:22, 4:41). By these voices, and Jesus' deeds and words, we get the answer that Jesus is both man and God.

Luke moves on to give us a picture of who and what Jesus' people are. The new Israel begins to emerge from the old Israel of chapter 6. Jesus replaces the outworn Jewish system with a new religion and a new nation of his own. His people are to be known as his 'church' who are 'called out' from the kingdom of Satan, as their predecessors were called first out of heathendom and then out of slavery in Egypt. The miracles of chapter 8 are both concerned with the instruction of these 'new Israelites' as well as demonstrating who Jesus is. From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock p 105 and 106.

Getting started

1. Did you know any Christians before you became one? What did you think of them?

2. What did you think of Jesus before you got converted?

Bible

3. Read Luke 9:1-9.
 - (a) What does Jesus ask the Twelve to do?

 - (b) What does Jesus prepare them for (v5) and how should they react?

 - (c) Thinking long term, what is Jesus training them for?

The Twelve, apostle, disciple

'Apostle' means 'one who is sent'. It could be used of an ambassador or official delegate. In the New Testament it is sometimes used specifically of Jesus' inner circle of twelve; but Paul sees not only himself but several others outside the Twelve as 'apostles', the criterion being whether the person had personally seen the risen Jesus. Jesus' own choice of twelve close associates symbolised his plan to renew God's people, Israel (who had traditionally thought of themselves as having twelve tribes); after the death of Judas Iscariot (Matt 27:5, Acts 1:18) Matthias was chosen by lot to take his place, preserving the symbolic meaning. During Jesus' lifetime they, and many other followers, were seen as his 'disciples', which means 'pupils' or 'apprentices'. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 303.

4. What happened to John (vv 7 – 9)? See Mark 6:14-28.

Herod

“Herod king of Judea” (Luke 1:5) or Herod the Great was given the title ‘king of the Jews’ by the Roman Senate, advised by Antony and Octavian. He ruled Palestine for the Romans even though he was an Edomite by birth. He was king when Jesus was born and ordered the slaughter of the children at Bethlehem (Matt ch 2). After his death his kingdom was split up amongst his sons, one of whom, ‘**Herod the tetrarch**’ or Herod Antipas, is the Herod mentioned in the rest of Luke. He inherited the Galilean and Peraean portions of his father’s kingdom. In the Gospels he is conspicuous chiefly for his part in the imprisonment and execution of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-28) and for his encounter with Jesus when he was sent to him by Pilate for judgement. Jesus is recorded as having once described Herod as ‘that fox’ (Luke 13:31f). From The New Bible Dictionary p 522.

5. What do you think the Twelve were saying when they preached the kingdom of God (v2)/gospel (v6)? See Luke 4:18-19 and Is 61:1-2, Matt 3:1-6 and Is 40:1-11, Is 46:13, Jer 23:5-8, Eze 37:24-28.

6. How would you modify your answer to question 5 if you were to preach the kingdom of God today?

Gospel, good news.

The idea of ‘good news’, for which an older English word is ‘gospel’, had two principal meanings for first-century Jews. First, with roots in Isaiah, it meant the news of YHWH’s long awaited victory over evil and rescue of his people. Second, it was used in the Roman world for the accession, or birthday, of the Emperor. Since for Jesus and Paul the announcement of God’s inbreaking kingdom was both the fulfilment of prophecy and a challenge to the world’s present rulers, ‘gospel’ became an important shorthand for both the message of Jesus himself and the apostolic message about him. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 307.

7. Read Luke 9:10-17.
 - (a) What does the feeding of the 5000 remind you of (see Ex 16:1-18)?

 - (b) What does this say about Jesus?

 - (c) The role of the Twelve amongst the 5000 can be seen as similar to our role amongst the community of believers. What aspect of our role is on display here?

8. Who is Jesus?
 Reading ahead to v36 and considering all of 9:1-36, who asks the question “who is Jesus” and what answers are given?

Herod represents all those, the majority, who hear of Jesus and discuss him but will not follow him. Theirs is an attitude common at all levels of society, but especially among thinking, articulate people. It is not sufficient, however, that this subject should make the brain stir and the tongue wag. It is meant to move the will to action. Peter represents the minority who are moved to follow Jesus: to them his identity is revealed. From The Message of Luke by Michael Wilcock pp 109 – 110.

9. What were the expectations for “The Christ of God” (v20) (see 1Sam 2:10, 2 Sam 7:12, Ps 2, Is 7:14-17, 9:6-7, 11:1-5, Zech 9:9-10, 14:9, Mal 3:1-4)?

Christ, Messiah

The Hebrew word means literally ‘anointed one’, hence in theory either a prophet, priest or king. In Greek this translates as *Christos*; ‘Christ’ in early Christianity was a title, and only gradually became an alternative proper name for Jesus. In practice ‘Messiah’ is mostly restricted to the notion, which took various forms in ancient Judaism, of the coming king who would be David’s true heir, through whom YHWH would rescue Israel from pagan enemies. There was no single template of expectations. Scriptural stories and promises contributed to different ideals and movements, often focused on (a) decisive military defeat of Israel’s enemies and (b) rebuilding or cleansing the Temple. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 311.

10. Why do you think Jesus warned the disciples not to tell anyone (v21)?

11. What were Jesus’ expectations for “The Christ of God”?

To finish

12. What does following Jesus really mean (vv23-25)?
13. Wasn’t Peter ashamed of Jesus when he denied him three times (Luke 22:54-62)? Didn’t Peter disown Jesus? How do Peter’s actions and attitude fit in with what Jesus has said about being ashamed and disowning (Luke 12:8-10)? How does forgiveness factor into the discussion (John 21:15-17)?
14. Jesus says in v27 that there are some standing there who will live to see the kingdom of God.
(a) When did this happen?
- (b) How is the kingdom of God a case of being “the now and the not yet”?

Study 2, Luke 9:28-62, Healing by Jesus

Getting started

1. Have you ever experienced sibling rivalry or rivalry with people you work with or rivalry with someone at church? How did you handle it?

Bible

Read Luke 9:28-36.

2. What do you think is the significance of the appearance of Moses and Elijah?

3. (a) What do you think they were talking about (v31)?

(b) What will be fulfilled?

The word for '**departure**' is *exodus*, and Luke means us to understand that in several senses. It can mean, like 'exodus' in the Old Testament, 'departure', 'going away'. It can also serve as a euphemism for 'death', as when someone says 'when I am no longer here', referring to their own death. But the reason Luke has chosen this word – not least in connection with Moses! – is that in his death Jesus will enact an event just like the great Exodus from Egypt, only more so. In the first Exodus, Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt and home to the promised land. In the new Exodus, Jesus will lead all God's people out of the slavery of sin and death, and home to their promised inheritance – the new creation in which the whole world will be redeemed. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 114 - 115.

4. How does the voice from the cloud answer Peter's comment in v33?

Read Luke 9:37-50.

5. Jesus is getting set for Jerusalem (9:51) and his death on the cross but we are only up to ch 9 and it takes at least another year before the crucifixion. Why the delay? What are the four incidents in Luke 9:37-50 that show what needs to be done?

6. What is the connection between Jesus dealing with a demon (vv 37 – 42) and immediately after when Jesus talks about his death (vv 43 – 45)?

Read Luke 9:51-56.

Samaritans and Jews didn't associate with each other (John 4:9). The reasons were historical, dating from the division of the kingdom after the death of Solomon (1 Ki 12:1-24) and the annexation of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians in 722-721 BC. The Assyrians resettled the area with foreigners (2 Ki 17:24-41) which meant a loss of both racial and religious purity from the standpoint of the Judaeans [Jews] in the south. The religious divide was deepened when the Samaritans (as they came to be called) built their own temple at Mount Gerezim around 400 BC. From The Message of John by Bruce Milne p83.

7. The feud between the Samaritans and the Jews was so bitter that the Samaritans would not help any Jew travelling to Jerusalem, not even Jesus (v53).
(a) What was the reaction of James and John to the attitude of the Samaritans?

(b) Why was it wrong?

(c) What do they need to learn about love here and in vv 49 – 50?

Read Luke 9:57-62

8. What is wrong with these would-be followers of Jesus?

To finish

9. Does Jesus ask too much of his followers?

Study 3, Luke 10:1-24, The Harvest

Getting started

1. Is evangelism more effective if we have a genuine relationship with people? Why/why not?
2. Is evangelism more risky if we have a genuine relationship with people? Why/why not?

Bible

Read Luke 10:1-24

Sodom: Notorious town South of the Dead Sea where Lot settled; destroyed with Gomorrah: Gen chs 14 – 19. **Korazin, Bethsaida** and **Capernaum** are towns in Galilee that have seen a great deal of Jesus and his powerful work. They will be judged. **Tyre** and **Sidon** are not even in Israel – Jesus imagines them repenting if they had seen what Galilean towns have seen. From Following Jesus by Gordon Cheng p 47.

3. What are four key aspects of evangelism that Jesus tells the 72 in vv 1 – 12?
4. What do you think might be the reason(s) people reject the message?
5. Why does Jesus take it so personally?
6. The mission is a great success. This success is a preview of something greater. What is it (vv 17, 18)?
7. Which instructions in vv 1 – 20 are applicable to us when we tell others about Jesus, and which instructions are not applicable?

We must remind ourselves who or what 'the **satan**' is in Jewish thinking. The word 'satan' literally means 'accuser', and 'the satan' appears in scripture as the Director of Public Prosecutions in God's heavenly council (Job 1:6-12, 2:1-7, Zech 3:1-2). At some point he seems to have overstepped the role, not only bringing unfounded accusations, but inciting people to do things for which he can then accuse them. Finally, in the flagrant rebellion against God and his plans of salvation for the world, the satan seeks to pervert, distort and

- ## To finish

11. How does the world judge success?
12. How did Jesus see success differently from the 72?
13. How should we judge our own “success” (see Micah 6:8)?

Study 4, Luke 10:25-37, Good Samaritan

Getting started

1. What does it mean to be God's people?

Bible

Read Luke 10:25-37

2. What sort of person is the expert in the law and what verses justify your answer?

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 p 146 & 316.

3. How does loving God and your neighbour (v27) answer the question about inheriting eternal life (v25)?
4. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan (vv 30 – 37) why would it be unwise or wrong to help the half-dead man? (Num 19:11 and the paragraph on Samaritans in Study 2 may help you answer.)
5. Why *did* the Samaritan help the injured man?
6. What is real love? See also James 2:15-17.

7. The expert in the law desired a good thing but what was wrong with his thinking?

When Jesus makes him [the expert in the law] reveal his own summary, and then simply agrees with it, the lawyer now aims 'to win the point', 'to justify himself' – not simply meaning 'to show that he hadn't asked a trivial or obvious question', but 'to come out on top in this public confrontation'. The question about the neighbour is designed to smoke out Jesus' supposedly heretical views on God's wider plans for the whole world, and so to show that the lawyer was right to challenge him. It does indeed produce from Jesus an answer about the wide-reaching grace of God, but the story Jesus tells makes it clear that these views are not heretical, but rather the true fulfilment of the commandment which the lawyer claims to regard as vital. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 128 & 129.

8. How did Jesus show neighbourly love (a) in his lifetime?

(b) in his death?

To finish

9. How should we show God's love to our neighbour?

Study 5, Luke 10:38-42, Mary & Martha

Getting started

1. What are the 5 most important things in your life? How would you put these in order of priority and what governs your thinking in making those priorities?

I thought it might be interesting to read this brief section from Wm. Paul Young's fictional work The Shack because it deals with **priorities**. This section is from pp 206 – 207. Sarayu is the Holy Spirit, Papa is God, the Father, and Mackenzie is the main (human) character of the story.

"The trouble with living by priorities," Sarayu spoke, "is that it sees everything as a hierarchy, a pyramid, and you and I have already had that discussion. If you put God at the top, what does that really mean and how much is enough? How much time do you give me before you can go on about the rest of your day, the part that interests you so much more?"

Papa again interrupted. "You see, Mackenzie, I don't just want a piece of you and a piece of your life. Even if you were able, which you are not, to give me the biggest piece, that is not what I want. I want all of you and all of every part of you and your day."

2. Does this change your ideas on priorities? If so, how so?

Bible

Read Luke 10:38-42

3. Do you think there is anything unfair in this story? Why/why not?

4. What are Martha's positive and negative qualities?

5. What are Martha's priorities?

6. What are Mary's priorities?

7. How would you describe the way Jesus handled the situation?

8. What aspects of the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15) are similar to this story about Mary and Martha?

To finish

9. Does your church put too much emphasis on serving rather than sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening?
Why/why not?
10. What keeps you from 'sitting at the Lord's feet'?
11. *When* can you 'sit at the Lord's feet' and listen to him?

Study 6, Luke 11:1-32, Prayer**Getting started**

1. What sorts of things did you pray about early in your Christian life?

Bible

Read Luke 11:1-13

2. What do these verses tell us about God?

3. What do these phrases mean?
(a) "hallowed be your name"?

(b) "your kingdom come"?

(c) "give us each day our daily bread"?

(d) "forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us"?

(i) Does our forgiveness depend on whether or not we forgive others? Why/why not?

(ii) Aren't Christians already forgiven for *all* our sins? Why then do we still need to ask for forgiveness? (This is a difficult question. In your answer you might like to consider the wider context of Luke ch 11 and the context of 1 John 1:8-9.)

(e) “lead us not into temptation”?

4. Which areas of the Lord’s Prayer do you tend to leave out of your own prayers? Why?
5. How do verses 5 – 8 relate to prayer?
6. What do these verses (5 – 8) teach us about God, if anything?

The **laws of hospitality** in the ancient Middle East were strict, and if a traveller arrived needing food and shelter one was under an obligation to provide it. The friend in the street knows that the friend in bed will understand; he would do the same if the roles were reversed. What counts is *persistence*. There are all sorts of ways in which God isn’t like a sleepy friend, but Jesus is focusing on one point of comparison only: he is encouraging a kind of holy boldness, a sharp knocking on the door, an insistent asking, a search that refused to give up. That’s what our prayers should be like. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 133 & 134.

7. Read Luke 11:9-13 again.
(a) What contrast does Jesus draw between human fathers and our Father in heaven?

(b) Why is a right understanding of our heavenly Father crucial for prayer?

Read Luke 11:14-26.

8. (a) What accusation is made against Jesus? What is the reasoning behind it?

(b) How does Jesus refute that accusation and what alternative explanation does he give?

(c) What is Jesus saying about himself and his ministry in Luke 11:21–22?

9. (a) Who do you think Jesus has in mind in v 23?

(b) How do they “scatter” people?

Jesus tells a strange story [Luke 11:24-26] about an **evil spirit** which returns to the place it left. This can't be a warning about the likely effect of exorcisms; if it was, it would be better not to do them at all, since the poor person ends up worse off than before. It probably means what it seems to in Matthew (12:43-45), applying not to an individual person but to the nation as a whole. . . Israel, like a demon-possessed person, had been 'cleansed' by various movements of reform. But unless the living presence of God came to dwell in her midst, Israel would remain vulnerable to the return of the demons. Jesus stood there among his people, embodying as we shall see the return of God to Israel. Unless they turned from accusation to acceptance, the demons that had led them to ruin in former days would come back in full force. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright pp 138 & 139.

Read Luke 11:27-28

10. (a) What does v27 remind you of?

(b) Why does Jesus reject the reaction of the woman?

Read Luke 11:16, 29-32. Jesus answers his critics of v16.

11. In what ways is Jesus comparing himself to (a) Jonah?
(Matt 12:38-41 may help you answer.)

(b) Solomon?

12. (a) Why will miraculous signs not be enough to convince someone about Jesus?

(b) What is required?

Now here is Jesus, anything but a comic figure, telling his own people it's time to repent, and they ignore him. Here is Jesus with a greater wisdom than even the legendary Solomon, and his own people don't listen. There is a straight line from this point that leads to the moment when Jesus weeps over Jerusalem because, unlike Nineveh, it has ignored the warnings, refused the way of peace, and thereby sealed its own fate. From Luke for Everyone by Tom Wright p 141.

To finish

13. Does God always answer our prayers?

Study 7, Luke 11:33-12:12, Hypocrisy

Getting started

1. “There’s no room for rules in genuine Christianity.” Do you agree/disagree and why?

Bible

Read Luke 11:33-36

2. What is the “light within you” (v35)?

Read Luke 11:37-54

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 p 312 & 313.

(N.B. Some information about the experts in the law was given in Study 4.)

3. What is the heart of the Pharisees’ mistakes?
4. What is at the heart of the mistakes of the experts in the law?
5. (a) How does Jesus lift the burdens that the experts make worse (v46) – see Matt 11:28-30?

(b) What burdens do we have laid on us today?
6. Why is this *generation* responsible for the blood of the prophets (vv 47 – 51)?

7. What is meant by the key to knowledge that the experts in the law have taken away (v52)?
8. How does Luke 11:53-54 fulfil what Jesus had predicted in verses 47 - 52?

Read Luke 12:1-3

9. Why does Jesus compare hypocrisy to yeast (v1)?
10. Why is hypocrisy ultimately foolish (vv 2 – 3)?
11. (a) What rules should you follow to live a better Christian life?
- (b) How are rules and regulations a great way to conceal hypocrisy?
- (c) How do you live a better Christian life if you haven't got rules to follow?

Read Luke 12:4-12.

(We have already dealt with some of the issues arising from these verses – see Study 1, Q 13.)

12. What should we be afraid of and what shouldn't we be afraid of?
13. Besides sparrows and hair counting (a) what value does Jesus put on human life?

(b) what value do we put on human life and how do we show that in our actions?

14. Verses 4 – 12 are a rebuke to half-hearted Christianity. We should be ready to meet what life throws at us but does v12 give us an excuse for poor preparation when we come to defend our faith? Why/why not?

Jesus said that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is unforgivable. This had worried many sincere Christians, but it does not need to. The unforgivable sin means attributing to Satan the work that the Holy Spirit accomplishes. Thus it is deliberate and ongoing rejection of the Holy Spirit's work and even of God himself. A person who has committed this sin has shut himself or herself off from God so thoroughly that he or she is unaware of any sin at all. A person who fears having committed it shows, by his or her very concern, that he or she has not sinned in this way. From the Life Application Study Bible p1829.

To finish

15. "You have nothing to fear except fear itself".
How true is this statement in the light of what we have been studying?

1. An ambitious person will set higher goals every year. What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?

- (b) what would be the advantages and disadvantages of doing things this way?

Read Luke 12:13-34

5. From what Jesus has so far taught his disciples in Luke, how would his disciples become rich before God (see Luke 9:18-27)?

6. Explain how these two ideas, Luke 10:25-37 and Luke 9:18-27, match up to mean the same thing.

Read Luke 12:22-34 again.

7. How would you define “worry”?
8. What are you worried about?
9. What view of God do worrying Christians apparently have?
10. In what ways does Jesus’ picture of God through this passage contrast to the worrying Christian’s view?
11. What does it mean to be given the kingdom (v32)?

Graeme Goldsworthy describes the kingdom of God as God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule (Gospel and Kingdom p 47).

To finish

12. “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” (v33). How far should we go?

1. Can you remember when you have had to wait a long time for something? How did you feel? How did you cope with the waiting? How did you prepare for the event or person you were waiting for?

2. Briefly look back over the themes of the last study. How is expecting Jesus' return a further antidote to worry?
3. In Jewish tradition, weddings were held at night. The servants would wait to serve their master and his bride when they arrived. What is different in Jesus' parable (vv 35 – 38)? How is this encouraging for us?
4. What is hard about watching and waiting?
5. What must we do while we wait?
6. (a) What is the answer to Peter's question of v41?

(b) What is the faithful and wise manager supposed to do?

(c) How is the unfaithful servant (vv 45 – 46) similar to the rich fool of Luke 12:16-20?

(d) How does the faithful and wise manager relate to us?

Read Luke 12:49-53.

7. What is the fire Jesus is talking about (v49)?

8. What is the baptism that is so distressing for Jesus (v50)?

9. Has this baptism got anything to do with a Christian's baptism (see Rom 6:1-10)?

10. "Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division" (v51).
How do you make sense of this compared to Luke 2:14 and Phil 4:4-7?

Read Luke 12:54-59.

11. What does the crowd fail to interpret (v56)?

12. What has judgement got to do with not interpreting the Jesus era correctly (vv 57 – 59)?

To finish

13. Does v46 teach that unfaithful believers can lose their salvation?