



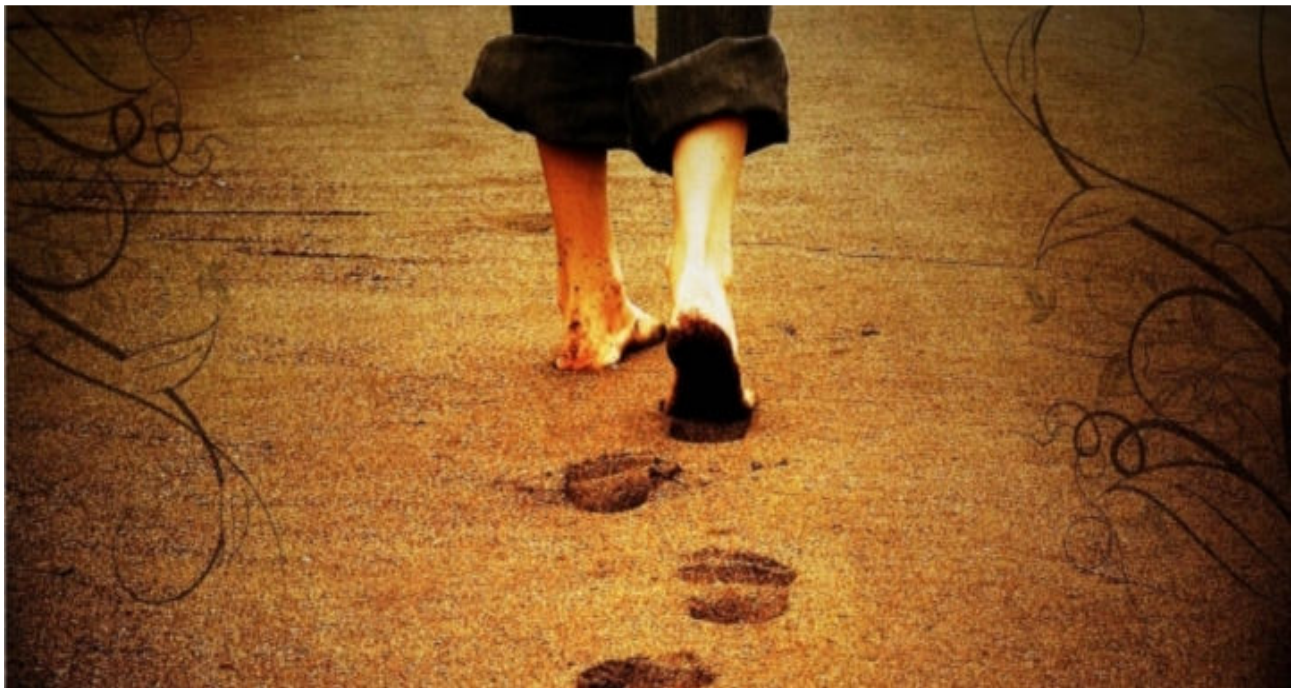
GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL

The Walk!

The Outflow of Knowing Jesus

A curriculum for small groups with new believers.

by Greg Williams



The Walk! The Outflow of Knowing Jesus

Introduction

Grace Communion International (GCI) provides this curriculum for small groups focused on discipling new believers. Its goal is helping new believers know Jesus more deeply, and then, as the outflow of that knowledge, to walk with Jesus more fully.

Curriculum Outline

This curriculum provides discussion guides for seven small group meetings.

The individuals who facilitates these meetings (typically seasoned believers), will give copies of this curriculum to each participant so that they can complete the homework prior to each meeting, and participate actively in the meeting discussions.

Meetings using this curriculum are designed to be interactive and fluid. However, the focus should be on the topics presented, all of which are grounded in the New Testament books of Luke and Acts.

Here is a list of the seven meetings, noting the primary topic for each:

1. *Assurance*
2. *Conversion*
3. *Faith*
4. *Prayer*
5. *Hospitality*
6. *Service*
7. *The Cost Counted*

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Assurance grows by repeated conflict, by our repeated experimental proof of the Lord's power and goodness to save; when we have been brought very low and helped, sorely wounded and healed, cast down and raised again, have given up all hope, and been suddenly snatched from danger, and placed in safety; and when these things have been repeated to us and in us a thousand times over, we begin to learn to trust simply to the word and power of God, beyond and against appearances: and this trust, when habitual and strong, bears the name of assurance; for even assurance has degrees. - John Newton (former slave trader and author of the hymn Amazing Grace)

Meeting 1: *Assurance*

Our journey in this series will be grounded in the *assurance* that God gives to us as we embrace him as he is revealed in the story of Jesus and his church—a story the Bible refers to as the *Gospel*.

In this series, we will be examining the Gospel as Luke presents it in the New Testament books of Luke and Acts (sometimes referred to as Luke-Acts).

New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson notes that Luke-Acts presents the fledgling Christian church as a fellowship of Jesus-followers who were philosophically enlightened, politically harmless, socially benevolent and philanthropically oriented. Their immediate challenge was to proclaim the story of Jesus and his church within the highly pluralistic environment of the First Century.

Discussion

- 1) What has been your view of Christianity?
- 2) What do you think of Luke Timothy Johnson's description of the First Century church?
- 3) In what ways does Christianity from this perspective seem relevant (or irrelevant) in our day?

Lesson

Luke 1:4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (NIV)

A primary goal of this series of lessons is that you would develop a deep sense of *assurance* that will give birth to boldness in joining Jesus in his ministry to the world. That assurance and boldness is grounded not in ourselves, but in Jesus.

Therefore, our discussions will focus on Jesus, as he is revealed to us in Luke-Acts, which tells the story of Jesus and of Jesus' people, the church. In his account, Luke seeks to ground his readers in a sure knowledge that God has, in Jesus, decisively fulfilled what he promised long ago concerning the salvation of humanity—both Jews and Gentiles. Luke also shows how the Holy Spirit formed and equipped the church so that it would boldly take the story of Jesus (the Gospel) to the whole world, despite the obstacles—ones encountered in the First Century, and ones being encountered now.

Homework

In preparation for the next meeting, **read** Luke 3:7-14 and Acts 2:37-40 (and read the surrounding verses to see the broader context). As you read, consider the following questions:

- What do these passages mean when they refer to the “turning” of one’s life?
- In what ways has your life turned?
- In what ways is your life continuing to turn?

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Being a Christian is more than just an instantaneous conversion - it is a daily process whereby you grow to be more and more like Christ. – Billy Graham

Meeting 2: *Conversion*

Review Homework

In both passages below, the response of hearers convicted by the message is this: “*What should we do?*”

Luke 3:7-14 John the Baptizer calls for repentance

- Emphasizing the need for sincerity over hypocrisy
- Knowing that Jesus is about grace and not race
- Knowing that being in Jesus leads to an unselfish life of doing good to others (where “doing” flows out of “being”)

Acts 2:37-40 Peter presents the case for Christ

- The response of people who were convicted about the reality of the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus was a heart level sense of remorse with a strong desire for change
- “Repent” means a change of mind – much of the crowd had seven weeks earlier participated in the conviction and death of Jesus and now their blindness was made sight and their hearts and minds were changed
- The promise of forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit were made to the people present, also to their children and all who are far off – “All” are included in the saving work of Jesus!

Discussion

- 1) How has your personal journey related to what we see in the homework passages? In what ways have you felt the Holy Spirit moving you to think or act differently?
- 2) How do you feel about God’s purpose to include all? (note John 12:32 and 2 Peter 3:9)

Lesson

Conversion is about a life that has been *turned around* – from a direction away from God to following God. Conversion is about a changed mind and heart – from one that was hostile to Jesus and his nature to a mind that now desires the perfect, acceptable will of God.

Luke-Acts is filled with story after story of people who came to Jesus through this sort of amazing turn around (for future reading, check out Luke 5:32, 10:13, 11:32, 13:3-5, 15:7-10, 24:47; Acts 3:19, 5:31, 8:22, 11:18, 17:30, 20:21, 26:20). Perhaps the most impressive of all of these conversion stories is the “turning” of Saul the persecutor into Paul the Apostle. His conversion was so important to the story of the early church that it is recorded three times in the book of Acts (9:1-9, 22:6-11, 26:12-18).

Acts 9 Saul’s Conversion

¹ Meanwhile, Saul was still breathing out murderous threats against the Lord’s disciples. He went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he found any there who belonged to the Way, whether men or women, he might take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. ³ As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” Saul asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” he replied. ⁶ “Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do.”

⁷ The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So they led him by the hand into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, “Ananias!”

“Yes, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹ The Lord told him, “Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. ¹² In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight.”

¹³ “Lord,” Ananias answered, “I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name.”

¹⁵ But the Lord said to Ananias, “Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ I will show him how much he must suffer for my name.”

¹⁷ Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, “Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul’s eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus. ²⁰ At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.

Note these noteworthy features of Saul's turning:

- Saul's blind rage against the followers of Jesus, driving him to hunt them down and persecute them
- The blinding light of Jesus' presence contrasted with his tender greeting of, "Saul, Saul," followed by his penetrating question: "Why do you persecute me?"
- Saul's question, "Who are you?" answered by one word: "Jesus" – a name despised by Jesus because it represents the new thing God is doing with all humanity (not just Jews)
- The irony of Saul being physically blinded so that his spiritual vision can be made whole
- Saul's view of scripture and of God's purpose was completely and radically changed in the light of Jesus
- Saul moved from persecuting Jesus to embracing and preaching Jesus, yet his intensity and passion remain

Discussion

- 1) In what ways has your conversion been radical like Saul's? Do you perceive that you were living a relatively neutral life without an understanding of God, or were you actually hostile toward God?
- 2) How has your understanding changed in the light of Jesus?
- 3) How have your values and pursuits changed?

Summary

The coming of Jesus changed everything! His presence removes blindness and inspires conviction. Jesus died for all, lives for all, and is drawing all to himself – this is the good news that we can join with the Apostle Paul in proclaiming.

Homework

Read Luke 8:4-15, 17:5-6 (read the surrounding verses to see a broader context)

Consider what is needed to be a fruitful believer. What obstacles get in the way?

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The faith of Christ offers no buttons to push for quick service. The new order must wait the Lord's own time, and that is too much for the man in a hurry. He just gives up and becomes interested in something else. – A.W. Tozier

Meeting 3: *Faith*

Review Homework

Luke 8:4-15 Parable of the Sower

Those who yield fruit cling to the word patiently and with a good heart, while the obstacles to fruitfulness include wealth, persecution and the worries of life (note that this is a parable about fruitfulness not about salvation).

Hearing the word of truth gets a mixed response – not in every case does a believer respond in a positive, fruit-bearing fashion. The heart is there, but distractions and humanness get in the way. Consider how the brothers of Jesus had not fully embraced him during his life and ministry, and yet they became leaders in the early church (Luke 8:19-21/ Acts 1:14).

Luke 17:5-6 Faith as a Mustard Seed

It takes living faith as represented by a seed to obey the instructions of the Lord and to forgive others. Our obedience in forgiving shows that we are embracing God's forgiveness ourselves, and on that basis trusting God to take care of the consequences, handle the possible misunderstandings and work everything out for our good and his glory.

The tiny mustard seed represents life and the potential for growth. The Bible gives us the sense of a "growing, developing faith."

It is good to have faith to do the difficult (Luke 17:1–3) and the impossible (Luke 17:4–6), but it is essential that we have faith to do even the routine tasks that Jesus has committed to us. Jesus says it is faithfulness in small things that leads to responsibility in much.

Discussion

- 1) Which of the obstacles mentioned in the Parable of the Sower cause you the most difficulty?
- 2) How does your faithful dependence on God help you to manage human relationships?
- 3) What are small ways that you are called on to be faithful? What are difficult ones?

Lesson

Everybody lives by faith in something or someone. The difference between a Christian believer and a non-believer is not that one has faith and the other does not. They both have faith! The difference is in the object of that faith—for faith is only as good as its object.

²⁰I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20, KJV, emphasis added)

Faith in God is not something that we work up through self-will (Galatians 5:22 reveals faith as a fruit of the Spirit, not the flesh). In Galatians 2:20 (KJV translation) we see that we are to live by the faith *of* the Son of God – we are called to share in Jesus’ *own* faith. Indeed, faith for the believer rests entirely on and in Jesus. With Jesus living in us, it is his faith acting on our behalf. As we rely on and abide in his faithfulness, he provides the patience and endurance we need to meet life’s challenges.

Discussion

- 1) In what kinds of things do people place their faith? Bank accounts, etc...
- 2) How do you feel about faith being a gift of the Spirit and not something you work up on your own?
- 3) What does it mean to live by the faith *of* the Son of God?
- 4) In what ways and means will you continue to “hear the word” to grow in faith?
- 5) Do you see growing in faith the same as a growing in a relationship with the Triune God?

Summary

According to theologian Luke Timothy Johnson, faith combines obedient hearing of the word and patient endurance. It is not a momentary decision but a commitment of the heart that can grow and mature. May your walk in the faith of Jesus grow straighter and more certain over the days, months and years ahead!

Homework

Read Luke 5:16, 11:1-4 and Acts 2:42-47 (read the surrounding verses to see a broader context)

Think about the importance that prayer played in the life of Jesus, and in the life of the followers of Jesus.

What role does prayer play in your life?

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Prayer crowns God with the honor and glory due to his name, and God crowns prayer with assurance and comfort. The most praying souls are the most assured souls. – Thomas Brooks

Meeting 4: *Prayer*

Review Homework

Luke 5:16 Prayer: a Regular Practice of Jesus

Jesus regularly removed himself to a private location to pray. Prayer is a constant in Luke-Acts. The critical moments of Jesus' ministry are punctuated by prayer (references for future reading: 3:21, 6:12, 9:18, 28-29, 11:1, 22:41, 44-45, 23:46).

Luke 11:1-4 Instruction for the Disciples

The original followers of Jesus could ask Jesus for anything – “teach us to preach”; “teach us how to do miracles”; but their one request recorded in Scripture was “teach us to pray.”

Jesus' prayer as recorded by Luke is made up of five crucial elements – the first two concern acknowledgment of God's holiness and establishment of his kingdom; the final three are requests related to our humanity: necessary provisions, forgiveness of sin, and freedom from testing (in essence a hedge between us and the evil one). This instruction suggests a general outline for prayer (see Matthew's account of this model prayer in 6:9-13).

Acts 2:42-47 The Activity of the Early Church

The activity of the early church was twofold:

1. The believers first continued steadfastly, “persisting in or continuing in” the Apostles' teaching or doctrine (references for future reading 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; 8:13; 10:7). Remaining faithful to the teachings of Jesus and his Apostles was a priority of the highest order.
2. The second was fellowship, which is defined as the breaking of bread and prayer. The breaking of bread seems to include both the Lord's Supper (Communion) and shared meals.

Discussion

- 1) Jesus is fully man and fully God. Why does he pray so much?
- 2) How do scripture study, fellowship, communion, prayer and breaking of bread interact to form the community known as the church?
- 3) How does a shared life in community directly influence prayer?

Lesson

As we study the prayers of the early church in Acts, we see bold prayers of power asking God to move in specific ways (and typically accompanied with a high level of expectation). The prayers were so united in the hearts and minds of the believers and so focused, that on two occasions the place in which they were praying “shook” (4:31, 16:25-26).

In Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested for preaching in the name of Jesus and healing the sick. Because of the sway of the people, they are released, and here in Scripture we read the prayer that was prayed:

²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

““Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?
²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

Acts 4:24-31 (NIV)

The early church saw with clarity the connection to God and his purpose from Old Testament times to what happened with Jesus. Now they saw what was happening with them in this particular moment. They acknowledged that all things happened as God had determined and allowed. Their prayer was not offered in a spirit of being relieved about Peter and John’s outcome, nor with a focus on future protection. Rather, this prayer was a direct request asking for more enabling power to preach the Gospel and for more healings and signs and wonders that only God can accomplish by his Holy Spirit (5:12-14 demonstrates immediate fulfillment to this prayer).

The early Christians did pray in times of trouble and persecution. In Acts 12:1-5 King Herod had Peter arrested, and verse 5 says that the church was earnestly praying for him. Then in verses 6-12 we learn that an angel was sent by God to release Peter’s chains and escort him from the prison. We pick up the story when Peter goes to the house where the church is gathered to pray:

¹² When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outer entrance, and a servant named Rhoda came to answer the door. ¹⁴ When she recognized Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed she ran back without opening it and exclaimed, "Peter is at the door!"

¹⁵ "You're out of your mind," they told her. When she kept insisting that it was so, they said, "It must be his angel."

¹⁶ But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished.

Acts 12:12-16 (NIV)

This is an example of well-directed, well-meaning prayer. Yet, even when the prayer had been dramatically answered, there was a response of unbelief. The scriptures ring true as we see how they do not sugarcoat human weakness—even the weaknesses of the original church and its leaders.

Another lesson from Acts is that when the Apostles needed God's guidance to appoint church leaders or select people for special assignments, they prayed. This can be seen in Acts 1:24, 6:6, 13:3, and 14:23.

Discussion

- 1) How do the prayer needs in Acts relate to similar needs of today?
- 2) In what ways do the prayers of our church community differ from our brothers and sisters in the church of Acts? What do you think about these differences?
- 3) What would make us more bold and expectant in our prayer life?

Summary

Studying through the book of Acts one can readily notice that the early believers were people of prayer. And it is typical to see the Holy Spirit move in dramatic ways to accomplish the requests of God's people. Prayer is a regular practice of believers who are walking daily with Jesus!

Homework

Read Luke 9:3-5, Acts 4:32-34 (read the surrounding verses to see a broader context)

What is your understanding of hospitality? How important is this virtue in the life of the Christian and the Christian community?

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“Who practices hospitality entertains God himself” – Source unknown

Meeting 5: *Hospitality*

Review Homework

Luke 9:3-5 Here teaches about hospitality in the context of a discussion about mission. To travel on mission without provisions makes the missionary dependent on the generous hospitality of the people in the mission field. If we back up to Luke 8:1-3, we read an interesting account about transformed women who were lavishly hospitable toward Jesus and the 12, even helping bankroll their broader ministry.

Concerning hospitality, Alan Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk note this in *The Missional Leader*:

Hospitality is an ancient church practice whose purpose has been largely forgotten. Hospitality is not an evangelism strategy but a genuine and complete welcoming of the stranger. Today the stranger can easily be the person next door, the widow whose children live far away, or many of the young people who crave conversation and acceptance from an older generation.

Acts 4:32-34 Transformed lives and display of Community in the Early Church

This is a phenomenal display of unity, community and genuine concern for others that began on the day of Pentecost (see 2:44). These first believers were a close-knit body where people were more important than possessions. This example of generous living is directly connected to the power of the resurrected Jesus at work in their lives. As verse 33 says, “much grace was upon them.”

Discussion

- 1) Did you catch the irony of how Jesus sends the evangelist out as the stranger who is in need of hospitality? Have you ever had an occasion to share the good news about Jesus through your personal neediness?
- 2) Are we by nature generous people? Should we sell all that we own and put the money at the pastor’s feet?
- 3) Did the church throughout the New Testament and over the past 2,000 years display this high level of generosity and concern for one another?
- 4) How does grace transform our own view concerning material possessions? About other people?

Lesson

So far, we have examined how the power of the resurrected Jesus transformed the early church into a caring, generous community who had all things in common. Luke Timothy Johnson says, “As God welcomes all people, so are Christians expected to show hospitality.” In the most pure form, hospitality is the welcoming of strangers and attending to their needs. The most notable passage illustrating hospitality toward Jesus is the story of two sisters Mary and Martha.

³⁸ As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. ³⁹ She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said. ⁴⁰ But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, “Lord, don’t you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!” ⁴¹ “Martha, Martha,” the Lord answered, “you are worried and upset about many things, ⁴² but few things are needed—or indeed only one. ^[a] Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)

Jesus, the itinerant preacher, who is dependent on others for food and shelter, was graciously received into the home of Mary and Martha. These two sisters displayed their sense of hospitality in two different ways. Jesus in his wise and direct way teaches Martha that personal attention to the guest is more important than making an impression on the guest – ultimately it is about the relationship.

Discussion

- 1) How do we receive and help strangers? How do we discern when to help and when to move on?
- 2) Is it wrong to focus on a clean house and special treats, as does Martha in entertaining Jesus? Why did Jesus say that Mary had chosen the better thing?
- 3) How is sharing our time, possessions and attention part of sharing the gospel?

Summary

Studying the actions of Jesus as he walked through this world help us to see what he views as top priorities. Clearly, hospitality and generosity, when employed to share his love with others, are of high importance. When we show small gestures of kindness to others, Jesus says we actually are doing so unto him. We serve an amazing God who includes all of humanity into his life, why wouldn’t we be inclusive of others as well?

Homework

Read Luke 22:24-30 (read the surrounding verses to see a broader context)

In close kinship to hospitality is the virtue of service. Consider the deep levels of service portrayed by Jesus.

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The first question, which the priest and the Levite asked, was “If I stop to help this man, what will happen to me?” But the Good Samaritan reversed the question: “If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him?” – Martin Luther King Jr

Meeting 6: *Service*

Review Homework

Luke 22:24-27 Jesus displaying Leadership in Table-Service

On the night before Jesus was crucified, when he was passing the wine and bread to his followers, there was among them a disturbing display of rivalry and competitiveness. Their rivalry about rank and position had been going on for some time (Luke 9:46). Jesus instructs them that the greater person is not the one being served, but the one who does the serving. Indeed, true authority is evidenced in practical acts of kindness – not in title or position.

Jesus equates this disciple’s desire for “first place” with the sin of the Pharisees (see Luke 14:7, 20:46).

Discussion

- 1) Which do you view as greater, the one who serves or the one being served? Why?
- 2) How do you view leadership and authority? Who has it? How do they use it? How does this square with the example and teaching of Jesus?
- 3) Why do we humans desire to be in charge and to dominate others?

Lesson

So far, we have examined how Jesus illustrates in word and action that leadership is about service and sacrifice. Jesus’ value of servant-leadership was carried over into the early church:

³⁴ You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. ³⁵ In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ”

³⁶ When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of them and prayed.

Acts 20:34-36 (NIV)

In Acts 20, Paul is giving a long, heartfelt farewell to the church at Ephesus; leaving them with important instruction. Paul rarely quotes Jesus and when he does it is to back up ethical instruction to the church (see I Corinthians 7:10, 9:14 and I Timothy 5:18). The proverbial truth in the expression “it is more blessed to give than to receive” is not disregarding the dignity of the weak or needy, but making the point that when a person has power, resources and opportunity to help others it is Christ-like to do so.

The habit and nature of Jesus was to help the weak. This too will be the practice of those who follow Jesus. They do not do so in order to gain God’s favor, but rather as a virtue planted in them by the living Christ. To them Jesus says, “Blessed (happy) are you when you help the weak.”

Discussion

- 1) Hospitality was about entertaining strangers. Service is about helping the weak. Who are the weak? Does the Bible say that we are to help certain groups of people?
- 2) What does it mean to serve others? Does this involve more than our time and money?

Summary

Jesus displayed pure servant-leadership in his washing of the disciples’ feet and in his serving them at the table. As much as these acts are a wonderful example to us, Jesus is doing much more here than serving as a role model. Consider what the bread and wine symbolized—pointing to what Jesus was about to do on the cross. The greatest act of service is what Jesus gave for the redemption of all humanity.

To sacrifice in serving others is a part of God’s own nature. As Christ makes his home in us and we share in that nature, we become servant-leaders like Christ.

Homework

Read Luke 14:25-35 (read the surrounding verses to see a broader context)

What does Jesus desire of his followers?

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“It will cost him *his self-righteousness*. He must cast away all pride and high thoughts, and conceit of his own goodness. He must be content to go to heaven as a poor sinner saved only by free grace, and owing all to the merit and righteousness of another. He must be willing to give up all trust in his own morality, respectability, praying, Bible-reading, Church-going, and sacrament-receiving, and trust in nothing but Jesus Christ. Let us set down this item first and foremost in our account. To be a true Christian it will cost a man his self-righteousness.” – J. C. Ryle

Meeting 7: *The Cost Counted*

Review Homework

Luke 14:25-35 The Cost of Discipleship

Up to verse 25, Jesus addressed the leaders of the Pharisees with a message about rejection. Throughout his ministry, the Pharisees had rejected Jesus. Yet he continued to invite them into relationship, warning them about rejection and teaching them about true discipleship. Jesus’ persistence with the Pharisees demonstrates God’s heart to never give up on his children. This passage teaches about allegiance.

Starting in verse 25, Jesus speaks to the crowd and explains the high call of being his follower. In verse 26 he states the need to prioritize relationships – all relationships beyond that with Jesus are to be “loved less” (this idea corresponds to 14:20 where the man who had married could not come to the banquet). Jesus goes on in verse 33 to explain the need for his followers to be willing to part with their possessions (this idea corresponds to 14:8-9 where certain ones turned down the wedding invitation to focus on purchasing a field and a team of oxen).

The stories of building a tower and a king going to war are unique to Luke’s account. The point of each of these stories is that we must be wise calculators, not starting projects we cannot finish. The crowning lesson is in verse 27: the true follower of Jesus will bear his or her cross in order to walk with Jesus. In contrast, the follower who places other things before a relationship with Jesus is like salt that has lost its saltiness – it is rendered useless and must be discarded.

Discussion

- 1) What do you think about Jesus’ descriptions and warnings that are related to being a disciple?

- 2) How good are we at not being distracted by other relationships and by our possessions? How do we see God's involvement in our relationships and circumstances? Does God love and care about the people we love and care about? Is God active in the lives of the people around us?
- 3) Luke 14:27 tells us that each individual must accept and bear his or her personal cross. Have you considered what yours is? How does this personal suffering weave into your walk with Jesus?
- 4) How does the tenacity and faithfulness of Jesus play into that journey? (see Philippians 1:6)

Series Summary

In the opening lesson of this series, we mentioned that one of Luke's purposes in writing Luke-Acts was to impart to his readers a sense of assurance. He wanted them to know that God has indeed fulfilled what he promised so long ago concerning the salvation of humanity. He fulfilled this promise by sending his Son, who through the Spirit established the church, which was sent on mission to the whole world (both Jews and Gentiles). We noted that Luke defends the word and work of God in the world and throughout history, and boldly demonstrates how God accomplishes his purposes in light of human doubts and uncertainty (including ours).

Our goal in this series has been to help you, a new believer, see your story as included fully within the story of Jesus and his church, and thus to help you find assurance." We studied passages in Luke-Acts to help us achieve this goal. As you reflect back on the series, discuss these questions:

- 1) How has the series, including Luke's writings, helped you to find assurance?
- 2) In what ways do you feel a greater connection with the people of the Bible? How do you feel a greater connection with the God of the Bible?
- 3) What questions or concerns have arisen as a result of this series?
- 4) In what ways will you move forward in your walk with Jesus?

Suggestions for Next Steps

The discussion in Luke 14 concerning counting the cost, leads into Luke 15 where the focus is on lost things. Luke's story of the lost son is beautifully retold in *The Parable of the Dancing God*, by Baxter Kruger (available at <http://mindev.gci.org/Web%20Documents/Parable%20of%20the%20Dancing%20God%20by%20Kruger.pdf>). This short book dramatically demonstrates the heart of the Father who has unconditional love for all of his children. We suggest that you read this book then hold a reunion of your small group to discuss it with a focus on answering the vital question, *Who is God?*

If you'd like to continue meeting, we suggest the curriculum, *The Hope of Jesus* written by Jim Valekis (available at <http://mindev.gci.org/Web%20Documents/The%20Hope%20of%20Jesus%20curriculum.pdf>).