

A Study in Luke

Week Fifteen

Luke 9:12-9:45

Day One

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here." 13 He replied, "You give them something to eat." They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish-unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 14 (About five thousand men were there.) But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 The disciples did so, and everybody sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to set before the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

v. 12 – This represented a reasonable request. The Twelve often served as ushers for Jesus' meetings, but they often tried to send the crowds and children away instead of finding ways for the crowd to touch or listen to Jesus. God doesn't need you or me to protect Him or His reputation. He can protect Himself! Our job is bring people to Him, not to turn people away.

v. 13 – Often we are aware of what we *don't* have instead of what we *do* have. Focusing on what we don't have causes us to miss opportunities where we could be of service to God. Focusing on what we do have makes way for creative miracles. God asks you to serve Him with what you have and He will empower it to be enough. Are you looking at how little you have today? Then your focus is wrong. Focus on what you do have and ask God to make it enough to do His will. And by the way, doing God's will is *never* about money. The disciples knew they didn't have money to buy lunch for everyone, but Jesus wasn't concerned about money. He still isn't concerned about money or the lack thereof; are you?

vs. 14&15 – There were 5,000 men there, maybe more with women and children. That's a lot of mouths to feed. But Jesus broke them into groups of 50 and the "ushers" complied. When Jesus feeds, He first requires discipline. God is a God of order and not chaos. The ushers had a role to play here, but not in driving people away, but in preparing them to receive what Jesus had for them.

v. 16 – Jesus had faith! He gave thanks, broke the bread and fish and then gave them to the ushers to distribute. He never doubted that there would be enough. That's the point that I want to get to—a point of total trust and obedience. I'm not there yet. I still focus too much on what I don't have.

v. 17 – Not only did Jesus provide enough, but there were leftovers!

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

We serve a powerful God, in Whom there is no lack. He's able to do everything well. Walk with confidence in that fact today. Look for ways to use what you do have and don't spend time thinking about what you don't have. Whatever you have is enough if you give it to God and obey Him. What can you do today with what you have?

Day Two

18 Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" 19 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, that one of the prophets of long ago has come back to life." 20 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "The Christ of God." 21 Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone. 22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."

v. 18 – Jesus asked a lot of questions to help his disciples understand by coming to their own conclusions. I recently met with a group of 250 leaders in East Africa. I started by saying to them, “We talk too much!” As leaders we talk too much and don't give our followers a chance to ask questions and express themselves. If you are a teacher or leader, how many questions do you ask? Do you talk too much? Are you a good listener?

v. 19 – The disciples were in touch with what the latest rumors were and these were the same rumors that Herod listed in Luke 9:7-8. But Jesus is never interested in who you think He is, or what you have heard others say about Him. He's interested in what you know and can say about Him.

v. 20 – Peter answered that Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah. This was a major pronouncement for Peter to acknowledge that Jesus was the heir to David's throne. Peter knew more than the leaders of his day, for they were plotting to kill Jesus just as Peter was declaring Him the Messiah. That's why we must always be listening to one another, even if we are a leader. Often others will have revelation and understanding that we need.

What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church (1 Corinthians 14:26).

The Spirit gives to anyone as He sees fit, regardless of their status or rank in the Church. Therefore we aren't really listening to other people, but rather for the voice of the Spirit as He speaks through others. Are you a good listener? Can you receive from anyone?

vs. 21&22 – Jesus ordered them to tell no one but rather began to explain to them what being the Messiah was going to mean for Him in the coming days. There's no way they had any concept of what was ahead for Jesus. It was incomprehensible. Yet He began to prepare them for it nonetheless. Their revelation of who He was became the basis for more revelation of what was about to happen to Him. When you listen to God and receive what He says, then He will speak and tell you more. In a previous study of Luke, we looked at the verse:

“Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him” (Luke 8:18).

You may want to spend some time praying and listening today, writing down what you hear. It may very well be the foundation for what you will do tomorrow or later in the week.

Day Three

23 Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. 24 For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it. 25 What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self? 26 If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. 27 I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God."

v. 23 – Why was Jesus telling them about His impending suffering? Because they were all to face their own suffering in the years to come. The cross wasn't to be Jesus destiny only, but also the destiny of every one of His followers. The same holds true today. We must take up our cross daily and follow Him. That means we must deny our desire to preserve our life as we know it so that we can discover the life that God has for us.

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:21-24).

v. 24 – This seeming paradox of how to save your life isn't really that paradoxical. It becomes a matter of trust. If anyone thinks they know how to save their life apart from God, they are mistaken and will lose the very life they are trying to save. If anyone trusts

God to save his or her life and follows that course, even when it goes against their natural instincts, they will save their life; perhaps it is better to say that God will save their life for them. Life in God is all about trusting Him for results that we think we can attain but actually cannot in our own strength.

v. 25 – This is a good question, yet we see the tendency of sinful to gain life by gaining “the whole world.” There are pop songs that say in essence, “I want it all!” Jesus said the exact opposite. He said, “Deny it all and you’ll find what you’re looking for.” I suppose we could say that life is one desperate search for life, not physical life but spiritual life. Many have said that there is a spiritual hole in each person that can only be filled by God. Yet many try to fill it with everything else but God. Are you filling your hole with God, or with the things of God—ministry, relationships or work? There is only one source of life for you and me and that’s God Himself.

v. 26 – The Jews were expecting a powerful king as their Messiah, one that would reign in pomp and power, just like David did. But that wasn’t Jesus way or mission. He was here to establish the Kingdom, but it wasn’t like anything any Jew had imagined or hoped for. Jesus’ style would cause many to stumble, and His death was abhorrent to the Jews:

“But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles” (1 Corinthians 1:22-24).

Following Jesus is denying self, because Jesus doesn’t exalt you, the person, but exalts Himself in you according to what pleases God. For that to happen, you must abandon your agenda for your life and surrender to His agenda. If that offends you or if you are ashamed of where He takes you, then Jesus will be ashamed of you and your life in the day of judgment.

v. 27 – This is a fascinating statement that some would not taste death before they see the Kingdom! What did Jesus mean? I think He meant that some with Him would see God’s kingdom, God’s government, made evident in the life of Jesus as He yielded to God’s will and was crucified. What an expression of God’s government:

Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will” (Matthew 26:39).

Jesus perfectly submitted to the will of God, thus providing us an example of God’s kingdom on earth—God’s will done here as in heaven. Do you agree with this interpretation or not?

Day Four

28 About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. 29 As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. 30 Two

men, Moses and Elijah, 31 appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.

v. 28 – Jesus handpicked those He wanted with Him when He went up the mountain to pray. There are some experiences that you cannot seek for yourself; they can only be chosen for you by God. There are some spiritual seekers, whom I liken to spiritual surfers. They are always looking for the perfect wave of God’s Spirit. But I stopped seeking spiritual experiences years ago. I would rather seek Him and go where He wants me to go and do what He wants me to do. If that includes mountaintop experiences, I’m happy. If I stay behind with those disciples at the bottom of the mountain, that’s fine too.

v. 29 – What a prayer meeting this turned out to be! Jesus was changed before them. Not only did His face change, but His clothes did as well. This reminds me of what was written about Moses:

We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to keep the Israelites from gazing at it while the radiance was fading away (2 Corinthians 3:12-14).

Moses got his “glow” from the mountain and now Jesus did too.

vs. 30&31 – Moses and Elijah came to talk to Jesus about His impending death. Both of those men had unique ends to their lives. We read that Satan contended for Moses body (See Jude 9), which was never found and that Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind (see 2 Kings 2:11). I wonder if both men were encouraging Jesus, telling Him that death wasn’t that bad. This wasn’t a vision of these two men; these men actually appeared in bodily form. They came to encourage their Lord in regards to death, the most human of all experiences.

God always sends you the encouragement you need, but you must be open to it. He will send you signs that He hasn’t forgotten about you, but He may not send you the things you are praying for or need. Perhaps Moses was saying, “Yes, Jesus, you will die, but you will live again, just like me!” The Father did not deliver Jesus from death, but encouraged Him that He would not be abandoned in death. What encouragement does God want to send you today? When it comes, will you receive it?

Day Five

32 Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. 33 As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, "Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." (He did not know what he was saying.) 34 While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and enveloped them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. 35 A voice came from the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him." 36

When the voice had spoken, they found that Jesus was alone. The disciples kept this to themselves, and told no one at that time what they had seen.

v. 32 – Later Peter and his companions would sleep in the garden right before Jesus death. This time they were asleep while Jesus prayed. When they awakened, they saw Jesus in His radiance with Moses and Elijah. I wonder how they knew it was Moses and Elijah. Maybe they were wearing nametags!

To see Jesus in His glory, sometimes God has to awaken us from our spiritual sleep. I think spiritual awareness is a great gift of God. I want to have my eyes opened to see God and what He is doing. I have found many to be around God and not even realize it, just like Jacob:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it" (Genesis 28:16-17).

Ask God to open your eyes and to awaken you from spiritual slumber today so you can be aware of Him and what He is trying to tell you.

v. 33 – As this spiritual high experience was about to end, Peter tried to prolong it by making a respectful recommendation that they build tabernacles where these men could reside. First of all, Peter again treated Jesus like He needed some help. Jesus was fully capable of ordering these tabernacles be built if He so desired. Then Peter did what I have done so many times: When in doubt, engage mouth and talk! He started to say something and He didn't know what He was saying. I have preached and looked back later to think, "I didn't know what I was talking about, but that didn't stop me from speaking!" I can identify with Peter here, can you?

v. 34 – Just then the Father sent a cloud. This blurred their vision so that they could not react to what they were seeing; they had to respond to what they were hearing. Too often I have walked according to what I saw instead of walking in obedience to what I had heard. When you enter a cloud like Peter did, you must fly by instruments and not by sight. You have to rely on what your indicators are telling you regardless of how bad it looks out the window. Are you walking by sight or by faith? The disciples were afraid when they entered the cloud; are you afraid if God requires you to ignore what you see and follow what you hear? If so, you aren't alone.

v. 35 – The voice gave clear instructions that Jesus was the Son of God; the disciples were to listen to Him! It is interesting that John and Peter went on to write the inspired word of God, but the basis for all that they did was to listen to Jesus. We would do well to heed the voice's warning and listen to Jesus. It's all about Him and not what people write about Him. Are you listening to Him and His voice? Are you doing what He says?

v. 36 – As quickly as it began, it was over. That is how spiritual experiences are. You cannot keep them going beyond their appointed lifespan. If you try, you will waste a lot of energy trying to duplicate what you could never produce in the first place. I don't

think the disciples knew what to make of this, so they kept it to themselves. They could never have answered the questions that others would ask until after the resurrection. There are some spiritual experiences that aren't to be shared right away; they are just for you. Their significance will come clear in time. There are some people that feel they must spiritually regurgitate everything they eat; I am not one of them. I like to savor some things and allow them to have the full work in me that God wants them to have.

If God is saying something to you, don't put it on others. If God is telling you to talk less, don't say, "I think all of us have the tendency to talk too much" or "I think the Lord is speaking to us about talking too much." The revelation is for *you*, not for others. Don't spread the blame or pain by making it a "we" thing when it is a "me" thing. Does that make sense?

Day Six

37 The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him. 38 A man in the crowd called out, "Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. 39 A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. 40 I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

v. 37 – As I stated above, you always have to come down from the mountain. Have you ever gone to a conference and been so high, only to come home and be depressed three days later? I learned that I had to determine what I was going to do, what changes I would make at the conference once I got home. If I expected the spiritual high to last very long, I was always disappointed.

Jesus and His disciples came down from this fantastic encounter with Jesus' glory to confront a large crowd with a big problem.

vs. 38&39 – Jesus Himself had to come "down" from the mountain to deal with the only child of a man in this crowd. It seems that the boy had epileptic seizures of some kind that were caused by a demonic presence. The man knew that the problem was a demon, but he was powerless to do anything about it. As I have said in previous studies, people are in touch with spiritual reality, often more than their leaders. This man's problem wasn't a lack of knowledge; it was a lack of power. Is that your problem too?

The devil and his partners are mean. They just don't want to hurt the people of God; they want to kill them.

"The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

v. 40 – The man had enough faith to press through his disappointment in the lack of performance on the part of the apostles to come directly to Jesus. Many people today haven't been able to do that. They are disappointed with the Church and, therefore, are

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disappointed with God. Someone else said, "People like Jesus; it's the Church that they have a problem with!"

Are you disappointed with the Church? We have all been at one time or another. But Jesus gave His life for the Church and the word of God still stands true for you, even if you are disappointed:

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching (Hebrews 10:25).

Jesus loves the Church and gave His life for it. He asks you to do the same. There are times when I have tried to receive from the Church, filled with imperfect people, what I could only get from God, who is perfect in every way. Disappointment was inevitable, because I looked for my source outside of God.

I am in the Church not for what I can get, as needy as I am, but for what I can give. As I give, I receive but not always what I thought I wanted or needed. But the Church has caused me to grow in love for imperfect people just like me. I have a silly deductive reasoning ditty that I often recite in church work:

People are crazy.
I am people.
Therefore, I am crazy.

It helps me deal with the fact that I can all too easily think I am all right, while everyone else is messed up. Truth is, I am as messed up as anyone else and Jesus wants me to walk in love with other brothers and sisters who are as sick or sicker than I am. Does this make sense? Does it help you see the Church differently?

Day Seven

41 "O unbelieving and perverse generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here." 42 Even while the boy was coming, the demon threw him to the ground in a convulsion. But Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, healed the boy and gave him back to his father. 43 And they were all amazed at the greatness of God. While everyone was marveling at all that Jesus did, he said to his disciples, 44 "Listen carefully to what I am about to tell you: The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men." 45 But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.

v. 41 – Jesus got angry here when the disciples weren't able to take the power that have been walking with and apply it, in faith, to a practical need that they encountered. Jesus has great patience, obviously, but His patience grew thin when there was lack of faith among those who should have had the most faith.

v. 42 – I have come to learn that you cannot counsel, cajole or reason with a demon. There is only one thing to do with a demon and that is cast it out! You may have a situation in your life and nothing seems to work. Then maybe it is an evil thing for which there is no rationale or strategy. You simply must tell it to go in Jesus' name! As a pastor, I had to learn also that I could not pastor a demon. I had to cast it out. You cannot make peace or a truce with the kingdom of darkness. You must tear it down in the power of Jesus' blood and name.

vs. 43-45 – Jesus used this opportunity to continue His ongoing teaching on suffering and death. But the disciples could not hear it and they were afraid to ask any questions about it. Perhaps that is why Jesus got a bit angry when the disciples couldn't heal the boy. He was facing His ultimate sacrifice on the cross and had so little time, and they weren't ready for Him to go! At any rate, Jesus used almost every opportunity to teach something to someone.

Is there something you are afraid to ask God? If there is, why are you afraid? The disciples weren't afraid for Jesus' sake, they were afraid for their own sake. And what may be going on right now of which you are not spiritually aware and present? The other day, a sister greeted me here in Zimbabwe in Shona and I was unable to respond. She said with a smile, "You come here often, but you aren't learning Shona." I went home that evening and thought about what she said. I went to her the next day and asked her to be my Shona coach.

My point is that I was aware of a slight touch from the Lord through that woman and I asked the Lord about it. He showed me that I was missing something and further showed me what He wanted me to do. Is God touching you today with some theme or message, but you are too busy or even afraid of what it means, so you ignore it? That isn't the way forward in God. If that is the case, what are you prepared to do about it?