

Episode: Luke Series No. 1

Narrator: Theophilus and Luke

Primary Scriptures: Luke 1

Story Summary: Background of the book of Luke, birth of Jesus

Location: Kingdom of Judea

Time: Circa 5-1 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 1:38, 1:50

Any reader of the Bible quickly notices that it gives few details about most of its characters or events. The Eyewitness Bible series of stories are true to scripture, while adding illustrative personalities and personal details to the people who lived these events. These stories also provide historical and geographic context not detailed in *Luke*.

In the *Gospel of Luke*, Luke said he made a careful investigation of everything before writing. His three primary sources of information were: his own experiences, written sources, and listening to the stories of those who were personally involved.

Luke had to be very careful writing his book because he was writing it to Theophilus in order to convince him of the truth of the life of Jesus. Theophilus was very likely a patron or influential person.

Luke's target audience was also anybody else who would read his account, which would likely include people who believed in—and probably worshipped—Roman or Greek gods. Luke was trying to convince everyone that all other gods are false, worthless, and harmful, so he was extremely detailed about the births of John and Jesus. Although miraculous, the births of both John and Jesus really did happen, as opposed to the made-up origins and existence of the gods of Rome and Greece.

Luke spends a lot of time on the birth and life of John the Baptist. He might have done that to prove to his Jewish audience that John had priestly lineage, which would have helped qualify him for a special place as a forerunner of Jesus. It is likely that, at the time of the writing of Luke, the Jews still held John the Baptist to be a prophet. Supporting John's authority would have the benefit of enhancing Jesus' public reputation.

Luke is an account of the life of Jesus. This episode explains how Luke felt about the birth story of Jesus. Can you imagine how a doctor like Luke would deal with a virgin giving birth? Luke's account of Mary's conception of Jesus is so detailed that at least part of the Bible story surely came straight from Mary. As a doctor, Luke would have asked the most obvious question to Mary, "How can we all be assured that you were a virgin?" Apparently, he resolved that question to his satisfaction.

Discussion Questions:

1. Where did Luke get his information to write *Luke*?
 2. Who did Luke write *Luke* to, and how might that have affected his writing?
 3. During the life of Jesus, was Israel an important country? Because the Bible is mostly written about the country of Israel, have you gotten an outsized impression of its importance in world affairs during Jesus' lifetime?
 4. How might Luke's style differ from a modern writing?
 5. What are some factors that might have convinced Luke of the truthfulness of Mary's story about her giving birth to Jesus while a virgin?
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1. Luke 1:1-4 Luke was a witness, he interviewed witnesses, and he used written materials that were available. 2. Theophilus, who was possibly a patron or influential person. Luke had to take extra care to write a truthful account so as not to offend Theophilus. Luke probably meant for many others to read his letter. 3. No, it was a tiny, obscure part of the huge Roman Empire. 4. He does not follow a strict chronological order, he is more interested in imparting a truthful story than factual details, he used other sources without crediting them. 5. The facts Mary gave him when she told her story, leading of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah's prophecy.

Application Questions:

1. Mary knew that she had not had sex, and she knew there was no possible way for her to be pregnant. How did she gain the trust in God to know that she was actually going to have a baby? What can you do to cultivate your trust in God to such a high level? [Mary described herself as a servant]
2. Luke was able to be convinced of the miracle of Jesus being born of a virgin. What do you need to be convinced of to love Jesus more and follow him better?
3. The Bible was written and compiled by humans in a variety of ways. How does this knowledge change the way you interact with the scriptures? How can you use this to internalize the Bible in your own life?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. What sorts of behaviors and attitudes have you exhibited to your parent(s) that causes them to trust you? To distrust you? If you were them, would you trust you? What could you do to get them to trust you more?
2. Luke had to be very careful with his facts and style to get the appreciation and trust of Theophilus. Are you always careful to get your facts straight?
3. Mary must have had an impeccable reputation in order for God to choose her to be the mother of Jesus. What qualities should you improve in order for God to choose you to do something special for him?

Episode: Luke Series No. 2

Narrator: Mary

Primary Scriptures: Luke 2

Story Summary: Story of the birth of Jesus

Location: Nazareth

Time: Circa 5-1 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 2:4, 2:11, 2:38, 2:40, 2:49, or 2:51-52

Luke tells many details of the births and early childhoods of Jesus and John the Baptist that Matthew did not give. It is likely that Luke had the opportunity to meet Mary in person and learn much about those early lives. As a doctor, Luke would likely have been fascinated with the many unusual aspects of their stories only Mary could provide.

In the gospel of Matthew, it is recorded that the wise men came to the baby Jesus in a house.¹ Although some traditions indicate Jesus was born in a cave or a barn, it is equally as likely that he was born in a guest house that had an interior manger. That might fit better with the idea that Joseph was of David's family and would have deserved hospitality in the small village of Bethlehem.

Luke stresses that Jesus' parents followed the Laws of Moses precisely when they offered a sacrifice for him. While at the Temple, two reliable prophets, Simeon and Anna, foretold many things about Jesus. From that point on, surely his parents must have been aware they had a special baby who would change the future of Israel.

Luke had the benefit of hindsight as he wrote about the birth and early life of Jesus. He also knew his target audience needed to be convinced of the legitimacy of Luke's rather outlandish story. He apparently chose his material accordingly. In the classic thinking, it was as important to note what was *not* said, as much as what was said!

¹ Matthew 2:11

Discussion Questions:

1. How would Luke have learned the small details of the birth stories of Jesus and John the Baptist?
 2. How would Mary have likely reacted when Gabriel appeared?
 3. What is one reason why Mary could have easily accepted that she was to have a baby even though she was a virgin?
 4. When Jesus was eight days old, Joseph and Mary sacrificed a pair of doves or pigeons. What does that say about their economic circumstances? How did being poor affect Jesus?
 5. What sorts of things did Luke *not* talk about?
1. Possibly from Mary herself. 2. She lived in a small town where everybody knew about everybody's business. She was probably astonished, but also worried about her reputation. 3. She was very likely familiar with Isaiah's prophecy about a virgin having a child². 4. That was a sacrifice poor people made. Joseph and Mary must have been poor.

Application Questions:

1. Zacharias questioned Gabriel and was struck mute because of it. Have you ever distrusted God so much that he should have disciplined you?
2. God entrusted Jesus to Joseph and Mary. Joseph and Mary were poor. Did God choose them even though they were poor, or because they were poor? Do you let your financial circumstances limit what you think God can do through you?
3. What qualities did Joseph and Mary have that you should cultivate in your own life?
4. What qualities of your children did they get from watching your example?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Have you ever prejudged someone and then found out you were wrong? Has anybody ever prejudged you incorrectly? How did that make you feel?
2. When have you ever given someone the benefit of the doubt? What qualities of theirs made you do it?
3. Luke 2:51 says Jesus was submissive to his parents. What does that mean to you? Are you willing to be submissive to your parents even when you think they are wrong?
4. Mary was hugely affected by the story of Jesus being lost and being found at the Temple. She remembered being frantic to find Jesus, but remembered more that he considered the Temple his father's house where he should be. What would it take for you to feel like church is your home away from home? How could you make it feel like that for others that you know?

² Isaiah 7:14

Episode: Luke Series No. 3

Narrator: John the Baptist

Primary Scriptures: Luke 3

Story Summary: Life of John the Baptist

Location: Kingdom of Judea

Time: Circa 5 BC – 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 3:3, 3:8, 3:16, 3:21-22

John often baptized people in the Jordan River, at least twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. The road from Jerusalem was dangerous, as Jesus illustrated in the parable of the Good Samaritan, so John and his message must have been powerful forces to entice people to come to him from Jerusalem and surrounding areas. Luke says John exhorted the people and that his message was good news.

The gospel writers took special care to portray John to be like the Old Testament prophets in both his look and in his message. One reason for that: the prophet Malachi prophesied that Elijah would return before the Day of the Lord.¹ The gospel writers wanted their readers to associate John the Baptist with that prophecy.

Though he had a sizable following, John took great care not to be confused with the Messiah, always showing himself as the one preparing the way for someone greater.

Although John was quite clear about his criticisms, he was also quite clear about the answers of how to change. His answers were not only clear, but quite practical. That would have endeared him to the general populace that were not able to meet the requirements of their religious leaders.

John was not worried about currying favor with the ruling elite—when Herod Antipas married his brother's former wife, John criticized him publicly. This eventually resulted in John's death.

With John's immense popularity, it would have been easy for him to resent the rising influence and popularity of Jesus. Instead, John supported Jesus in every way possible, including sending some of his own disciples to follow Jesus. Perhaps John portrayed the ultimate humility when he said about Jesus, "He must become more; I must become less."

The baptism of Jesus by John was the beginning of the end for John. Jesus' ministry took off like a rocket, while John's disciples left him for Jesus. John knew that was fine because his ministry was coming to an end in the very near future.

¹ Malachi 4:5

Discussion Questions:

1. Why would Matthew have portrayed John as wearing rough clothes and living in the wilderness?
 2. John the Baptist is often portrayed as a raving preacher condemning everyone to eternal death. Does that image really fit with John's message and his popularity?
 3. What was John's mission?
 4. Which Herod put John the Baptist in jail and executed him?
 5. Besides John, who else did Herod Antipas threaten?
 6. Some of John's disciples abandoned him. Who did they go follow instead? How did John take that news?
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1. To invoke the image that John was like the Old Testament prophets.
 3. To prepare the hearts of the people to accept Jesus and his teachings.
 4. Herod Antipas, a son of Herod the Great.
 5. Much of Jesus' ministry was in Galilee, an area ruled by Herod Antipas. It is likely Antipas tracked Jesus and was paranoid about him.
 6. Jesus. He encouraged it to happen.

Application Questions

1. How can you present the Gospel in such a way that the message is attractive to people?
2. When you confront fellow Christians about what they are doing wrong, do you present possible answers to them about how they can change?
3. Are you willing to confront people who are sinning? If so, how do you confront people in a Christian manner? And how do you guard yourself from sin so that you can retain authority in your confrontations?

Application Questions for Teens

1. John knew that he was not to be the most popular leader to his disciples and listeners, but that he was preparing the way for his disciples and listeners to accept and follow Jesus. Are you prepared to accept the fact that you don't have to be the most popular person among your peers, and that you should instead be a light to others and lead them to Christ?
2. Do you listen to people better when they present their request in a pleasant manner or in an angry manner?
3. At the end of Luke 3, Luke presents some of Jesus' genealogy. Do you know your genealogy and, if so, does that knowledge affect how you think of yourself? Does that limit you or encourage you?

Episode: Luke Series No. 4

Narrator: Satan

Primary Scriptures: Luke 4: 1-13

Story Summary: Jesus in the wilderness, Satan's story

Location: Kingdom of Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 4:8, 4:13

In the Old Testament, Satan is only discussed by name these three times: the testing of Job,¹ the counting of David's fighting men,² and the matter of Joshua the high priest.³ In the New Testament, Satan is referred to by name quite often. It appears that much of the insight about spiritual beings happened in the period between the Old Testament and New Testament, and through Jesus himself.

The ministry of Jesus starts when he is tempted by Satan in the wilderness. There are few places on Earth as desolate as the wilderness just a few miles east of Jerusalem. It is a light beige, desert-dry landscape of rocks, canyons and mountains, and when you stand in the midst of it, you feel as if you are a million miles away from the nearest human being or body of water. It is no wonder Satan chose to spiritually attack Jesus in the wilderness after he had fasted for forty days.

Throughout the New Testament, Satan is portrayed as a living personality who relentlessly attacks humans physically and spiritually. Modern society has effectively destroyed fear of Satan by portraying him as a comic character or rendering him harmless, if not non-existent. In contrast, the New Testament writers consistently warned of Satan's power to destroy.

¹ Job 1, 2 Although the KJV names him in one Psalm, too.

² 1 Chronicles 21:1

³ Zechariah 3:1-2

Discussion Questions:

1. If you were Satan, would you rather people feared you or believed that you do not exist? Why?
 2. How might the Internet and smartphones be considered tools of Satan?
 3. How might the Internet and smartphones be considered as weapons *against* Satan?
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1. They keep you occupied with non-spiritual matters, offer all types of temptations, often makes fun of God and his people. 3. They offer full-time access to the Bible, gives you search and study tools to help you learn the Bible, offer unlimited numbers of sermons and lessons about the Bible, offer unlimited number of church services to watch.

Application Questions

1. How can you teach your children and friends about the reality of Satan and his influence on their lives?
2. Do your actions indicate that you do or do not believe that Satan exists and is a powerful negative influence in your life?
3. What kind of temptations do you regularly give into? What steps could you take to stay away from those temptations or learn to overcome them?
4. How much of your life should be spent resisting Satan, and how much should be spent following Jesus? In what ways do you need to reorient your life to properly balance this ratio?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Which type of person is more harmful to the cause of Jesus: an atheist, or someone who claims to be a Christian but does not truly follow Jesus?
2. Do you know of any friends who believe that Satan does not exist? How would you prepare yourself to be ready to discuss this topic with them?
3. Think about how many hours you spend on your phone each day. Statistics tell us that number is probably between 5 and 7 hours per day. How much of that time on your phone are you spending reading the Bible, spreading God's word, or pleasing God?
4. How does Satan use your phone to cause you harm? How can you mitigate those things? [creates desires in you, distracts you from important things, causes you to ignore other people, keeps you from learning how to resolve conflicts with others]

Episode: Luke Series No. 5

Narrator: James

Primary Scriptures: Luke 4: 14-44

Story Summary: The beginning of the ministry of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 4:18-19, 4:32, 4:41, 4:43

Luke introduces James into this story when Jesus taught in his hometown of Nazareth. The unbelieving people of Nazareth used the existence of Jesus' family to dispel the notion that Jesus was anything special.¹ Luke thought it was important to point out that Jesus was rejected in his hometown. Apparently, Luke wanted us to know that familiarity does breed contempt, so we must guard against that in our own lives.

When Jesus made it clear that non-Jews will receive salvation, the people became enraged and tried to kill him. The Jews of the time were very jealous of their special relationship with God.

There is no proof that James believed Jesus to be the Son of God while Jesus was alive. In fact, there are some verses that indicate Jesus' brothers opposed his ministry. However, the book of *Acts* says that James later became the leader of the church in Jerusalem.

This episode portrays James as following Jesus for several days during his early ministry. There is nothing in the New Testament that says he did or did not do such a thing. This episode's storyline does allow an understanding of why Jesus chose Capernaum as his headquarters instead of his hometown of Nazareth. We also get a glimpse of the early days of Jesus' ministry when he spent much time healing people, casting out demons, and teaching. He did this not only in Capernaum, but also throughout the region of Judea.

Luke 4:31 is a hint of things to come. It says that the people were amazed because Jesus' words had authority. The people were not just impressed, but absolutely amazed. Why? Probably because they were used to hearing religious leaders quote other religious leaders who quoted other religious leaders. The words they were hearing from their religious leaders may have been correct, but they certainly lacked true authority and authenticity.

Of the many religious leaders of the time, the Pharisees were most stung by the reaction of the people. They knew the Scriptures, studied all the time, and were devoted to following the rules they had made so they could better satisfy God, so the authority of Jesus was a serious threat to their leadership positions.

¹ Matthew 13:53-58

Discussion Questions:

1. When Jesus left Nazareth after being threatened, wouldn't Mary have been concerned about her son? What actions might she have taken to verify his safety and well-being?
 2. Why did Jesus keep the demons from identifying him as the Son of God? Wouldn't their testimony be overwhelmingly powerful?
 3. Why were the people amazed at the words of Jesus?
 4. Why did Jesus choose Capernaum as his headquarters?
 5. Why do you think James had such a hard time believing in Jesus? How would you feel if your relative became a famous Hollywood star or politician?
 6. How did James' early reaction to Jesus affect his actions and thoughts when he became the leader of the church in Jerusalem?
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1. His words had authority. They were used to hearing the stale words of the Pharisees. 4. It sat on a major trade route which made it convenient for people to come see him, news of his ministry would spread quickly, it was far from Jerusalem and the most powerful Jewish leaders. 6. He was reputed to have prayed incessantly.

Application Questions

1. If you believed somebody could heal your severe physical ailments, what would you be willing to do to get in front of that person and ask to be healed? Would you do the same for severe spiritual ailments?
2. The people of Nazareth got furious at Jesus because he said people who were non-Jews could be more faithful than Jews. Do you ever get upset when Christians with different beliefs than you appear to be more faithful than you? What might you do with those feelings to channel them into a deeper discipleship?
3. Based on this passage, is it more important to help people meet their physical needs or to tell them the gospel story? Now, try to prove the opposite of what you first answered.

Application Questions for Teens

1. Have you ever had a friend that others thought was amazing, but you didn't? Was that because you knew something others didn't, or might you have been jealous?
2. If you had been Jesus, what kind of miracle would you have performed in your hometown just to show them you could? Be honest!
3. Jesus did not heal everybody who wanted healing or do every miracle people wanted him to do. What do you want God to do in your life that you would consider a miracle? Do you want it badly enough to pray regularly for it, but still believe in God if he chooses not to do that miracle?

Episode: Luke Series No. 6

Narrator: Matthew

Primary Scriptures: Luke 5

Story Summary: Early ministry of Jesus

Location: Capernaum

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 5:11, 5:16, 5:25, 5:27-28, 5:32

We know almost nothing of Matthew's life before or after he became a follower of Jesus. We know he was a tax collector in Capernaum when Jesus called him as a follower.¹ He had a tax collecting booth and a house, and his friends included tax collectors and other people considered to be sinners. We know that Mark and Luke called him "Levi" and that he was an apostle.² And most importantly, we know that Matthew heard Jesus' call and left his booth immediately to follow him. That is virtually all we know directly about Matthew.

We don't know Matthew's hometown or how he was educated. We don't know how long he knew Jesus before hearing and acting upon his call. We don't know how well he got along with the other apostles or what he did after the death of Jesus.

From his writing of the book of *Matthew*, we can surmise he had an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures, and that he was focused on the Jews knowing about Jesus as the Son of God. We can surmise Matthew joined Jesus early in his ministry and wrote as an eyewitness to much of what Jesus said and did. We can deduce that Matthew knew several of the other apostles before Jesus came to the area, and also met Luke many years after the death of Jesus.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Luke insinuates that Jesus knew Simon Peter before he called him to follow him. It is possible Jesus would have known some of the other apostles before he called them.

In Chapter 5, Luke brings the Pharisees into the picture, and shows how they begin to oppose Jesus. It seems they are not quite sure what to do with someone who can so obviously do miracles and healings while not fitting their notion of "righteousness." Jesus and his followers don't even fast "appropriately" according to the rules of the Pharisees.

The healing of the man with leprosy and the paralyzed man have many facets. Jesus was the first to ever heal these types of maladies. Faith was involved with the healings. The healings led to the conclusion that Jesus could forgive sins, which meant he was God incarnate. No wonder the Pharisees were in a furious quandary about what to do with Jesus.

¹ Matthew 9:9-12

² Mark 2:13-15, Luke 5:27-29

Discussion Questions:

1. How long would you guess Jesus knew Simon Peter and his fishing partners before calling them to follow him?
 2. How long do you think Jesus knew Matthew before calling him to be a follower? Why would Jesus have been familiar with Matthew?
 3. Why would Matthew's friends have been other tax collectors and sinners?
 4. Why would Matthew have left a lucrative job to follow a poor preacher? Do you know other people who have left lucrative careers to follow Jesus?
1. Jesus had already healed Simon's mother-in-law Luke 4:38. 2. Matthew had a tax booth that Jesus would have had to walk by every time he left town in a certain direction. 3. tax collectors were agents of the Roman government and had the right to try to collect as many taxes as possible. The common people detested them and considered them to be sinners. They were only allowed to socialize with other tax collectors and "sinners."

Application Questions

1. Matthew had to leave his friends in order to pursue his relationship with Jesus. Are there friends you need to leave, at least temporarily, to pursue Jesus better? What other things in your life might you need to leave behind to be a better follower of Jesus?
2. Jesus taught that you cannot put a new way of life into an old lifestyle. Have you ever tried to do that? How did that work for you? What did you learn from it?
3. How could you go about making friends that are good enough to lower you through a roof to see Jesus?
4. Jesus did not fit the Pharisees' model of what it meant to be righteous. They reacted with anger and disapproval. How do you react to Christians who don't agree with you?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Simon and his friends thought so much alike that they all left their jobs to follow Jesus. Would you like to have friends that are that close? If so, what would you be willing to do to get them?
2. Jesus said that he came to heal sinners. Do you ever feel like you are too much of a sinner for Jesus to want you? If so, what can you do in those moments overcome those feelings with the truth?
3. What ideas or desires do you hold to that are keeping you from becoming closer to Jesus? What would it take for you to release those?

Episode: Luke Series No. 7

Narrator: Right-Hand Man

Primary Scriptures: Luke 6

Story Summary: Healing of the man with the withered hand, early ministry of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 6:12-13, 6:27-28, 6:31, 6:36-37, 6:46

The Pharisees and Jesus start confronting each other early in his ministry. The Pharisees were religious leaders intent on obeying their strict interpretation of the laws of Moses. In fact, they created hundreds of rules to make sure that nobody would ever come close to breaking the laws. Unfortunately, in their efforts to obey the rules, they often forgot the reason for the rules, frequently neglecting the fact that God loves people and wants them to be healed, both physically and spiritually.

In the opening scene of this episode, a man with a deformity stands in need of healing. This man had a withered right hand, which was a disastrous event at the time, meaning he couldn't work at hard physical labor, couldn't be a full member of the synagogue, and would have a hard time finding a good wife. He would surely have died a little inside every time someone looked at him with pity or disdain. When Jesus heals him, it changes far more than just his hand.

However, the event occurs on the Sabbath when the Pharisees had concluded that any act of healing would be "working". Since it was prohibited to work on the Sabbath, Jesus was in violation of the Pharisees interpretation of the Law. No matter how much it helped the man, it was not appropriate to do on the Sabbath.

The healing of the man with a withered hand was just the start of how Jesus would show people that their worldviews were often contrary to God's desires, that they could follow the Law to the letter while completely missing its spirit. It would not be long before the people around Jesus began to understand the words of an ancient prophet, "God desires mercy, not sacrifice."¹

Sometimes it appears as if Jesus chose his apostles almost at random. It might be better seen that Jesus wanted everyone to follow him, but concentrated on certain people. His apostles, however were chosen from among many followers. How did Jesus choose them? After spending a night praying to God!

¹ Hosea 6:6

Discussion Questions

1. What are some of the reasons a man with a withered right hand would have been at a huge disadvantage? How would your life change if your right hand was paralyzed or shriveled?
 2. The Pharisees made up rules that they wanted to force people to follow. Can you think of rules that churches used to try to enforce that they no longer do? Did those rules tend to help people behave like people of God or to alienate them from God?
 3. When Jesus warned rich people of the perils of being rich, what characters in the Old Testament might he have been talking about? How do you think the poor people reacted when Jesus said it was blessed to be poor?
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1. He couldn't get a job doing heavy manual labor, hard to find a wife, would not have been accepted in some of the ceremonies at the synagogue, would have been ridiculed from birth. 3. Lot, David, Solomon.

Application Questions

1. The Pharisees were sure their interpretation of the Mosaic Law was the "correct" one; Jesus upended that certainty. In what areas of your faith might Jesus be speaking to you along these lines?
2. Jesus spent the entire night in prayer before he chose his apostles. How long did you pray before making your last big decision?
3. Have you ever started a project that you hugely underestimated the costs in terms of money or time? What did you do when you understood your predicament? In retrospect, what should you have done?
4. Using a figure of speech, Jesus advised that we not criticize others for their behavior until our own is faultless. Have you done such a thing in the recent past?
5. How would you react if a man came into your church group and started criticizing your leaders and explaining the Scriptures in a way you could not agree with?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Your body may be healthy, but are there spiritual or emotional "withered hands" that are keeping you from living your fullest faithful life? In what ways would you like Jesus to "heal" those?
2. How can you get into the habit of praying before making important decisions?
3. How much would it take to change your behavior to never criticize anybody? Not to judge anybody?
4. If you measured what is in your heart by the words that come out of your mouth, what would you find out?

Episode: Luke Series No. 8

Narrator: Centurion

Primary Scriptures: Luke 7

Story Summary: Some healings and miracles of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 7:22, 7:28, 7:47, 7:50

Think of centurions as being the toughest of the tough. In terms of rank, they would be somewhat equivalent to a captain in the United States army. The typical centurion led a dangerous life because he led his soldiers in battle, and if he survived, he typically received Roman citizenship and a grant of land upon retirement. Like many soldiers of the time, they sought a calm, peaceful assignment as they approached retirement.

Very little is known about the centurion located in Capernaum. We can surmise he was there to protect the Via Maris trade route, and possibly act as an implicit threat to Herod's nearby town of Tiberius. However, he treated the Jews and their religion with respect, which was unusual for a Roman; possibly he had become a God-follower, a person who believed in God but was not willing to become a Jew.

Since he was responsible for keeping peace, you can be sure the centurion knew all of the local leaders and kept abreast of all gossip and social news. He would have been familiar with Jesus and his healings and teachings. It was not a big leap for him to think of Jesus when his favorite servant was on the verge of death.

The healings, miracles, and resurrections of Jesus caused such a stir that he began to spend too much time doing those things instead of teaching. Desperately ill people certainly preferred healings over spiritual teaching, but Jesus was intent on healing people spiritually, too.

In *Luke*, this is the time when all of the attention turns from John the Baptist to Jesus. It is challenging for modern Christians to understand the importance of John the Baptist. It seems like Luke spends too much time on somebody who announces Jesus and then gets killed.

Jesus makes the effort to show the immense importance of John in preparing the way for Jesus. Jesus invokes Old Testament prophecies to show the validity of John's message. This is important in trying to turn the Jews from the Laws of Moses to a new way of thinking. When Jesus gives John validity, it also provides validity for Jesus' messages and claims.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why might the centurion have been posted in Capernaum?
 2. Why would the centurion have treated the Jews with respect?
 3. How might the centurion have known Simon the Pharisee?
 4. How did the centurions and other government leaders keep up with local news and threats?
 5. How do you suspect Simon the Pharisee reacted when Jesus publicly embarrassed him?
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1. Protect the trade route, keep the peace, act as a check on Herod. 2. To keep the peace. He might have been a God-fearer who believed in God but wasn't willing to convert to Judaism. 3. As a Jewish leader, the centurion had probably met him in the normal course of governmental matters. 4. Hired spies, bribed people, made friends with local leaders.

Application Questions

1. The Centurion was able to get help when he most needed it by gaining favor way ahead of time. How are you wisely gaining favor from others before it is needed? How can you navigate this so that you still see people for their humanity and not as a possible future transaction?
2. The mother of the son who died was probably destined for death or extreme poverty herself. Why did Jesus take such pity on her? Is there somebody in your life or peripheral to your life who needs your compassion? What can you do to show it to them?
3. John showed great humility by announcing Jesus and then bowing out of the way. Have you ever bowed out of the way in deference to someone else? Might you need to be doing so now?

Application Questions for Teens

1. The Centurion recognized authority not only because he received deference from others, but because he deferred to others himself. Do you defer to authority figures in your life willingly or are you rebellious? How will that help or hurt you as you become an adult? When is it appropriate to stand up to authority instead of showing deference?
2. Simon the Pharisee could not see his own shortcomings because of his pride. Can you name a time when your pride blinded you to your faults? Do you think of yourself as prideful? Do your friends think of you as being prideful? How do you know?
3. Jesus forgave a known sinful woman because of her faith and repentance. Is there something you need to quit doing? How will you take steps to follow through with that?

Episode: Luke Series No. 9

Narrator: Mary Magdalene

Primary Scriptures: Luke 8

Story Summary: Some healings and miracles of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 8:2-3, 8:14, 8:21, 8:25, 8:38-39

Over the centuries, many people have observed that Jesus was one of the first world leaders concerned with women's rights. When it came to women, Jesus wasn't as concerned with the day-to-day societal norms as he was with their worth. In many ancient societies, including the time when Jesus was born, women were considered property, with worth far below that of men—the Roman Empire even codified this in their laws. It was only during the following decades that women started receiving more legal rights.

Jesus cared for women as much as men. He healed them, he talked to them, he taught them, he loved them, and in doing so, he made it clear that God loves women as much as he loves men. That is one reason why so many women followed Jesus and cared for his needs and the needs of the apostles, as well as rose to positions of leadership in the early Church.

One of the things that is challenging about the Gospel stories is that there are so many women named Mary, and it is not always clear which one is which. The mother of Jesus is named Mary. The sister of Martha and Lazarus is named Mary. A woman who was healed of seven demons is named Mary and sometimes referred to as Mary Magdalene. The mother of John Mark is named Mary. There is a woman married to Clopas named Mary, who was the mother of James and Joseph. And even that information is not perfectly clear and undisputed.

This episode is narrated by Mary Magdalene. Many people associate things with Mary Magdalene that are not necessarily verified in the Bible. Perhaps this episode will clear up some misunderstandings.

With the Parable of the Sower, Luke shows Jesus starting to teach in parables, which is essentially a short story with spiritual meaning. One of the interesting things about the Parable of the Sower is that Jesus explained the meaning of the parable to his close disciples. The Gospel writers did not record that happening very often.

According to *Luke*, the story of the demoniac living in the country of the Gerasenes is a true story, not a parable. The end of that story is very intriguing, in that the healed man wanted to follow Jesus, but was instead commanded to return home and tell people what God had done for him. What did the former demoniac do? He went through the whole city telling people—and therefore showing them—what Jesus had done!

Discussion Questions:

1. What is a parable? Why did Jesus use parables in his teaching?
 2. Why were women especially attracted to the teachings of Jesus?
 3. If you read the Parable of the Sower in Luke 8:5-8, would you have discerned the meaning that Jesus explained in Luke 8:11-15?
 4. Are you a sibling of Jesus? Did the apostle Paul have this scripture in mind when he wrote of Christians being adopted by God?
 5. Why do you think Jesus commanded the demoniac to go tell his story in his home rather than coming to follow Jesus?
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1. A short story with a spiritual meaning. It was a common method to teach. People would remember the stories and reflect on them. With reflection, they would learn spiritual meanings. 2. He taught that women had equal value as men to God. He treated them with respect and care. 4. Luke 8:21 5. His testimony would be very compelling, he needed to ask forgiveness of others

Application Questions

1. Did this episode change your perception on the status of women in the eyes of Jesus? What can you do to more fully embody Jesus' perception of women in the world?
2. In the Parable of the Sower, what kind of seed do you identify with? What would it take for you to identify with the seed that returned a hundredfold?
3. If you had been the healed demoniac, and been told to tell people about Jesus, what kind of excuses would you might have tried to make?
4. Have you ever wanted to be healed from a habit so badly that you would be as bold as the woman who reached out to touch Jesus? What kind of things make you bold?

Application Questions for Teens

1. In the Parable of the Sower, one of the kinds of seed wasn't very productive because it was choked out by the pleasures of life. What kind of pleasures of life keep you from being productive at school? Within your family? For Jesus?
2. The most fruitful seed was fruitful in part because it held the Word of God closely to its heart? What would you need to do to be described as hold the Word of God closely? In the last seven days, how many minutes did you read the Bible?
3. The apostles were marveled that Jesus calmed the storm. When you think of things that Jesus has done, what things make you marvel... physical things or spiritual things?
4. Do you ever make excuses to keep from doing what a parent asked you to do? What would have happened differently if you had just been cheerfully obedient?

Episode: Luke Series No. 10

Narrator: James the Apostle

Primary Scriptures: Luke 9

Story Summary: Miracles of Jesus, Mount of Transfiguration

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 9:1-2, 9:13-14, 9:20, 9:23-25, 9:48, 9:50-51, 9:62

Luke builds his Gospel by showing how Jesus calls his twelve apostles and then trains them. This training takes the form of spending time with Jesus, watching him do miracles and healings, and listening to his teachings. By Luke 9, the basic training is over and advanced training has started. Jesus empowers the apostles and gives them authority to drive out demons and cure people, and to teach about the Kingdom of God.

Luke tamps down their success by saying they returned to Jesus and reported the results, but Jesus just took them and withdrew to the small town of Bethsaida. Luke follows this with the story of the feeding of the five thousand. The apostles should have learned that they had the power to feed the people, but they did not understand this even after Jesus encouraged them. They must have been very confused about what power they did and didn't have.

On another occasion, Jesus takes an opportunity to set the record straight. He puts Peter in the position of having to state who Jesus is. When Peter correctly named Jesus as the Christ, it becomes undisputed among the apostles who they are serving. Rather than extol all the good things that are going to happen, Jesus explains how much they will have to suffer. He knew he had to keep their expectations in check. In another instance of overturning their expectations, Jesus takes three of them up on the Mount of Transfiguration and confirms their belief in him.

Have you ever thought how confused the disciples must have stayed? One moment they learn about the benefits of following Jesus, and the next they learn the cost of that following will be suffering. One moment, Jesus shows his Messiahship by healing unhealable people, and the next he is talking about his death.

To add to the apostles' bewilderment, Jesus has the habit of saying confusing things. In this chapter alone he says, "It is the least among you who is the greatest"; "whoever is not against you is for you"; and whoever want to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it." It is easy, after 2000 years of received wisdom about Jesus, to envision how awesome it would have been to be with him, but maybe the apostles didn't feel that way all the time.

One verse not to miss is Luke 9:51. Luke is making a transition in this passage by saying Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. From this point on, Jesus is irrevocably committed to going to Jerusalem and to the cross.

Discussion Questions:

1. In Luke 9:9, Luke comments that Herod wanted to see Jesus. He indicates that this desire was born out of both fear and curiosity. How might the story of Jesus proceeded if he had gone to meet Herod at this time in his ministry? Might it have changed the outcome of the trial before Herod on the night Jesus was betrayed?
 2. After the feeding of the five thousand, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers. Is there any significance to that number? What do you think they did with the leftovers?
 3. After the Mount of Transfiguration, Luke writes that the disciples kept the event a secret. Why do you think Jesus asked them to keep it a secret? Why would they have wanted to keep it a secret? Was the secret shared with all the apostles, or did the three keep it among themselves?
 4. Luke portrays this time in Jesus' ministry as very successful, but he starts giving hints of things to come. For instance, after the healing of the boy, Jesus seems to randomly say that he is going to be betrayed. Why would Jesus have picked that time to say such a thing?
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1. One for each of the apostles, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel?

Application Questions

1. Jesus picked only three apostles to accompany him on the Mount of Transfiguration. Why did he pick Peter, John, and James? Do you have some of those same qualities?
2. After Jesus healed the demon-possessed boy, the people were amazed at the greatness of God. How can people be amazed at the greatness of God through your actions and beliefs? Are you typically striving for God to get the credit, or for you to get the credit?
3. Peter had a clear answer as to who Jesus is: God's messiah. If somebody asked you who Jesus is, how would you answer the question?
4. In what ways has Jesus overturned your expectations throughout your life? What can you do to prepare for future instances of this?

Application Questions for Teens

1. In the story of the demon-possessed boy, he was involuntarily subjected to convulsions and screaming. Do you think people are still possessed by demons, or are illnesses always physical or mental? Does your answer indicate the way you treat people with illnesses?
2. Jesus said that he will be ashamed of anyone who is ashamed of Jesus and his words. What could you do to make sure you never act ashamed of Jesus?
3. Jesus said that the least among his followers is the greatest. What marks those who are least? [humility, servant attitude, love] Would you be willing to settle for being great like that or would you prefer to be the most popular kid in the room?

Episode: Luke Series No. 11

Narrator: John the Apostle

Primary Scriptures: Luke 10

Story Summary: Middle ministry of Jesus

Location: Galilee and Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 10:2, 10:20, 10:24, 10:27-28

John the Apostle was part of the inner circle of Jesus. He was also the author of five books in the New Testament. Yet with all of that, the authors of *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke* hardly quote him.

John called himself “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”¹ That probably wasn’t an overstatement, because Jesus entrusted his mother, Mary, to John upon his death.

As Luke describes the middle part of Jesus’ ministry, he starts relating more stories about the seriousness of committing to follow Jesus. Jesus was running out of time to train his apostles and certainly had less time to spend with disciples who would not fully commit to him. When Jesus sent out the seventy disciples, it was an opportunity for them to learn the rewards of full commitment. One reward was that Jesus saw Satan fall like lightning from the sky.

As you read Luke 10, notice how Jesus stresses the importance of full commitment in both his actions and his stories. Even in his confrontation with the Pharisees, he makes it clear that you simply being close to being committed is not enough. He says we have to love God with all our hearts, soul, strength and mind, and love our neighbors as ourselves. Those are surely high bars of commitment!

Luke is the only Gospel source for the parable of the Good Samaritan. Notice that Jesus tells the parable in response to the question, “Who qualifies for me to love them as much as I love myself?” It is ironic that the expert in the law asked that question to Jesus, since surely Jesus would ask himself that very question on many occasions since the beginning of time. Think of the parable in that context and you may think of Jesus in a new way.

¹ John 13:23

Discussion Questions:

1. John was a fisherman when Jesus met him. When do you think John became so intent on the subject of love?
 2. John was in Jesus' inner circle. Who else was part of that circle? When do you think his inner circle understood that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God?
 3. What did Jesus say to confirm the success of the seventy-two he sent out? []. What does evangelistic success look like today?
2. Peter and James, and sometimes Andrew. 3. He saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Application Questions:

1. Jesus demands that his disciples fully commit to him. What would that look like in your life? What does it look like *not* to fully commit to him?
2. What do you remember of the story of the Good Samaritan that you learned as a child?
3. Concerning the story where Martha serves Jesus while Mary listens to him teach, do you identify more with Martha or Mary? What things distract you from more important things? Are those different distractions than before you got a smart phone?
4. The teacher of the law asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. How would you answer that question if somebody asks you? Can you back up your answer with Scripture you have memorized?
5. What does it look like to love someone as much as you love yourself? Was Jesus being overly dramatic or literal? How good are you at loving yourself?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Jesus said to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Is it even possible to do that in today's world? Name the three things that you love the most, using your free time as the measurement.
2. The expert in the law said that the neighbor was the one who had mercy. Name some people who have had mercy on you. Is there someone you need to have mercy on today, even if it is inconvenient for you to do so?
3. Jesus said that no one knows who God is except those to whom Jesus chooses to reveal him. One of the ways Jesus reveals God is through Scripture. Name some of the characteristics of God that you know by personal experience. Do those line up with Scripture or are they just your perceptions?
4. What does it look like to love someone as much as you love yourself? Was Jesus being overly dramatic or literal? How good are you at loving yourself?

Episode: Luke Series No. 12

Narrator: The Pharisee

Primary Scriptures: Luke 11, 12, 13:31-35

Story Summary: Teachings of Jesus

Location: Galilee

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 11:2-4, 9-10, 11:13, 11:23, 11:28, 12:8-9, 12:10, 12:15, 12:48

The Pharisees were a Jewish sect that started two hundred years before Jesus. At times their identity shifted between a political party, a social movement, or a school of thought. They believed in the authority of virtually all of the Hebrew Bible (what we call the Old Testament) and had built an oral tradition of a vast number of interpretations. After the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, their beliefs became foundational in Rabbinic Judaism.

The Sadducees were another Jewish sect who recognized only the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament) and rejected the rest as well as oral traditions and beliefs such as the resurrection of the dead. The Sadducees and Pharisees comprised most of the Jewish leadership in the time of Jesus.

Both the Pharisees and Sadducees opposed Jesus and his teachings. Jesus interpreted the Scriptures differently than either the Sadducees or Pharisees, was intent on serving God and not the letter of their laws, and wanted to free the people from the religious rules that the leaders had inflicted on them. Jesus spoke with authority, and the religious leaders feared the people would follow Jesus and reject them. This fueled their jealousy and hatred.

In these chapters, Jesus is headed toward Jerusalem and his death, and Luke seems to be choosing among his many teachings and actions during that period. One of Jesus' best-known teachings is found in Luke 11:1-4, the Lord's Prayer. A little longer form of this prayer is found in Matthew 6:9-13. In Matthew, the Lord's Prayer is given in the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke places it in response to the request of Jesus' disciples to be taught to pray, just as John the Baptist taught his disciples to pray. This was not an unusual question by his disciples, since it was the responsibility of every rabbi (teacher) to teach all things to the rabbi's followers.

As Jesus is heading toward his final week of life, it is sometimes a little difficult to tell how popular he still was with the people. A hint of an answer is found in Luke 12:1 where thousands of people had gathered. The verse isn't clear how many of these were followers and how many were there just to see Jesus, but either way, the Pharisees would have been unhappy.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does the term "Pharisee" mean in modern terms? Do you ever find yourself acting like that? Was Jesus worried about offending the religious leaders?
 2. What are the differences in the Lord's prayer of Matthew and Luke.
 3. When Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath, how might that have caused a Pharisee to have emotional and theological problems?
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1. someone who rigidly adheres to rules and laws even when they don't make sense. Luke 11:45-46. 2. Matthew's is longer; Matthew's was given in the Sermon on the Mount, while Luke's was in response to a question. 3. Only a righteous man could heal somebody, but Jesus was working on the Sabbath; Jesus and his followers did not follow the rules of the Pharisees, so why would God bless their work? Jesus and his followers were in conflict with the Jewish leaders, but all good Pharisees followed their leaders.

Application Questions:

1. Jesus often condemned people for having hard hearts. Do you sometimes have a hard heart? How do you get over having a hard heart?
2. Do you think you would have been a Pharisee in the time of Jesus? Many of them seemed to be sincere in wanting to serve and obey God. It is possible, like the Pharisees, to take that sincerity too far? In what ways might you do that, and what can you do to live a more Jesus-centered faith?
3. Luke 12:8-10 are some of the scariest verses in the Bible for many people. Should they be scary to you? What steps can you take to live it to the fullest?
4. Luke 12:48 is one of the most popular verses in the Bible. What does it mean to be entrusted? Why is there more expected from being entrusted than from being given?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Jesus taught his disciples to pray. Who would you pick to teach you how to pray?
2. Luke 12:15 says that there are different kinds of greed. What kinds of greed have you encountered in your life? How can you guard yourself against them in the future? [money, popularity, recognition]
3. Luke 12:22-31 is about not worrying. Do you feel like you are a worrier or not? What are some of the ways Jesus suggests to help you quit worrying?
4. Pick one of the parables in the primary scriptures for this lesson. Try to explain the parable or tell why it is confusing to you or why it makes sense.

Episode: Luke Series No. 13

Narrator: Martha, the crippled woman, and a gardener

Primary Scriptures: Luke 10:38-41, 13

Story Summary: Healings and teachings of Jesus

Location: Galilee and Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 10:40, 13:34-35

It would be easy to read the Gospels and conclude that Jesus spent all of his time with his apostles, infrequently mingling with other people while he taught or healed them. These stories are meant to convey a different picture.

Somehow, Jesus met the family of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha and spent enough time with them to become close friends. It is likely that Jesus stayed in many homes as he traveled, so it seems likely that he made other close friends too.

At another point in time, Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead. From the stories about this family, it appears they were well off financially. In this episode about Martha, it is likely she could have afforded servants to serve everyone instead of doing it herself. That fact that she didn't may say more about her personality than about her financial status.

In this video episode of Martha, the part of the story up to when Jesus chastises Martha is in the Bible. After that, the story represents one possible reaction that Martha might have had. The Bible does not say what Martha's reaction actually was.

In the modern world, celebrities surround themselves with armed bodyguards to keep away the crowds. There is some evidence to conclude that Jesus' followers did try to keep the crowds away from Jesus on occasion, but other stories lead to the conclusion that Jesus came to be in contact with many other people outside of his group.

The crippled woman fought through the crowds just to get near Jesus. It was obvious she had faith, and she was healed. It was good news that God cared about her. However, the chapter starts out with the story of Pilate killing Galileans. God cared about them, too, but did not choose to save them. The apostles must have struggled with those types of incongruities.

In the Parable of the Narrow Door, Jesus makes it clear that many Jews who think they are righteous will not be saved, while many non-Jews will be saved. This must have come as quite a shock to Jews who thought they had exclusive favor of God.

There is a subtle message in Jesus' reply to the Pharisees in Luke 13:32-33. Herod Antipas is probably in Tiberias, on the Sea of Galilee, and is threatening Jesus once again. Jesus knows the time for his death is near, so he no longer has to avoid Herod and his threats since he is leaving Galilee for the last time. He is going to Jerusalem.

Discussion Questions:

1. In the time of Jesus, women in most societies had few rights. If their husbands or sons did not take care of them, they had few options to survive economically. Name some women that might have influenced Jesus' thoughts on widows and divorce.
 2. Why might the common people have been more able to hear the Good News than the religious leaders?
 3. Luke 8:2-3 says Mary Magdalene had seven demons cast out of her. What story of Jesus may have been referencing that event?
 4. Luke 8:2-3 says Mary Magdalene was one of the women who traveled with Jesus and helped support his ministry out of their resources. What might that indicate about Mary Magdalene?
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1. His mother, Mary; his ancestor, Ruth; his ancestor, Rahab. 2. Not so influenced by man-made rules, not distracted by wanting to be popular, not as distracted by wanting to be rich, were more humble. 3. Luke 11:24-26 When an impure spirit found the empty place and brought back seven other demons, so that the person is worse off than when they started. 4. Mary Magdalene may have been wealthy.

Application Questions:

1. Are you like Martha, who valued hard work and serving other people? Or, are you more like Mary, who wanted to listen to Jesus and get closer to him? What do you think has caused you to be the way you are? Are you capable of valuing people who are as different from you as Martha was to Mary?
2. Do you think it pleases God more for you to read and study the Bible, or to pray and meditate? Why?
3. Do you feel like God loves you mostly for your hard work on his behalf?
4. Are there people in your life that you have spent a lot of time trying to convert to Christianity, but are starting to wonder if you are wasting your time? How much more time and effort should you spend on them?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Is it easier for you to spend time with Jesus in prayer or to do things to help people on his behalf?
2. Can you get to heaven by working harder? What Scriptures lead you to your answer?
3. What is the difference between working your way to heaven and doing things in order to be a loving, obedient child of God?
4. Jesus developed life-giving relationships both before and during his ministry. What kinds of relationships are you developing? How can you bring life into others' worlds?

Episode: Luke Series No. 14

Narrator: Judas

Primary Scriptures: Luke 14

Story Summary: Teachings of Jesus

Location: Galilee and Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 14:11, 14:26-27, 29-30

Jesus chose Judas to be an apostle. Apparently, Judas was taught the same things as the other apostles and had the same types of experiences. It seems likely that Jesus loved Judas and valued him as much as any of the other apostles, at least until near the end.

Luke never met Judas. What Luke knew of Judas likely came from the testimony of the other apostles and from the stories he heard. We don't read much about Judas before his betrayal of Jesus. It's easy to suppose the Gospel writers so detested his betrayal that they were not interested in saying anything nice about him, but they also say very little about half of the apostles, so it may be that Judas was just like those apostles.

We are not told in the Bible when Judas started drifting away from Jesus. Perhaps he expected Jesus to overthrow Rome to establish an earthly kingdom and was disappointed when Jesus made it clear his kingdom was spiritual. Or perhaps it happened when Jesus called for his disciples to be fully committed and Judas realized he did not want that. Or perhaps it was some difficult teaching of Jesus or a time Judas was embarrassed by Jesus' words or actions. We don't know why or when, but we do know that the actions of Judas helped result in the death of Jesus.

Luke 14:15 references a feast in the kingdom of God. Since Jesus launches into one of his parables in reply, it is easy to overlook or misunderstand the reference. The statement was made after Jesus mentions the resurrection of the righteous. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the righteous, but they perceived they were the only righteous ones. Jesus' parable not only discounts their likelihood of attendance, but also opens up the resurrection door for the all the people the Pharisees had rejected—the Gentiles, the poor, and the physically disabled and disfigured.

Luke 14:25 says that large crowds were with Jesus when he told them about the high cost of following him. Surely that kind of talk must have discouraged several in the crowd. John 6:66 records a time when Jesus clarified how hard it was going to be to follow him, and many of his disciples turned away and left for good. Unlike many modern leaders, Jesus did not make it easy or cheap to be his disciple; he was interested in having only dedicated followers who were willing to count the cost, and to pay it.

Discussion Questions:

1. Imagine Judas as a faithful follower of Jesus in the early days. Think of a Bible story and place Judas in it as a friend of Jesus. For instance, imagine Judas rowing the boat across the water in the storm, and vying with Peter to walk to Jesus.
2. Jesus once said that whoever was not with him was against him,¹ but he also said that whoever is not against him is for him.² What is the difference in those statements?
3. How do you think the Pharisees reacted to being told they were not righteous and would not receive the rewards of the righteous?

Application Questions

1. Have you ever had a time when you betrayed Jesus?
2. How can you tell if you are fully committed to Jesus as his disciple? Can you think of one thing you could do to become more committed?
3. Have you ever committed to do something for God, but not fulfilled that commitment? What kept you from doing so?
4. What are some of the costs of being a disciple of Jesus?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Judas betrayed Jesus for money. Have you ever traded some measure of your integrity for earthly gain? What would you do if the opportunity was presented to you in the future?
2. What practical commitments do you maintain when it comes to following Jesus? How can you meet those commitments? How can you add to them?
3. Do you have any areas of your life that you approach with the certainty of the Pharisee? How can you work to have God expand your vision of those areas?

¹ Matthew 12:30

² Mark 9:40

Episode: Luke Series No. 15

Narrator: Lazarus the Beggar

Primary Scriptures: Luke 15, 16

Story Summary: Some parables of Jesus

Location: Galilee and Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 15:7, 15:10, 15:20, 16:10-11, 16:13

A Biblical parable is a short story designed to illustrate a spiritual truth. Many people believe Jesus invented parables, but many hundreds of years before, proverbs were used in the books of *Psalms*, *Proverbs*, *Ezekiel*, and *Hosea*. In fact, Matthew wrote that at least one of the Old Testament verses was a prophecy that Jesus would speak in parables.¹

It appears that Jesus taught the crowds in parables because they could remember and understand them as they had time to reflect on them and discuss them. After telling parables to the crowd, Jesus would often later explain them in detail to his apostles. These explanations are recorded in the Bible and help us clearly understand what Jesus was trying to teach.

Because of their ancient, Middle East context, many of Jesus' parables are difficult for modern Westerners to understand. An example of this was driven home to a group of Christian tourists in Israel as they toured the ruins of the town of Chorazin, a place Jesus did many miracles.² The group leader told Jesus' parable of the woman who lost a silver coin and had to search her house for it. He first said he had always misunderstood the parable because he was used to smooth American floors, then told the crowd he had dropped ten coins on the very rough rock floor beneath their feet. The entire group could find only five of the coins.

Luke is also the only Gospel writer to tell the story of the Lost Son, sometimes known as the Prodigal Son. As you read this story, remember that the original listeners would have been shocked that both sons treated their father with such disrespect. In that culture, he should have disinherited both sons instead of treating them with love and mercy. This would have surely challenged the listeners' minds about the nature of God.

The story of the rich man and Lazarus is told only in *Luke*. As you listen to the story, remember that in none of his other parables did Jesus use proper names. In this story, Jesus gives Lazarus as the name of the beggar. This has caused many people to interpret this event not as a parable but as an historical event. Jesus' wording about the afterlife in this story has been interpreted in many ways. Some take it to be entirely figurative, others entirely literally, and many others somewhere in between.

¹ Matthew 13:34-35

² Matthew 11:21

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Jesus speak to the crowds using parables? [they could remember the stories and reflect on them until they understood them.]
 2. It is highly unlikely that you have been a shepherd of sheep. How might that impact your understanding of the shepherd who lost one of his hundred sheep? Is it likely that a shepherd would have had one hundred sheep? How hard is it to lose a sheep?
 3. What, if anything, do you think Jesus was trying to teach about Heaven and Hell in the story of Lazarus the beggar?
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1. They could remember the stories and reflect on them until they understood them.

Application Questions:

1. The Pharisees were not known for being rich, but according to Luke 16:14, they were lovers of money. In your experience, who loves money more...rich people or middle-class people? Regardless of your social class, what can you do to bring your view of money more in line with that of Jesus?
2. Luke 16:13 is a famous verse. Jesus says that no person can serve God and money, since you can only have one master. In your daily life, how would somebody know which one you are serving? Proverbs 22:7 says a borrower is slave to the lender. Could being in debt hinder your relationship to God?
3. Luke 16:31 indicates that some people cannot be convinced of the truth of the Scriptures even if someone rises from the dead. What did it take, or will it take, for you to become convinced?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Luke 16:13 indicates you cannot be devoted to money and to God. What will that mean to you in the next two years of your life? What other things may steal your devotion to God?
2. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, are you more like the brother who left home or the brother who stayed? Do you ever do the right thing with the wrong attitude?
3. In the story of Lazarus the beggar, the rich man was too wrapped up in his high standard of living to pay attention of more important things. What are you neglecting in order to have a higher standard of living?

Episode: Luke Series No. 16

Narrator: Tenth Leper and Young Ruler

Primary Scriptures: Luke 17, 18:1-34

Story Summary: Healing of the ten lepers, the young ruler

Location: Galilee and Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 17:1-2, 17:4, 18:1, 18:14, 18:23-24

Leprosy has historically been one of the most feared diseases. Although people did not understand about germs or bacteria until relatively recently, they did know leprosy was communicable, so lepers have always been shunned and separated from their communities and families.

Leprosy was not just a skin disease that appeared like severe acne or sebaceous cysts—it caused horrible deformities. Since their flesh literally rotted away, lepers often lost fingers, toes, noses, or other appendages. In past times, when people did not often live long enough to deal with heart issues and cancer, leprosy was a greatly feared disease. God instructed the Jews to separate lepers so their disease would not spread. This was a devastating development for people used to living with intimate relationships in close communities.

The complete opposite of being a leper was to be a rich, young ruler. There were few rich people in the Jewish society, and wealth was often correlated with being righteous. How could it be any better than to be young, rich, "righteous," and the boss? The young ruler and Jesus knew that there was something better...being truly righteous in God's eyes, not man's.

In Luke 17:20, the Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. The Pharisees could have been referring to a time when the Romans would leave Israel and a Davidic kingdom would be established. They could have been referring to a future time when God and the Jews would enjoy a blissful existence together as they ruled over all other kingdoms. Whatever kingdom they were referring to most likely had to do with the Jews receiving special blessings.

Jesus told the Pharisees that the kingdom would not be physical, but that the kingdom was already in their midst. No doubt the Pharisees were clueless about his meaning. Then Jesus gave his disciples much more information about God's coming kingdom, but even then the disciples were probably as confused as the Pharisees. They could not fathom a situation where the Messiah would go away, be rejected, and then revealed.

Discussion Questions:

1. Leprosy has been discovered to be caused by bacteria. Why would it have struck rich people and poor people?
 2. The tenth leper was a Samaritan, a people group despised by the Jews. Do you think that made much of a difference to the other nine lepers who were probably Jewish?
 3. Explain the people's reaction in Luke 18:26.
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1. Bacteria can be transmitted in many methods. Even rich people would have been in contact with crowds at the Temple, at the market, in the streets, and may have been served by infected people. 2. Unlikely to have made much of a difference because leprosy trumped all other social issues. 3. The people believed riches were an evidence of righteousness. If riches are only acquired by righteous people, then rich people should go straight into the kingdom. Jesus destroyed that perception.

Application Questions:

1. Who do you compare yourself to in order to determine whether you are financially wealthy? How does your choice of comparison impact your perception of your financial wealth?
2. If Jesus asked you to give up all of your financial wealth, what would you do? How would you know if Jesus is asking you to do so?
3. The rich young ruler thought righteousness was equivalent to following rules. Do you sometimes feel the same way, that maybe you can be more righteous if you just follow more rules or quit doing certain things? Why did Jesus want him to give all of his possessions to the poor? [to make him dependent on God instead of his riches, to show him what total obedience and commitment are, to help the poor]
4. Explain how Luke 17:1-2 might apply to you.

Applications Questions for Teens:

1. In the parable of the Unworthy Servants, Luke 17:10 indicates that no matter how hard you work for God, you are just doing your duty. Explain why that is good news. (being a faithful servant of God is enough)
2. What is your favorite possession? How hard would it be for you to give it up?
3. Your age group tends to have its own "lepers," people who are never part of the crowd. Have you ever been that person? How can you work to include people in your community?

Episode: Luke Series No. 17

Narrator: Zacchaeus

Primary Scriptures: Luke 18:35-43, 19:1-27

Story Summary: Story of Zacchaeus and ending of Jesus' ministry

Location: Judea

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 18:41-43, 19:17

As Jesus approached Jericho, he was very likely tired and his mind elsewhere. He had just predicted his impending death and was focused on going straight to his probable doom in Jerusalem. It's likely that his apostles thought they were being compassionate to him as they kept the crowds away, letting him be thoughtful.

You can imagine they wanted the blind man to be quiet instead of yelling at Jesus, but the more they tried to quiet him, the louder he yelled. The apostles probably felt like failures when Jesus stopped and called for the blind man to be brought to him. Where the apostles saw an inconvenience, Jesus saw an occasion for God to be glorified.

You can glean how quickly the news spread through the small town that one of their own blind men had been healed by Jesus. The man famous for doing miracles and healings had come to *their* town! Zacchaeus was used to getting news first, so it is likely he knew about Jesus as soon as anyone else, but rather than fight for a place in the crowd, he took advantage of this knowledge and raced ahead to climb a sycamore-fig tree so he could easily see Jesus. He probably didn't realize that it made him a target for Jesus to see.

Can't you imagine the different reactions when Jesus told Zacchaeus to come down quickly? Many in the crowd must have been wondering why such a respectable man was up in a tree, and maybe laughed as he scrambled to the ground. The apostles must have wondered why Jesus singled out the man and been astounded at Jesus' need to eat at his house. Zacchaeus would have been bewildered to hear the stranger call him by name. What a sight that must have been!

The Parable of the Minas sounds a lot like the Parable of the Talents in *Matthew*, but with some meaningful differences. The Parable of the Minas also combines a story of an unpopular rich man going away, which very possibly was a vague reference to Herod's trip to Rome to retain his kingship, and his retribution to his enemies when he returned. The crowd must have been very surprised that Jesus would reference that event in public. Keep in mind that Jesus told this parable because the people expected the kingdom of God to appear immediately.

Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus asked the blind man what he wanted. It appears that Jesus might have granted him anything he wanted. What other things could the blind man have asked for instead of being healed of blindness?
 2. Where do you suppose Zacchaeus was when he heard the news about Jesus?
 3. How did Zacchaeus acquire his wealth?
 4. When Jesus said that salvation had come to the house of Zacchaeus, what did he mean?
 5. Jesus wanted the rich young ruler to give all of his wealth to the poor, but seemed to be satisfied that Zacchaeus gave only half of his wealth to the poor. Why the difference?
 6. Why did Jesus tell the parable of the Ten Minas?
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1. Great riches, a wife and children, go to heaven when he died.
 2. His tax booth, his house, in the market?
 3. He was the chief tax collector, so he got some his wealth honestly. His later discussion with Jesus indicates he may have cheated people, too.
 6. Because the people thought the kingdom of God was to appear immediately

Application Questions:

1. Can you think of an event when you thought you were being inconvenienced only to discover it was a time when God ended up being glorified? How can you maintain an openness to those times in your daily life?
2. Zacchaeus pleased Jesus by making amends to people through giving away his wealth. Do you have any people in your life to whom you need to make amends? How can you make amends to people you have offended or taken advantage of?
3. Name talents of yours that you have both improved through use, and talents that you have kept unused. What could you do to start using your unused talents?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. If Jesus asked you what you want, what would you answer?
2. Is there someone you have taken advantage of that you need to ask forgiveness from? Is there someone whom you need to forgive? What can you do to make peace in all your relationships?
3. If you knew you were going to eat dinner with Jesus tonight, what would you do to prepare? Would it be more important to get your rooms in order or your relationships in order?

Episode: Luke Series No. 18

Narrator: Andrew

Primary Scriptures: Luke 19:28-48, 20, 21

Story Summary: Last week of Jesus' life

Location: Jerusalem

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 19:43-44, 20:17, 20:25, 21:3-4, 21:6, 21:17-19

In order to get a fuller picture of the last week of Jesus' life, you have to read all four Gospels, where each writer emphasizes different events and details. One of Luke's special points was the opposition of the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders to the ministry of Jesus.

In Luke's account, Jesus knew the physical manifestation of the Jewish leaders' emphasis, the Temple, would soon come to an end. The Temple, built by Herod, was a magnificent building, but Jesus knew that it would be demolished in about forty more years.

Jesus also knew the spiritual manifestation of the Jewish leaders' emphasis, ritual and rule-following, would soon come to an end. Without the Temple, many of their religious rites would automatically disappear. While their emphasis on man-made rules might not disappear, it would be shown to be useless.

The story of the widow's mites (small coins) is well-known. As you think of the story, consider that Jesus' mother was a widow. Jesus would have known the sacrifice the woman made. He must have already been thinking about his mother and what would happen to her after his death. Imagine the other details of life that Jesus must have considered as he faced his impending death. Like all of us, he surely felt he had more to do than time in which to do it.

As you read the different Gospel accounts of the last week of Jesus' life, you have to be struck with his desperate efforts to teach his enemies as well as his friends. Jesus so badly wants to help everyone that he uses his precious time to convince everyone of his truth. However, with time running out, he talks with his followers about the future times and gives them his parting teachings and encouragements. He never sugarcoats their impending trials, but he does let them know that he won't be victorious in the future...he is already victorious!

Discussion Questions:

1. Many thousands of people probably saw Jesus come over the Mount of Olives as he made his Triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Why might they have thought Jesus could be the Messiah?
 2. Why didn't the Jewish officials just kill Jesus as they wanted to do?
 3. When Jesus asked the Pharisees to show him a denarius, what did he trick them into doing?
 4. What are some things that you can learn from Jesus' discussion of the resurrection in Luke 20?
-
1. People were reciting Psalms about him, he was riding a donkey (the sign of royalty), people were celebrating as if he was the Messiah. 2. They did not have authority from the Romans to do so, they were afraid of the opinion of the people. 3. Proving that they owned Roman money with a graven image on it. The fact that they owned a Roman coin betrayed their hypocrisy. 4. There will be a resurrection, those who are resurrected won't die or get married.

Application Questions:

1. The Jewish leaders thought the Temple was a sign of God's favor toward them. Do you have anything in your life that you think makes you special?
2. In the Parable of the Tenants, Jesus showed that many people try to take advantage of God's goodness and mercy. Can you name a time when you took advantage of someone? Or when you tried to take advantage of God?
3. In the story of the widow's offering, Jesus is clear that God values money differently than most people. What do you have that you can offer to God that is valuable to you, but is not money? Are you willing to happily give that to God?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Have you ever felt left out the way Andrew probably felt? He was an apostle of Jesus, but his three best friends were obviously more special than him, especially his brother, Peter. Do you suppose Jesus ever talked to Andrew about his situation? If you ever feel left out, do you concentrate on what you don't have, or what you do have?
2. The Pharisees very much valued the Temple and their rituals, but Jesus knew those things would soon go away. What do you value that may not have much value in the future?
3. Almost everyone wants to be better looking and more popular, not matter how old they are. Why is putting too much value on good looks or popularity a dangerous thing to do?

Episode: Luke Series No. 19

Narrator: Peter and Pilate

Primary Scriptures: Luke 22, 23

Story Summary: Betrayal of Jesus, trials of Jesus, death of Jesus

Location: Jerusalem

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 22:3, 22:19-20, 22:32, 22:40, 22:46, 23:34, 23:47, 23:49

Luke writes about the Last Supper, as well as Jesus' arrest, trial crucifixion, death, and burial in only two chapters. He writes about those events in rather terse language and doesn't provide many details; you can read the two chapters in less than ten minutes. You will have to read the accounts in the other Gospels to get a much fuller description of what happened in those twenty-four hours.

Without giving exact chronological timing, Luke issues a forewarning of Jesus' death by telling of Judas' agreement to betray Jesus to the Jewish leaders. Luke does not make it clear whether the betrayal happened because Satan entered into Judas or because of the payment of money, or both.

Luke only briefly describes the Last Supper and some of Jesus' conversations. You have to read the account in *John* to have an appreciation of the momentous events that happened at that time.

Peter was likely one of Luke's information sources for what happened the night of Jesus' arrest. Perhaps that is why Luke includes Jesus' prophecy about Peter's denial of Jesus and the later fulfillment of that prophecy. However, Luke does not identify Peter as the one who cut off Malchus' ear, as John did.¹

Throughout history, Pilate has been either vilified or exonerated of his actions that resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus. He was no doubt a violent man, but was he evil or just doing his job as a Roman official? The Jewish leaders knew they could possibly end Pilate's career by causing a big enough riot, so his desire both to keep his position and to do a good job were sufficient to cause him to end the life of Jesus.

It is tempting to think of the crucifixion of Jesus as a special event. In fact, crucifixion was a common capital punishment of the Romans, Persians, Carthaginians, and other cultures, often used to punish political or religious agitators, pirates and slaves. As an example, in the aftermath of the slave rebellion led by Spartacus, about 11,000 rebelling slaves were crucified by the Roman Generals Crassus and Pompey.

¹ John 18:10

Discussion Questions:

1. It appears that Jesus knew Judas was going to betray him, and even suspected when it would occur. Why do you think Jesus did not avoid his arrest? Why do you think God did not send angels to rescue Jesus?
 2. Jesus told Peter that he would deny him. How do you think that made Peter feel? What kinds of things do you do that might open you to the accusation that you deny Jesus?
 3. Why was Pilate in Jerusalem the day of Jesus' trial?
 4. Why did Pilate send Jesus to his death even though he knew Jesus did not deserve it?
 5. Why was Jesus crucified instead of killed a different way?
-
1. Don't overtly identify myself as a Christian, allow people to say bad things about Jesus without objecting to it. 3. It was Passover and Pilate knew there was the chance of unrest in the city when there were so many people there. 4. Pilate's first objective was to keep peace because his job depended on doing that. 5. Crucifixion was a normal way to punish religious or political agitators.

Application Questions:

1. If you knew you only had 24 hours to live, what would you do? What would you tell your family members?
2. In what ways can you deny Jesus? How can you take measures to keep you from doing so?
3. Have you ever done something at work that was against your personal ethics? Do you remember why you made the choice to do so? Would you act differently now?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. One reason Judas betrayed Jesus was to receive money. What are some reasons that might cause you to betray a friend or relative?
2. Peter was sure he would not deny Jesus under any circumstance, yet the question of a mere servant girl caused him to angrily deny Jesus. Have you ever gotten scared far out of proportion to the actual danger?
3. The guards mocking Jesus did so without fear because they were in power and they were harming a powerless person. How can you keep from doing the same sort of thing to powerless people?

Episode: Luke Series No. 20

Narrator: Luke

Primary Scriptures: Luke 24

Story Summary: Resurrection of Jesus

Location: Jerusalem

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 24:2-3, 24:6, 24:27, 24:45-47, 24:50-53

Luke started his Gospel talking about the miraculous event of Jesus being born to a virgin, Mary. As a doctor, he must have been very convinced of the truth of that event or he would not have written about it. As hard as that must have been, writing about the resurrection and ascension of Jesus must have been equally as challenging. However, he must have been just as convinced of the truth of those events.

The ascension of Jesus and his future return is historically a standard part of Christian belief. Luke wrote about those two things in *Luke* and *Acts*. Without Luke's writing, how would we know about those two things? Matthew and John do not mention them in their Gospels, and the passage in *Mark* that mentions the ascension is disputed, and does not mention his return. If it wasn't for Luke's accounts we would be left to the relevant passages in the rest of the New Testament for our knowledge of the ascension and future return of Jesus.

Where did Luke get his eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection? As he traveled with Paul, he most likely spent time with Jesus' original apostles and disciples. Also, Luke knew that at least five hundred people had witnessed the resurrection, so he likely talked to some of them.

It is best to study all the Gospel accounts of the resurrection and post-resurrection at once, especially using a harmony/parallel account. Each Gospel has something important to add. If you do so, you will probably come away with a timeline of events similar to this: the tomb is visited by women, the stone is rolled away, the tomb is found to be empty by the women, Peter and John visit the empty tomb, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene, Jesus appears to other women, soldiers report, Jesus appears to two people on road to Emmaus who report to the other believers, Jesus appears to assembled disciples, Jesus appear to the seven while fishing, Jesus appears to the eleven, Jesus makes other appearances, and Jesus ascends to heaven.

As will be found in the remaining books of the New Testament, the first Christians were absolutely convinced of the truth of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. But the marvelous revelation of Jesus' return isn't clearly revealed until Luke's next book, *Acts*.

Discussion Questions:

1. How would Luke have become convinced of the truth of the resurrection, ascension, and future return of Jesus?
 2. Mary Magdalene was at the tomb when it was revealed that Jesus had been resurrected. Knowing her history as someone healed from demons, how do you think she felt? Why do you think the resurrection of Jesus was revealed to women first?
 3. Jesus lived in his resurrected body for forty days. What sorts of things do you think he did in that time?
 4. Why do you think Luke ended his Gospel with the ascension of Jesus without revealing that Jesus would return again?
-
1. Eyewitness accounts, the early Christians fully believed in them. 4. *Acts* is a continuation of Jesus' story. Maybe he wanted to have that information as a big reveal to start *Acts*.

Application Questions:

1. How would you have felt if you had been with Jesus when he started rising in the air? The book of *Acts* says Jesus will return in a manner like the one he left. The next time you look in the sky, imagine that you see Jesus coming back. One day, somebody doing that will see him!
2. Perhaps Mary Magdalene's past life came back to her mind after she realized Jesus was resurrected. In a sense, she had been resurrected by Jesus to a new life. With that analogy, what part of life did Jesus resurrect you to?
3. The two people on the road to Emmaus had the Old Testament scriptures explained to them by Jesus (Luke 24:27). Do you know those scriptures enough that Jesus' explanations would make sense to you?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. If the apostles had guessed, they surely would have expected Jesus to appear first to Peter, James, or John. Why do you think Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene instead? Why might Jesus choose to make himself known to you instead of someone that is more popular at school?
2. It seems pretty obvious that nobody really expected for Jesus to rise from the dead even though he had said he would. What has Jesus said that you don't really believe?
3. Jesus resurrection from the dead is proof that he has control over everything. Without that event, he was just a good person. Do you realize that your belief or non-belief in his resurrection has such an impact over your whole worldview?