

THE
JESUS
FILM

24 Day Challenge with Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer

Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer



Since 1980, Dr. Erwin W. Lutzer has served as Senior Pastor of The Moody Church in Chicago.

Dr. Lutzer earned his B.Th. from Winnipeg Bible College, a Th.M. from Dallas Theological Seminary, an M.A. in Philosophy from Loyola University, and an honorary LL.D. from the Simon Greenleaf School of Law.

Known as a clear expositor of the Bible, he is the featured speaker on three radio programs that are heard on more than 1,000 outlets in the United States and around the world:

Moody Church Hour

—The Moody Church’s Sunday morning worship service

Songs in the Night

—an evening program that’s been airing since 1943

Running to Win

—a daily Bible-teaching broadcast

Dr. Lutzer is also an award-winning author of numerous books including:

- *The Cross in the Shadow of the Crescent*
- *The King Is Coming*
- *Covering Your Life in Prayer*
- *One Minute After You Die*
- *When a Nation Forgets God*
- *Christ Among Other gods*
- *Hitler’s Cross* (Christian Bookseller’s Gold Medallion Award winner)

His speaking engagements outside of The Moody Church include Bible conferences and seminars, both domestic and international, in countries such as Russia, the Republic of Belarus, Germany, Scotland, Guatemala, and Japan. He also leads tours to Israel and to the cities of the Protestant Reformation in Europe.

Dr. Lutzer and Rebecca live in the Chicago area and have three grown children and eight grandchildren. He and his wife have co-written the books *Life-Changing Bible Verses You Should Know* and *Jesus, Lover of a Woman’s Soul*.

The 24-Day Challenge

Whether you are a believer in Christ, simply interested in investigating the Christian faith, or even a skeptic, let me give you what I call the 24-Day Challenge! The book of Luke has 24 chapters, so my challenge to you is to simply read one chapter a day for 24 days. There is no substitute for being exposed to this first-century, first-hand account of the life of Jesus Christ.

If you come across a passage that is difficult for you to understand, or if you are struggling with questions about how the story could have happened, don't let that keep you from continuing to read daily the stories and the information in the book.

I encourage you to note down your questions and keep reading. Keep a notebook beside you, and as you read answer these questions:

- 1 How is Jesus different from other teachers, gurus, or prophets?
- 2 How does Jesus live up to his claims to be the Son of God and the Son of Man?
- 3 Why do you think Luke gives us so much detail about the death and resurrection of Jesus?
- 4 In light of what you have learned, what should your response to Jesus be?

This study guide will help you summarize the lessons of each chapter and keep pointing you to the text of the Bible so that you might investigate for yourself the life and teachings of Jesus.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 1

Reading: Luke 1

Luke 1:30-31

The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid, Mary; God has been gracious to you. You will become pregnant and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus.'

Review

When you think of an angel, what comes to mind? A baby with wings, carrying a harp? The figurine on top of the Christmas tree? Angels are actually powerful spiritual beings who act on God's behalf.

In Luke 1, we read about a particular angel named Gabriel who was God's messenger to a young virgin Israelite named Mary. Gabriel delivered an incredible message to Mary, but instead of being incredulous, her response was to wholeheartedly accept her role—to have a child who was God's own Son. The angelic announcement even included the child's name: He was to be called "Jesus" which means "God saves."

After this dramatic encounter with the angel, Mary traveled to visit her older relative, Elizabeth. Elizabeth was also unexpectedly pregnant in her old age, and she rejoiced as soon as Mary entered her house. Even though these women could see only the smallest part of God's plan, just think of the excitement they must have experienced as they shared all that God had done in their lives.

Reflect

- 1 Mary responded to incredible news with acceptance and obedience. How can we have that same attitude when God asks us to do something seemingly beyond our ability?
- 2 What did the angel tell Mary about Jesus that's important for us to know?
- 3 Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, couldn't speak until his son John was born. What does his experience teach us about faith?
- 4 What does Luke 1 tell us about God's faithfulness?

Respond

Thank you, God, for sending Your Son to save us. As I read Your Word, help me to have a heart of faith like Mary who was ready to obey. And above all, thank You for Your Son who came to Earth to save us.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 2

Reading: Luke 2

Review

Centuries before Jesus was born, God made a promise that He would send a Savior: the Messiah who was the Son of God. He would be like us—human, with flesh and bones—and would grow up in the care of His mother, Mary, and His stepfather, Joseph.

In this chapter we see angels announcing His birth to shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem. “For to you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.” But was Jesus here just for the Israelite people? A godly man named Simeon answered that question when he met the baby Jesus and His parents at the Temple in Jerusalem. While holding Jesus in his arms, Simeon announced that in seeing Jesus, he had seen God’s salvation, “a light of revelation for the Gentiles.” God had sent His Son to Earth to save people from every country and nation.



Luke 2:52

Jesus grew both in body and in wisdom, gaining favor with God and people.



Reflect

- 1 How do you think Mary felt when she had to lay her newborn baby into a manger that
- 2 What lessons can we learn from the shepherds about how important it is to make the best of an opportunity?
- 3 When 12-year-old Jesus was in the temple, why were the religious teachers so surprised at Him? How do you think Mary and Joseph felt about Jesus when they found Him in the temple?

Respond

Thank You, God, for sending Jesus to live in this world to show us God’s love. Thank You for the angels’ announcement to the shepherds, telling them where to find Him in Bethlehem. Help us, like the angels, to tell others how to find Jesus: by coming to Him in prayer. Please help me to keep learning about Him and show me others who I should invite to join me in this 24-Day Challenge.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 3

Reading: Luke 3

Luke 3:3

So John went throughout the whole territory of the River Jordan, preaching, 'Turn away from your sins and be baptized, and God will forgive your sins.'

Review

You may not realize it, but we've already met John the Baptist. He was the son of Mary's cousin Elizabeth—the unborn baby that leaped for joy at the sound of Mary's voice. God had a special role for John: he was to prepare the way for Jesus' public ministry by reminding the people of their sinfulness and urging them to turn (repent) from their old ways.

When John spoke, he held nothing back. No one could avoid John's rebukes—after all, just like today, everybody has done something wrong or not done what is right. John even confronted Herod, who was the ruler in that area, for his wickedness. As we'll see later, John's boldness in that confrontation led to his imprisonment and death (Luke 9:9).

Sin is humanity's biggest problem. It doesn't matter if you think you've been "pretty good." Every single one of us has done something wrong, so we all need to listen to John's words and recognize our need for God's forgiveness (Luke 3:3).

Reflect

- 1 John the Baptist asked people to repent of their sins. Have you ever met someone who thinks he or she has never sinned? Have you sinned?
- 2 What did the angel tell Mary about Jesus that's important for us to know?
- 3 John believed that people who repented should show that repentance in what they did. What do you think he meant when he talked about "the fruit of repentance"?
- 4 Jesus was sinless, but He chose to be baptized. What do you think baptism meant to Him?

Respond

God, You are perfect and holy. Help me to repent so I can receive Your forgiveness and mercy, and help me to live in a way that shows my love for You by the way I treat others and speak of You.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 4

Reading: Luke 4

Review

We all face trials and tests, but Jesus faced an especially powerful challenge. Led by the Holy Spirit, Jesus went into the desert to fast for 40 days. During that time of hunger and weakness, Satan tempted Jesus, trying to get Him to compromise His character and mission. But even when He was hungry and exhausted, Jesus didn't give in to sinful desires. He quoted verses from the Old Testament to rebuke the devil and stop his demonic attack.

After Jesus demonstrated His superiority over the devil, He began His ministry of delivering people from Satan's power. All it took was a simple command for Jesus to force demons to leave the people they were tormenting (4:36).

In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read a passage of the Old Testament that foretold His coming. Jesus had come to give the good news of God's forgiveness to the poor, and to free people from bondage to the devil and to their own sins.

Reflect

- 1 Jesus stood up to Satan by quoting verses from the Old Testament. Have you memorized any verses that you can use during times of temptation?
- 2 What do you think the disciples learned about Jesus' power when they saw Him delivering people from demonic bondage? What confidence does this give us today?
- 3 How was Jesus different from other teachers and prophets? Why can we trust Him to become our Savior too?



Luke 4:40

After sunset all who had friends who were sick with various diseases brought them to Jesus; he placed his hands on every one of them and healed them all.



Respond

God, thank You that I don't have to live in fear. I don't have to fear temptation when it comes, whether it's from my heart or from the world around me. Help me remember that Your Son, Jesus, is stronger than evil, and help me follow His example in using Your Word to fight temptation.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 5

Reading: Luke 5

Review

Peter apparently thought he was a better fisherman than Jesus. When Jesus asked him to put his nets into the deep water, Peter told Jesus that they'd already been fishing all night and hadn't caught anything. But, to Peter's credit, he also said, "But at Your word I will let down the nets."

In response to Peter's act of obedience, the boats brought up so many fish that they almost sank under the weight of the catch!

Jesus used this miracle to teach the disciples. Just as He could command fish to swim into a net, He would teach His disciples how to "catch men;" in other words, they would learn how to bring people into God's kingdom.

Jesus continued to do miracles. He cured a man with leprosy—a terrible skin disease. He even made a paralyzed man walk again. People were forced to recognize the truth: Jesus had God's authority to do miracles. Jesus didn't just come to heal people physically—He healed them spiritually. He led sinners to turn away from their sins and offered them forgiveness (Luke 5:32).

Reflect

- 1 Look at Peter's reaction to Jesus—it was reluctant, but when he saw the miracle, he fell at Jesus' feet. What does this teach us about how we should respond to Jesus?
- 2 Jesus touched the leper He healed. Since people didn't touch lepers in those days, what does this teach us about Jesus' compassion? How does this apply to us?
- 3 Jesus chose Levi, a tax collector, to become one of His disciples. How do you think this decision changed Levi's life?



But the news about Jesus spread all the more widely, and crowds of people came to hear him and be healed from their diseases.



Respond

God, I know that You are able to do great and marvelous works. Thank You that I've been blessed to read of Your greatest work, the gift of forgiveness. Help me to want more than just temporary healing and provision; give me the desire for spiritual and eternal transformation.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 6

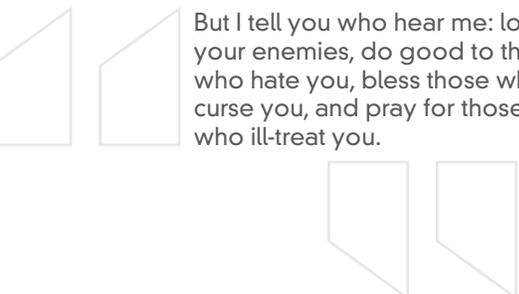
Reading: Luke 6

Review

Jesus didn't do His work alone. He chose twelve disciples to teach so they could serve alongside Him. As opposition to Jesus' ministry grew, He warned His disciples that being identified with "the Son of Man" could cause them to be hated, just as He was (Luke 6:22).

However, Jesus didn't want His followers to focus on these troubles. Instead, they were able to keep going even in the face of opposition, knowing they would be rewarded in heaven (Luke 6:23). In fact, Jesus challenged His disciples to love their enemies, living out God's example of kindness and patience toward the wicked.

Luke 6:27-28



But I tell you who hear me: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who ill-treat you.

Reflect

- 1 Jesus was accused of breaking the Sabbath laws. How did He respond to these accusations?
- 2 Jesus taught us to love our enemies. In what practical ways can we show His love to those who hate us?
- 3 Jesus taught us to be careful about judging others. What mistakes can we make when we judge others? Why is it so hard for us to honestly judge ourselves?
- 4 This chapter ends with a powerful parable about two men who each built a house. What lessons should this story teach us?

Respond

Father, give me the strength to do what's right, even when it's difficult. As I follow You, don't let me be silenced by opposition, remembering that You wait to reward people who stay faithful on Earth. Instead, help me choose to boldly love my enemies, sharing the good news about Jesus Christ.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 7

Reading: Luke 7

Review

In this chapter we read several stories about Jesus reaching out to the needy and humble. The centurion acknowledged he was unworthy to have Jesus come to his house, yet Jesus healed his servant. The widow, left alone after the death of her only son, rejoiced when Jesus raised him from the dead.

But perhaps the most remarkable story is Jesus' visit to the home of a self-righteous Pharisee. An outcast woman—who might have been a prostitute—began weeping, wetting Jesus' feet with her tears, and then she wiped them dry with her hair.

The Pharisee reacted with judgment because he was focused on her past not her sincere act of love. Jesus rebuked the religious ruler, but forgave the woman for her sins—not on the basis of what she did to serve Him, but because of her faith and love for Him.

Luke 7:47

I tell you, then, the great love she has shown proves that her many sins have been forgiven. But whoever has been forgiven little shows only a little love.

Reflect

- 1 Jesus commended the centurion for his faith. How can our faith in Jesus grow and become stronger?
- 2 Contrast the attitude of the Pharisee who invited Jesus into his home, and the attitude of the outcast woman.
- 3 How do we know this woman was forgiven on the basis of grace and not works? Describe how you think she felt when she heard Jesus say, "Your sins are forgiven."
- 4 What lessons did Jesus want us to learn from the parable He told while in the home of the Pharisee?

Respond

Father, give me the faith of the centurion and the humility and faith of the needy woman. Help me to see that I also am a sinner, in need of Your grace and forgiveness. I receive Your forgiveness and rejoice that You have accepted me because of what Jesus has done. I also know my good works can't save me—and so I choose to trust You for forgiveness and salvation.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 8

Reading: Luke 8

Review

Jesus had relationships with a lot of people. In addition to His twelve disciples, there were also several women who followed His teachings and helped provide for His ministry. In a highly patriarchal culture, Jesus showed his concern for both men and women. Why? Obviously, both men and women needed to hear the good news of His salvation.

In Luke chapter 8, in addition to doing several miracles, Jesus also began to teach His disciples with parables—ordinary stories with a special meaning. In one parable, four different kinds of soil received seed. The different soils represent four different kinds of people and their responses to God’s Word.

Later in the chapter, Jesus’ mother, Mary, and His half-brothers were trying to get through a large crowd to reach Him. Someone told Jesus that His family was there and wanted to see Him. His response hinted at a great truth: whoever hears God’s Word and does what it says can become a part of Jesus’ family. When we read God’s Word, we are near to God Himself.

Reflect

- 1 Think about the four different kinds of soil in Jesus’ parable. Which soil represent true believers? Which soil do you think best represents you?
- 2 Jesus had the power to calm a storm on the Sea of Galilee. What does this teach us about His power to help us when we face difficulties in life?
- 3 Think about the shy woman who went behind Jesus and touched His coat. Why would she be afraid to speak directly to Him? What emotions do you think she felt after she was healed? Can you imagine how she felt when Jesus called her “Daughter?”



Luke 8:21

Jesus said to them all, ‘My mother and brothers are those who hear the word of God and obey it.’



Respond

Father, thank You that You reach out to all kinds of people, and that You even reach out to me. Please help me to love Your Word, so that I can claim my place in Your family.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 9

Reading: Luke 9

Luke 9:24

For whoever wants to save their own life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for my sake will save it.

Review

Many of the Jews hoped that Jesus would lead a revolt to overthrow their Roman oppressors, but the reason for His coming was quite different. In chapter nine, Jesus predicted His death and resurrection.

Following His shocking pronouncement, Jesus gave His listeners a two-fold task:

- 1) They were to deny themselves, which meant sacrificing their own desires for the greater privilege of following Jesus.
- 2) They were to make a daily decision to take up their “crosses;” that is, to be willing to follow Christ even if it meant going with Him to death.

This radical reorientation of their priorities demanded their complete allegiance. Jesus left no doubt about the commitment required, because it’s impossible to be a “part-time” disciple.

Reflect

- 1 How do you think the disciples felt about Jesus’ prediction of His death and resurrection?
- 2 In the story of the transfiguration, we get a glimpse of how Jesus looks today in heaven. Reread the account and ask: what does this teach us about life in heaven?
- 3 The disciples encountered a demon they couldn’t cast out. Why do you think they failed? What does this teach us about Jesus’ power?
- 4 The disciples argued about who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. What does this teach us about human nature, and about our own selfishness? Have you seen the same arguments among people in your home or church?

Respond

Father, I admit that my heart is filled with selfishness. Help me say no to myself and yes to You—and to be willing to follow You completely. Help me to get to know You better and trust You more so I can serve You with all my heart. Teach me about Your greatness, power, and love.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 10

Reading: Luke 10

Review

Jesus chose the twelve disciples to travel and minister with Him, but He also sent others to different towns to announce the Gospel. Seventy-two of them traveled to towns to which He was going, and they shared the Good News of God's salvation. However, for those cities that rejected His offer, there was judgment.

Luke 10:22

My Father has given me all things. No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

To illustrate how self-centered we all can be, Jesus told a parable about a priest and a Levite who saw a wounded man on the side of the road, but simply walked past, leaving the man to die. He contrasted these religious leaders with a Samaritan (who was of a mixed race, and looked down on by the Jews), who cared for the man at his own expense.

The chapter ends with a beautiful story of Jesus relaxing in the home of three friends, Martha, Mary, and Lazarus. Martha worked hard to serve Jesus, but Mary did even better by simply sitting at His feet and hearing His Word.

Reflect

- 1 Jesus made it clear that His invitation was open to all. Why do you think His message is so important?
- 2 What is the main lesson in the story of the Good Samaritan?
- 3 If you could have been Mary, sitting at the feet of Jesus, what questions would you have asked Him?
- 4 Have you invited anyone else to begin the 24-day challenge in the Gospel of Luke?

Respond

Father, I want to be Your disciple who shares the Good News, not with miracles or wonders, but with Your Word. Help me to be like the Good Samaritan who shared Your love with a wounded man he didn't even know. Let me be like Mary, enjoying fellowship with You because I know You love me and care about me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 11

Reading: Luke 11

Luke 11:1

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.'

Review

Jesus' disciples had a wonderful request for Jesus: they asked Him, "teach us to pray." He taught them a simple but profound prayer that we can use as an example of how to pray.

As Jesus' ministry continued, both His opponents and His supporters grew in numbers. In this chapter, Jesus rebuked those who were rejecting His teachings about the Kingdom of God. These rebukes were mainly directed at the religious leaders of the day, because their hypocrisy had hindered the people, obscured God's love, and turned a blind eye to the murder of God's prophets.

As we continue reading the chapter, we see Jesus' triumph over Satan, and His strong words of rebuke for those who refused God's grace. His words hold valid warnings for us today.

Reflect

- 1 What is the main point in Jesus' parable about prayer?
- 2 What is the main point of Jesus' words about the need for a kingdom to be united?
- 3 What sign did Jesus give to the world? How does this sign apply to us today?
- 4 Think through the rebuke Jesus gave the Pharisees and lawyers. Why was Jesus so upset with them? How do we commit the same sins today?

Respond

God, make me a person of prayer. Help me to always come to You in faith, believing that You care about me and my needs. I'm so thankful that You have power over Satan, and that Jesus has defeated him. Please show me my sin; help me repent of the sinful attitudes in my heart so I can avoid the deception of the Pharisees. Through the grace You've shown me, I submit myself to You completely.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 12

Reading: Luke 12

Review

Jesus frequently told parables, which were simple stories with a deeper meaning, in order to demonstrate truths. In one case, as Jesus exposed someone's greedy heart, He told the story of a rich man whose only desire was to accumulate more possessions (Luke 12:16–21). In the end, what did the rich man's hoard gain for him? Nothing—he was a fool, because at his death he had put no effort into a relationship with God.

Luke 12:27

Look how the wild flowers grow: they don't work or make clothes for themselves. But I tell you that not even King Solomon with all his wealth had clothes as beautiful as one of these flowers.

Like the rich man in this chapter, many people strive for wealth. Their only real goal is to fulfill the desires of their deceitful hearts, completely ignoring the true wealth that can only come from God. Money and possessions are not inherently evil, but they can easily distract us from what is truly important.

Reflect

- 1 What comfort can we find in Jesus' promise about what evil people can do to us?
- 2 What mistakes did the rich man make as he planned for his future?
- 3 What reasons did Jesus give as to why we don't need to worry?
- 4 What did Jesus teach about the need to be faithful in whatever He calls us to do?

Respond

God, You are more valuable than anything I could experience or own. Provide for my needs, but please don't let me be captivated by the desire for possessions. I want to be rich in my love for You, believing and obeying Your Word. Give me the faith to believe all Your promises, and to trust You with my life and future.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 13

Reading: Luke 13

Review

In this chapter, Jesus made it clear that God expects our lives to be like trees that bear fruit; in other words, we're to live for God's praise and glory. If our lives aren't fruitful in this way, we're a disappointment to Him.

Jesus also plainly described two types of people. Some will enter the Kingdom of God, and others will choose to remain outside the Kingdom, living life as they please. But one day the "narrow door"—the window of time during which humanity has the opportunity to seek God—will close. Then the choices these people made will be final, and many will be turned away from God and consigned to hell—a place described as being filled with "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Luke 13:28).

While the truth about hell is uncomfortable, it reminds us of our need for a Savior. We are all "workers of evil" who deserve punishment (Luke 13:27). Thankfully, through the sacrifice of His Son, God provided a way to Himself.



Luke 13:18-19

Jesus asked, What is the Kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it with? It is like this. A man takes a mustard seed and plants it in his field. The plant grows and becomes a tree, and the birds make their nests in its branches.



Reflect

- 1 Jesus always emphasized that there were two kinds of people, those who accepted Him and those who rejected Him. Why are some people in one group or the other?
- 2 Jesus told the sobering story of people who will expect to get into heaven but will be told they aren't welcome. Why do you think these people were deceived about their relationship with God?
- 3 What does Jesus' lament over Jerusalem show about His compassion for people?
- 4 From what you have learned about Jesus so far, why do you think some people might still reject Him? Have you accepted Him?

Respond

Father, help this difficult truth about people being lost forever motivate me to share about Jesus and His way of salvation. Help me love others enough to warn them of the danger. Bring to mind people who I can tell about Jesus' love and His desire to save all who come to Him. Thank You for the privilege of walking on the narrow way, and not the broad way that leads to destruction.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 14

Reading: Luke 14

Review

Do you want to be honored in front of others? If we're honest, most of us do. In this chapter, Jesus told a parable about a wedding feast. As the guests were streaming in, everyone took a seat. Many people might try to grab a seat of honor for themselves—but Jesus praised the person who deliberately chose a lower place at the table.

Jesus values humility, and He perfectly models it for us. However, many people who claim to be Christians are far more concerned with receiving honor than they are with being humble and serving others. In telling this parable, Jesus pointed out to His disciples the sinfulness of this mindset. He showed them that they had to humble themselves in ministry, knowing that God would one day honor them in His Kingdom.

Luke 14:15

When one of the guests sitting at the table heard this, he said to Jesus, 'How happy are those who will sit down at the feast in the Kingdom of God!'

Reflect

- 1 How can we display the kind of humility that Jesus praises in His story about the wedding feast?
- 2 In the parable of the banquet, when some of those who were invited refused to come, Jesus said that the servants would go out into the streets to invite others. How does this story apply to you?
- 3 Jesus told His disciples that they should "take up their cross" and follow Him. How do you think this can be applied today?
- 4 What benefits do you think will come to those who are willing to follow Christ?

Respond

Father, I choose to humbly serve and obey You. Help me not to do anything just to gain honor from others, but help me seek only the honor that comes from You. I want to be one of those who comes to Your feast and enjoys Your presence, and then follows You with my whole heart. Help me to want Your approval above all others in all that I do.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 15

Reading: Luke 15

Review

God wants those who are lost to be found. In Luke 15, we read three parables from Jesus, centering on something that was lost. A shepherd seeks a missing sheep; a woman searches for a misplaced coin; and a father joyfully welcomes home his prodigal son.

In each parable, Jesus correlated being lost with being a sinner—because we are truly lost in our sins. However, like the father in the third parable, God rushes out to welcome His lost loved ones home. When we follow the example of the prodigal son and confess our sins, God restores us, provides for us, and calls us His family.

It's heartbreaking to realize that many people believe they're "too far gone," and that God can never forgive them. But the opposite is true. God's forgiveness and love are infinite, therefore they are infinitely greater than our sins when we repent and come to Him.

Luke 15:7

In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine respectable people who do not need to repent.

Reflect

- 1 What do these three parables teach us about God's character?
- 2 What lessons can we learn about father/son relationships in the story of the prodigal son?
- 3 Some people think the father was wrong to invite his son back home. What do you think?
- 4 The elder brother who stayed home represents the Pharisees, who were upset because Jesus spent time with sinners, forgiving them for their sins. Do we sometimes have that same jealous attitude?

Respond

Father, thank You for Your grace in seeking out the lost and inviting us into Your kingdom. Forgive us for being like the elder brother, who resented the welcome the father gave to the prodigal. Thank You that angels in heaven rejoice when a sinner comes to repentance. Help me encourage prodigals living in the world to come home to their waiting Father.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 16

Reading: Luke 16

Review

Money and possessions compete with God for our attention and passion. That was true in Jesus' time too, which is why He often discussed money. This irritated the Pharisees, who are described as "lovers of money" (Luke 16:15), so they ridiculed and insulted Jesus.

But Jesus got to the core of the issue. God sees our hearts. The Pharisees might have put on a decent show to convince others of their godliness, but God knew their deep-seated craving for riches. Even though this desire for wealth might have been acceptable to the world around them, it offended God. He alone deserves worship. We are to love Him with all our minds and hearts.



Luke 16:15

Jesus said to them, You are the ones who make yourselves look right in other people's sight, but God knows your hearts. For the things that are considered of great value by people are worth nothing in God's sight.



Reflect

- 1 In the parable, Jesus gave us a good lesson from the life of a bad man. Jesus doesn't condone the actions of the manager, but He does say that at least he had the wisdom to see that money can be used to invest in our future. What does this parable teach us about the wise use of money?
- 2 Jesus told the money-loving Pharisees that God knew their hearts. How should this fact of God's knowledge affect us?
- 3 What does the story of the rich man and Lazarus teach us about the need to prepare for death? Describe the experience of each of the two men after they died.

Respond

Father, please forgive me for my sinful longings. I pray that You'll mean more to me than money, and more than becoming famous or well-liked. Teach me to use the money You provide for eternal purposes: I want to use it to help people know You. Help me learn from the destiny of Lazarus and the rich man, recognizing that this life is preparation for eternity. I affirm that I trust only Jesus for my eternal salvation.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 17

Reading: Luke 17

Review

Jesus didn't heal everyone He met; but in this chapter, when He met ten men with leprosy, He chose to show them mercy. Because of the extremely contagious nature of the disease, lepers were shunned and forced to live on the fringes of the city. Jesus commanded the men to go to the temple and show themselves to the priests—a requirement before someone who had been healed could reenter society. The men were not yet healed, but they demonstrated their faith in Jesus by obeying His command even though the blotches of leprosy were still evident on their bodies. On the way to the temple, the lepers were miraculously restored to health.

Luke 17:19

And Jesus said to him, 'Get up and go; your faith has made you well.'

Nine of the men went on their way, and we never see them again. But one of them, who wasn't even an Israelite, came back "praising God in a loud voice" as soon as he was healed (Luke 17:15). He threw himself at Jesus' feet in thankfulness for the miraculous gift he'd been given.

Reflect

- 1 What did these ten men have in common? Yet what made one of them so different? Would we be among the nine, or would we be the one with a heart of thankfulness?
- 2 What warnings does Jesus give to those who live carelessly?
- 3 When Jesus says to "Remember Lot's wife," to what is He referring? (You can find the story in Genesis 19:23–29). What is the warning for us?
- 4 Can you think of other warnings in the Bible that we're tempted to ignore?

Respond

Father, I am so grateful to You. You've given me life—even the breath in my lungs at this moment. When I experience Your kindness, help me to always be faithful and persistent in thanking You. Please help me and others to listen to Your warnings—let us not delay our salvation, but help us trust in Jesus so we won't come into judgment.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 18

Reading: Luke 18

Review

We often behave like we deserve something from God—as though we’re “good enough” to be entitled to His good gifts. When we act this way, we demean and trample on His mercy. The subject of mercy is discussed twice in today’s chapter.

First, Jesus paints a verbal picture of two men praying in the temple. One is a Pharisee, full of self-righteousness, whose prayer is one of arrogance and pride. The other is a despised tax collector, who, in contrast, openly acknowledges his sinfulness and begs God for mercy.

Then in another story, as Jesus is nearing Jerusalem, a blind man overcomes the opposition of the crowd and calls out to Him for mercy. In his awareness of his need, this man stops at nothing to get Jesus’ attention. Jesus stops and heals the man’s blindness. Ironically, Jesus—who gave others mercy—would not receive mercy Himself. He continued on toward Jerusalem where He would be killed—not because He did wrong, but because He did what was right.

Luke 18:14

I tell you,” said Jesus, “the tax collector, and not the Pharisee, was in the right with God when he went home. For those who make themselves great will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be made great.

Reflect

- 1 Are we ever self-righteous in our prayers like the Pharisee? Give some examples.
- 2 For what do you need God’s mercy? How desperate are we?
- 3 In the story of the rich young ruler, what was Jesus trying to get him to understand?
- 4 Why do you think the disciples found it so hard to understand Jesus when He told them He was going to Jerusalem to die? Keep in mind that the disciples were not expecting that their Messiah would be crucified.

Respond

Father, have mercy on me, a sinner. I’m in desperate need of Your grace, because I’ve wronged You and rebelled against Your perfect laws. Forgive me. I humble myself before You, God, because I know I’ve sinned. Thank You for Your gift of forgiveness, given freely to those who receive it by faith.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

Note: Israel’s King David wrote many beautiful prayers of praise for the grace and mercy of God. One such prayer is found in Psalm 40. Read it, and pray it from your heart to God.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 19

Reading: Luke 19

Review

As Jesus rode into Jerusalem, the crowd celebrated. People even spread their cloaks on the road in front of Him. In their joy, the disciples began praising God and shouting that Jesus was the King. The Pharisees were offended, but Jesus responded that “if they keep quiet, the stones themselves will start shouting.” For Jesus was no ordinary teacher—He was the Messiah, and worthy of worship.

Luke 19:38

‘God bless the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God.’

Once Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, He entered the Temple, which was historically the center of all worship and ministry for the Jewish people. He drove out the merchants who were corrupting the Temple by using it as a place of business, and He began preaching and teaching at the Temple every day. While the people loved Him and didn’t want to miss a word He spoke, the leaders and those in power were looking for an opportunity to kill Him. The King had come to Jerusalem, and He was approaching the day when He would be rejected and scorned by those He came to save.

Reflect

- 1 The man Zacchaeus was so anxious to see Jesus that he climbed up a tree to see Him. Why do you think Jesus asked to spend time with him in his home?
- 2 Jesus told a parable to illustrate the need for us to be faithful in what we’ve been given. Contrast the unfaithful man with those who used their talents wisely.
- 3 When Jesus rode into Jerusalem, many people rejoiced and honored Him. Why do you think that the Pharisees were upset with these people?
- 4 Jesus wept as He looked over Jerusalem. What does this tell us about Him, and how does this apply to us?

Respond

Father, God, I acknowledge Your Son as King, and I know He deserves my worship and adoration. I want to be among those who praise Him; please don’t let me be like the Pharisees, who didn’t even realize they needed a Savior. Help me weep over those who don’t know You, like Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Help me always proclaim Him as my King, Savior, and Lord.

In Jesus’ name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 20

Reading: Luke 20

Review

This chapter describes a series of conflicts between Jesus and those who criticized Him. Jesus often answered a question with another question. When He was asked what authority He had to do His miracles, He responded by asking His critics whether John the Baptist's right to baptize people came from God or from men. They didn't want to answer Jesus' question—so He didn't answer theirs!

Luke 20:25

So Jesus said, 'Well, then, pay the Emperor what belongs to the Emperor, and pay God what belongs to God.'

In telling the parable about the vineyard, Jesus made it clear that though He was being rejected, anyone who believed Him would be saved. This powerful story made some leaders angry, but Jesus didn't back down, because He wanted them to understand the truth.

Whether asked about taxes or life after death, Jesus always challenged His listeners, whether with another question, a parable, or just direct, plain speech.

Reflect

- 1 Why do you think Jesus was so controversial?
- 2 When Jesus' enemies asked Him if they should pay taxes, Jesus simply said that we should pay the Emperor what belongs to him, and give God what belongs to Him. Discuss how this might apply in your country and your situation.
- 3 When asked, Jesus said that marriage does not exist in heaven. What do we learn about heaven from the answer Jesus gave?
- 4 Jesus warned the common people to be suspicious of their religious leaders. What were the leaders doing that was wrong and misleading?

Respond

Father, I pray for humility. I don't want to fall into the sins of the religious leaders who opposed Jesus. Give me spiritual insight into everything Jesus taught. Help me to live out Your truth as He did, with wisdom and strength, honoring You with my life and all I do.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 21

Reading: Luke 21

Review

It's hard not to worry about the future. Thankfully, we can trust that Jesus already knows our future, and has it in His hand. When Jesus was in Jerusalem, the great city of His people, He spoke to His disciples of the destruction that was coming. Forty years before the Roman siege of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., Jesus predicted the destruction both of the Temple and of the city itself.

Luke 21:12-13

Before all these things take place, however, you will be arrested and persecuted; you will be handed over to be tried in synagogues and be put in prison; you will be brought before kings and rulers for my sake. This will be your chance to tell the Good News.

Jesus told people to prepare for difficulty, hatred, and persecution; some of His followers would even be put to death. However, He also encouraged them with the reminder that He would return one day, with many signs and wonders, to redeem His people. When we read His words, we are both warned and comforted because we know our future is in His hands, and He will return for us.

Reflect

- 1 Jesus predicted that many people will be deceived by false teachers claiming to be the messiah. How can false teachers deceive us today?
- 2 Jesus also predicted a time of great suffering and persecution. Why did He say we shouldn't be afraid, no matter what happens?
- 3 Jesus also predicted that He would return in power and great glory. How can we be prepared for this event?
- 4 Finally, this chapter ends with Jesus' warning that we need to be ready for His appearing. What instruction did He give so we can stay awake, spiritually speaking?

Respond

Father, thank You for sending Your Son, and that He taught us how to be ready for His return to earth. I pray for myself and my friends, that we won't be filled with fear, but that we'll look forward to His return. If we're persecuted, make us faithful; if we're threatened, fill us with courage and hope. Above all, let us be ready for Jesus' return by trusting in Him alone for forgiveness and redemption.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 22

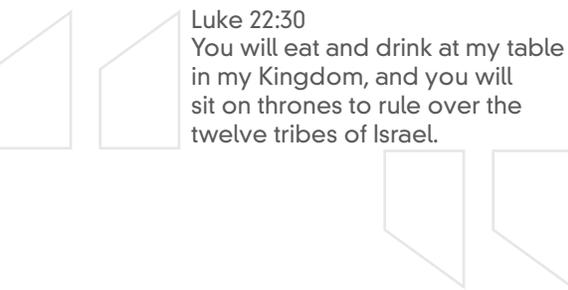
Reading: Luke 22

Review

In this chapter, we read about the last meal shared by Jesus and His disciples as part of the Passover remembrance. The Passover meal looks back to God's judgment of Egypt and redemption of Israel, recorded in the Old Testament book of Exodus (Exodus 11–12). After Israel spent hundreds of years as slaves in Egypt, God decreed that the time had come for their freedom. When Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, refused to release the slaves, God declared that every firstborn male—both of people and of livestock—would die. For the Jews, however, He provided a way of redemption. He told them to slaughter a lamb without any defects, and to sprinkle the lamb's blood on the doorposts of their homes. The judgment would then "pass over" those homes marked with the blood of the lamb. In essence, the lamb's blood was the substitute for their lives.

The symbolism and history of the Passover are clear in Luke's account of the Last Supper. Jesus made it plain that He was the new Passover lamb, and His body and His blood would be the means through which salvation was secured. He directed His disciples to regularly commemorate His sacrifice, to remind themselves of the price that was paid for their salvation.

Jesus didn't teach that the disciples were saved from their sins by participating in this memorial service; He used the bread and the wine as symbols of His body and blood. Salvation is through faith alone as we receive Jesus into our lives.



Luke 22:30
You will eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and you will sit on thrones to rule over the twelve tribes of Israel.

Reflect

- 1 How did Jesus show His concern for His disciples, even though He knew He would be dying a horrible death just a few hours later?
- 2 Why do you think Jesus told Peter in advance that he (Peter) would betray Him?
- 3 Think about Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. What do you think He was referring to when He spoke of the "cup?" What lessons can we learn from Jesus' willingness to do the Father's will?
- 4 Both Judas and Peter betrayed Jesus—but their later reactions were completely different. Contrast the two as they thought about what they did.

Respond

Father, thank you that You sent Your Son to die, and that His body was pierced and His blood shed for me. Give me a heart like Peter, who repented after he denied Jesus. I pray that no one would be like Judas, who hardened his heart and denied Jesus because of money. Today, Lord Jesus, I affirm again that my trust is only in You for forgiveness and redemption. I worship You because You died for me.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 23

Reading: Luke 23

Review

Jesus had been abandoned. His closest friends and disciples had vanished, and the crowds He had taught were now demanding His death. So the Son of God was nailed to a Roman cross—a humiliating death, reserved for the worst of criminals. In the most degrading fashion possible, the only sinless person who has ever lived died for the sins of the people; He died for us. The Pure One died for the impure, the Righteous for the unrighteous, the Innocent for the guilty (Luke 23:47).

Luke 23:46-47

Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Father! In your hands I place my spirit!' He said this and died. The army officer saw what had happened, and he praised God, saying, 'Certainly he was a good man!'

While He was hanging on the cross, Jesus still sought to save the lost. He was crucified along with two criminals, and the crowd gathered beneath them shouted abuse and scorn. One of the criminals, hanging on his own cross, still came to Jesus' defense, and then reached out to Jesus for help. In His agony, Jesus still chose to fulfill His divine purpose of redemption—He replied in love, "You will be in Paradise with me." Shortly afterward, Jesus died.

Reflect

- 1 Contrast the responses of the criminals crucified on either side of Jesus. What would have happened if Jesus had taken the one criminal's suggestion and come down from the cross?
- 2 How do Jesus' words, "today you will be in Paradise with me," show His authority? Why do you think He acted so graciously?
- 3 Think about Jesus' last words, "Father! In your hands I place my spirit!" What does this teach us about how we should die?
- 4 Describe how you think the disciples felt when Jesus was crucified and buried. Why is it so important for us to see our trials in perspective?

Respond

Thank You, Father, for Jesus. Thank You that He came and lived the perfect life, and that He was willing to die a horrible death as a sacrifice for sinners. I know He is innocent, and I confess I am guilty. I know salvation is only possible because of His pure sacrifice on my behalf, and I choose to put my trust in that sacrifice. I'm so grateful that because of Jesus, I can be considered righteous before You.

In Jesus' name, amen.

The 24-Day Challenge: Day 24

Reading: Luke 24

Review



Luke 24:45–47

Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'This is what was written: the Messiah must suffer and must rise from death three days later, and in his name the message about repentance and the forgiveness of sins must be preached to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem.



At the end of the previous chapter, Jesus was dead and buried in a borrowed tomb. But as we read today's chapter, to the shock of His followers, we see that the tomb was empty! Jesus had done exactly what He had said He would do—He rose from the dead. Later in the New Testament, in the book of 1 Corinthians, we're told that over 500 people saw the risen Savior; and they didn't just see Him, they spoke with Him, ate and drank with Him. He wasn't a ghost or a hallucination. Jesus was alive.

When the disciples saw that Jesus was alive, they carried out His words to the letter. This small group of people, by the power of God, declared the good news to the nations (Luke 24:46–47). They called people to turn away from their sins, and to trust in Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection for forgiveness and salvation.

Reflect

- 1 Look at the two disciples who left Jerusalem and walked toward the little town of Emmaus. Why were they so sad? Why did they not recognize Jesus when He started walking with them?
- 2 Jesus told these two disciples that they were despondent because there were things they had not believed. What should they have known and believed?
- 3 What finally convinced them that they had been in Jesus' presence?
- 4 Later, with a large group of His disciples, Jesus ate a piece of fish. What does this tell us about the kind of body He had after His resurrection?
- 5 The disciples shared their story about Jesus with others. Have you shared your faith in Him with your friends and relatives? Why, or why not? Do you pray that others will come to know Jesus too?

Respond

Father, thank You that Jesus is alive and in heaven today. Thank you for this study in the book of Luke that has shown me that Jesus is both the Son of Man and the Son of God. And thank you that He is the One who died for us, and that He has triumphed over death. Help me to share this good news with others, and to keep learning about Jesus and loving Him more each day.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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