

Ready for Real Life

A Lenten Study of Luke



Small Group Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

God is real. So real life is lived in light of God and eternity. In the teachings of Jesus in Luke, it is clear that life can be lived badly, with grave consequences for us and for others. How do we get ready for real life? What are the requirements, the expectations? Being ready is not just a matter of being right with God in some abstract way, but in being right with others in very practical ways. God calls us to love the people He loves.

This Lenten series addresses the basic life issues that characterize us as ready servants of God, living in God's kingdom. These basics describe life lived well. They all bring promises of God's blessing, but all come with warnings, too.

To prepare your heart and mind for the Lenten sermon series and to familiarize yourself with the context of the sermon texts, read the Gospel of Luke through, at least once, and if possible, in one sitting. You want to read to get an overview, not to try and absorb all the details.

In each week's text, take note of how Jesus acted and interacted with people. What did His actions reveal about His feelings toward people? With whom did He speak and about what? What questions did He ask?

The Gospel of Luke contains four great hymns of praise which have often been set to music and used in prayer books down through the ages:

Magnificat 1:46-55

Benedictus 1:6-79

Gloria in Excelsis 2:14

Nunc Dimittis 2:29-32

As you work through these Lenten studies, you may enjoy praying these hymns or finding them in a hymnal and singing them as part of your personal (or small group) worship time.

This study was written by Joyce Sackett.

Week #1

Are You Ready?

Luke 12:35-40

Life is full of distractions, things that take our eyes off the truly important. All too easily, we forget that the end is coming, that Jesus will return. And so, we can be lulled into a careless kind of living.

Read Luke 12 in two or more translations or paraphrases. Then reread verses 35-40, praying Psalm 119:18: *“Open my eyes that I may behold wonderful things from your law.”*

What do you think it means in verse 35, to be “dressed ready for service” or “dressed in readiness?” (Literally, “gird up your loins;” alluding to men at work or fighting, who would tuck their long garment into their belt in order to move more freely.) See also Mark 13:33-37; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Peter 3:11; Revelation 16:15.

What is the significance of the “lamps” in verse 35? What do they symbolize? See also Luke 11:36; Matthew 5:14-16; Matthew 25:1-13.

Week #1

In verse 37, we see the Lord as host and His servants as guests. What is Jesus telling us here about His relationship to us, how He feels about those who stay alert, watching for His return?

What changes might you need to make in your thinking or daily “doing,” in order to stay alert, to be dressed ready for service?

Determine to memorize Central’s verse for the year, Luke 12:35:

“Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning.”

NIV

“Be dressed in readiness and keep your lamps lit.”

NAS

Week #2

Good News ~ Bad News

Luke 6:17-26

The teachings of Jesus in Luke 6 contain blessings and warnings. Jesus gives us this list of good and bad news because our priorities in life so often do not match His. Jesus turns many of our conceptions of life upside down.

Read Luke 6. Then reread verses 17-26 in several translations or paraphrases, praying Psalm 119: *“Teach me good discernment and knowledge.”*

Try to imagine yourself in the scene described in verses 17-19. Picture the place, the feel of the crowd around you, all the people pressing in on Jesus. Why had the people come? What was happening? What was Jesus doing?

In verses 20-26, Jesus was addressing first his apostles (He had just chosen them) and the great crowd of disciples around him, as well as a mass of others. (See also Matthew 5:3-12.) Who did Jesus say are the “blessed” ones and what is in store for them? Do these blessings and “rewards” appeal to you?

Week #2

To whom does Jesus speak “woe,” and what do they have to look forward to? (“Woe” or “alas” is an expression of pity and compassion for those under judgment, not only a denouncement.)

Is it wrong to be rich, well-fed, happy and well-respected? What lifestyle is Jesus warning against?

What thought or verse in this passage encouraged you or challenged you the most? Record here any lifestyle or attitude changes you need to make as a result of studying this passage.

Week #3

Loving When It Hurts

Luke 6:27-36

Read Luke 6. Then reread verses 27-36 in several translations or paraphrases, praying Psalm 119:125: *"I am your servant; give me understanding."*

What kind of people will we encounter as we follow Jesus? How would you describe the quality of love Jesus is telling us to give to these people? See also 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and Colossians 3:12-14.

What is your "gut reaction" to the kind of love Jesus wants us to give? How possible do you think it is to obey Jesus in the painful and difficult relationships He describes?

Week #3

What reasons does Jesus give for calling us to this active, radical kind of love?

Can you think of someone to whom you need to express the kind of love described in this passage? What decision do you need to make about this person? Ask God to help you be “real;” honest with Him and with yourself.

“Living Christ is not a 12-step recovery program from the real world...but an invitation into its middle....an invitation to follow Jesus into the corner of the world each of us has been given and to simply love the people we find there.”

Bebo Norman

Week #4

Multiply Your Love

Luke 6:37-42

Read Luke 6, then reread verses 37-42 in several translations or paraphrases, praying Psalm 119:133: *“Establish my footsteps in Your Word...”*

What two behaviors does Jesus condemn in verses 37, 38? What two does He commend?

What does it mean, to “judge?” How is this different from discernment? See Matthew 7:15-20; Luke 7:43 and 12:57.

What kind of “payback” is Jesus describing in verse 38? See also Matthew 6:1 and 2 Corinthians 9:6.

Week #4

In verses 39, 40 - what is the point of this parable in the context of this passage?

In verses 41, 42 - What is the “speck?” What is the “plank” or “log?”

In verse 38 - what “measure” do you use in evaluating and treating family members, friends, coworkers, etc.? In what ways might you need to change the standard by which you measure out love, judgment, giving and forgiving?

*“May the mind of Christ my Savior live in me from day to day,
by His love and power controlling all I do and say.
May the love of Jesus fill me, as the waters fill the sea...”*

Katie B. Wilkinson

Week #5

Foundations for Real Life

Luke 6:46-49

Read Luke 6, then reread verses 46-49 in several translations or paraphrases. Pray Psalm 119:60 as your own commitment to the Lord: *"I hastened and did not delay to keep Your commandments."*

What meaning and authority does the title, LORD, carry?

If we call Jesus, LORD, what does that imply about our relationship to Him?

Who are the two kinds of people described in these verses? How do their lives compare?

Week #5

Jesus uses several metaphors in this passage. What do they signify?
House....foundation....flood....

How is obeying Jesus like building your house on a rock? See also 2 Timothy 2:19; Ephesians 4:22-24 and 2 Peter 1:3-10.

Has Jesus been speaking to your heart lately about something you need to obey? What is it and what do you plan to do about it?

*“These words I speak to you are not mere additions to your life,
homeowner improvements to your standard of living.
They are foundations words, words to build a life on.”*

Luke 6:47 (The Message)

Week #6

God's Light Touch

Luke 19:28-44

Read Luke 19, then reread verses 28-44 in several translations or paraphrases. Pray Psalm 119:140 back to God with thankfulness: *"Your word is very pure, therefore your servant loves it."*

What preparations were made for Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem? How did He enter the city?

Read Zechariah 9:9-13. What was Jesus proclaiming about Himself by the way He came into Jerusalem?

Week #6

Verses 39, 40 - how did the Pharisees feel about the crowd of disciples treating Jesus like the Messiah? What was Jesus' response to them?

Verses 41-44 - how did Jesus feel about Jerusalem?

Think about the character and heart of Jesus revealed in this passage, and the destiny of those who rejected the King. Are you moved to respond to any situation, place or person in your life today, with some particular prayer or action? If so, how do you plan to respond, God helping you?

You may also find it helpful in your personal or group worship time to read Psalm 118:22-29 and pray it back to God. This Psalm contains verses that were shouted in the streets by the disciples when Jesus entered Jerusalem the week before His crucifixion.

Week #7

Resurrection Life

Luke 24:36-53

Christianity is based on the fact that Jesus Christ is alive, risen from the dead and has sent His spirit to make life real for us now, today and forever.

Read Luke 24, then read verses 36-53 in several translations or paraphrases. Praise God, thanking Him for the fact of Luke 24:39, where Jesus says, *“See my hands and My feet, that it is I, Myself; touch Me and see...”*

What were the “eleven” and other disciples talking about in verse 36? Why do you think the disciples thought Jesus was a spirit, or ghost?

What evidence does Jesus give that he is alive? Verses 38-43

What does Jesus say the Scriptures reveal about Him? Verses 44-47

Week #7

What job does Jesus give His disciples? With what promise? How do verses 47 and 48 apply to you today?

When did the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is alive today, become true and real for you? What difference has this fact made in your life?

Make it a point to share with your small group or a friend the high point of these Lenten studies for you.

*“Crown Him the Lord of Life, Who triumphed o’er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife for those He came to save.
His glories now we sing, Who died and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring and lives that death may die.”*

Matthew Bridges

Some Tips For Small Group Leaders

It may be possible for some small groups to do these Bible studies *before* hearing the sermon on the study text. If your group meets to discuss the study *after* the sermon, take time to share how the sermon helped in understanding the text, or raised questions or gave ideas and encouragement for applying the Scripture to their life.

The study titles correspond to the sermon titles, which are printed in the News & Views.

Be prayerful in the days before your group meets, asking God to help you grow in community, so that you will all feel free to share honestly and openly, encouraging one another to obey the Word. As a group, pray for the Holy Spirit's guidance in your discussion and sharing. (Application will be difficult, however, without private thought and prayer.)

Be alert to anyone in the group who hasn't contributed and see if you can encourage their input. If someone is monopolizing the discussion, be bold enough to ask them to give others a chance to share.

The leader does not have to comment on every discussion question. However, at times it is helpful if the leader or someone else in the group summarizes what has been shared before moving on to the next question.

Encourage group members to jot down each other's applications and prayer requests. This helps them to remember to pray for one another during the week, to ask how it's going at the next meeting and to notice answered prayers.

Resources

LifeChange Bible Study Series- Luke; a NavPress Bible study; 1995

The Serendipity New Testament for Groups, NIV; NavPress; 1986

The Message, a Bible paraphrase by Eugene Peterson; NavPress; 2003

New American Standard Bible

Holy Bible, English Standard Version

The New Living Translation; Tyndale House publishers; 1996

2008 Schedule for Lent

Sunday, March 16th

Palm Sunday Services ~ 8:15 am, 10:00 am, and 11:30 am
Childcare and Programming - Typical Sunday morning

Thursday, March 20th

Maundy Thursday Service (Communion) ~ 7:30 pm
Childcare: Infants through 3-year olds

Friday, March 21st

Good Friday Service ~ 12:00 noon & 7:30 pm

Intergenerational Worship Experience - Recommended for 2nd graders and older

12:00 pm ~ Childcare: Infants, Toddlers

Programming: Twos, Threes, Pre-K, K and 1st Grade

7:30 pm ~ No childcare available

Easter Sunday Celebration Services

Sunday, March 23rd

Traditional Service ~ 8:15 am

Traditional Service ~ 10:00 am

Contemporary Service ~ 11:30 am

Childcare and Programming ~

Typical Sunday morning



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