NOW IS THE TIME: Luke
A TWENTY-FIVE DAY JOURNEY

AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY
**Now is the Time: Luke** is a 25-day journey through the book of Luke that encourages participants to experience Jesus and faithfully walk with him.

**Note to Ministry Leaders:** This suite of resources includes tracks for adults, youth, and children. Companion materials include discussion guides and sermon outlines.

To access these materials, go to **NowLuke.com**. Check out the **Luke 4.18-19 Assignment** and live out Scripture everywhere, every day.
**PRAY**

_Jesus, awaken my heart to receive your infinite mercy and overflowing kindness._

**READ**

**LUKE 1.5-20, 26-56, 67-80**

Gabriel, an angel of the Lord, visits Zechariah, an aged priest. Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, had faithfully served and obeyed God for years, but they did not have any children. It was Zechariah’s time to burn incense in the temple, a once-in-a-lifetime event that happened by lot. The angel gave Zechariah the incredible news that he and Elizabeth would have a son, John. The priest is skeptical about the angelic announcement and says, “How will I know this is going to happen? My wife and I are both very old” (v. 18). Because of his unbelief, God makes Zechariah unable to speak until after the baby’s birth.

Gabriel also visits Mary, an unmarried teenager, with astounding news. She is going to have a baby who will be called “the Son of God Most High” (v. 32). In astonishment, Mary asks the angel, “How can this happen? I am not even married!” (v. 34). She receives Gabriel’s explanation and then humbly says, “I am the Lord’s servant! Let it happen as you have said” (v. 38). Mary’s submission is the true mark of a disciple.

Later, both Mary and Zechariah respond in song to what God has done for them. Their songs focus on God’s mercy and kindness as God prepares to send Jesus into the world. Mary sings, “God helps his servant Israel and is always merciful to his people. The Lord made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his family forever!” (v. 54, 55). While Zechariah sings, “God said he would be kind to our people and keep his sacred promise” (v. 72).

Mary and Zechariah—two very different people, yet they find themselves singing praises for God’s mercy which endures to all generations.

**REFLECT**

Have you experienced God’s mercy and kindness even though you know you did not deserve it? What incredible thing has God done in your life?

**RESPOND**

Write your own song of worship to God in response to God’s mercy toward you.

_Jesus, I worship you. Thank you for bringing us your mercy and kindness._
PRAY
Holy Spirit, guide me as I encounter you in the Holy Scriptures today. Give me courage to do your will.

READ
LUKE 2.5-20
Sometimes it takes courage to do God’s will. As we follow the events leading up to the birth of Jesus, we find that Mary and Joseph had a difficult time carrying out God’s plan for their lives. Mary was very pregnant when she travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem for a required census. She had no friends or family to advise her on how to handle the birth of her first child. Nor did she have a comfortable room or a nursery for her baby. Instead, she gave birth to her firstborn child in an animal stable filled with hay because the local inns had been booked solid.

It took courage to endure these hardships. It took courage to be parents of a newborn and yet entertain a group of late night visitors—shepherds— who wanted to talk about their recent angelic experience and all they had seen and heard that night concerning the child. The Scriptures never record a word about Mary and Joseph’s fear, anger, or frustration. Instead, we are told that Mary tucked all these events in her heart, “thinking about all this and wondering what it meant” (v. 19).

We will often experience challenging times as we try to follow Jesus in obedience. At times it will be difficult to do God’s will, but God will grant us the courage we need to overcome each obstacle, if we ask him.

REFLECT
Recall a biography in which someone spent their life doing God’s will. What challenges did they face? How did they overcome them?

RESPOND
Read biblical accounts of God’s people who showed great courage in the face of great adversity.

Lord Jesus, let me walk beside you so I may joyfully receive the courage I need to face any difficulties I may encounter.
PRAY
Lord, show me the error of my ways and help me to change.

READ
LUKE 3.1-20

Few things disturb my life more than my conscience. I hear a sermon, read a book or read the Scriptures, and I am convicted to change. When crowds came to be baptized, John the Baptist preached “Do something to show that you really have given up your sins” (v. 8). His listeners were deeply moved and convicted. “What should we do?” (v. 10) they asked. The answer was simple. “If you have two coats, give one to someone who doesn’t have any. If you have food, share it with someone else” (v. 11). The hated tax collectors were told, “Don’t make people pay more than they owe” (v. 13). They were to do their work ethically. The soldiers were told, “Don’t force people to pay money to make you leave them alone. Be satisfied with your pay” (v. 14). True change was more than outward action, it was the result of a changed heart.

John’s words penetrated the heart of their greed. They could not serve God obediently until their hearts were changed and then their actions would follow. When we invite God into our lives, he convicts us about obedience. He first wants us to change whatever does not meet the test of honesty, integrity, and compassion. It may mean we have to change the way we conduct ourselves at work or in our family. As we change, others will see what God has done in our lives and seek after change in their own lives.

REFLECT
Do you recognize when the Holy Spirit convicts you of sin? How do you respond?

RESPOND
Ask God to change your heart and give you courage to lead a spirit-filled life.

Lord, let my actions speak louder than my words.
**PRAY**
*Father, keep me away from those things that would distract me from your Word.*

**READ**
**LUKE 4.1-13**

When we are tempted, the devil tries to manipulate God’s Word in an effort to undermine the truth. His aim is to defeat us at our weakest point and cause us to renounce God’s commands. This strategy is not new. The devil uses it on our Lord Jesus, as he ends a 40-day fast. He challenges Jesus to turn stones into bread, but Jesus demonstrates that he takes orders from no one but the Father. Jesus quickly rebukes the devil with the Word of God, saying, “The Scriptures say, ‘No one can live only on food’” (v. 4).

Next, the devil leads Jesus to a high place and commands Jesus to worship him in return for power and authority over the nations on earth. But Jesus will not circumvent his destiny for what the devil offers. Again, Jesus rebukes the devil telling him, “The Scriptures say: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!’” (v. 8). When that tactic fails, the devil makes one last attempt at getting Jesus to yield to him. He tells Jesus to jump off the highest point of the temple since the Scriptures say angels will protect him. But Jesus overcomes the devil, telling him: “The Scriptures also say, ‘Don’t try to test the Lord your God!’” (v. 12).

There are lessons to be learned from Jesus’ temptations. To be victorious, we dare not fight the devil in our own strength but in the power and might of the Holy Spirit. We also need to commit God’s Word to memory so we can use it, as Jesus did, as a weapon against temptation.

**REFLECT**
Have you overcome bouts of temptation? Consider the value of your testimony and the positive effect it can have on others.

**RESPOND**
Revise your daily schedule to include more time to read the Scriptures and talk with God.

*Lord, you are all I long for. I will worship and serve you with all my heart.*
THE POWER OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE

PRAY

Lord, give me courage to trust you. Make me obedient to your commands.

READ

LUKE 5.1-11

To be a fisherman in Jesus’ day was no glamorous job. Fishermen worked long hours—usually all night—and then spent their mornings maintaining their boats and nets. Fishing, like agriculture, was an industry that was critical to the survival of people back then. The job required a high level of knowledge, skill, concentration, and patience. And Simon was one of the best. It’s no wonder Jesus chose him to be one of his first disciples! Yet it wasn’t Simon’s skill or knowledge that caused Jesus to choose him. It was this fisherman’s faith and obedience.

With one command to Simon, Jesus challenged his faith: “Row the boat out into the deep water and let your nets down to catch some fish” (v. 4). Would Simon humble himself and do as Jesus said? He had already been out all night and had caught nothing. Who was this Jesus anyway? What did he know about fishing?

Simon’s response was forthright and honest. He held nothing back: “Master,” Simon answered, “we have worked hard all night long and have not caught a thing. But if you tell me to, I will let the nets down” (v. 5).

The result was a miraculous catch. More fish than Simon could imagine—or handle. He had to call his friends over to help. And together, they loaded two boats full of fish. An act of faith and obedience led to an “on time” and unexpected miracle.

REFLECT

God is much more interested in our faith and obedience than our natural abilities. Are we willing to trust God enough to head back out into the cold waters and let down our nets one more time? Is our confidence in God so secure that we are willing to trust God’s Word and obey even when we don’t see the immediate answers to our problems?

RESPOND

What will it take to fully let go and trust God? Ask God to help you see the areas in your life where you might still be holding back.

Lord, give us faith to trust you, to step out in boldness and obedience, to share your truth, and to watch you work.
PRAY

Jesus, we acknowledge you as Lord of the Sabbath, and give you praise for being Lord over all things.

READ

LUKE 6.1-11

The Pharisees are always at odds with Jesus and his radical approach to living. It seems they lurk around to nitpick at Jesus’ every action, judging him by the law and holding him to standards they themselves cannot keep.

Jesus demonstrates that many in his audience held a misguided view of the Sabbath. What they do not realize is that Jesus, the Messiah, is Lord of the Sabbath. This means he is the ultimate interpreter of its meaning, and as Lord of all, Jesus has power and authority to heal and to cast out evil spirits however and whenever he chooses. This truth shocked his audience.

We will never understand God or relate to him correctly if we only see Jesus as an ethical teacher or prophet. Jesus’ ethical teachings are grounded in who he is – the Son of God. Such teachings originated with him, and it is Jesus who gives them their meaning.

The Pharisees could not move away from the restricting laws they practiced long enough to see Jesus’ point of view. Jesus tries to help them understand that when these laws produce results that are contrary to God’s teachings, it is time to re-evaluate how one makes sense of the law. As a case in point, before healing a man in the temple on the Sabbath, Jesus poses this question of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law: “On the Sabbath should we do good deeds or evil deeds? Should we save someone’s life or destroy it?” (v. 9). The group remains silent, perhaps realizing that any answer they give would make them appear foolish in front of the people or point out their lack of compassion.

REFLECT

Do you hold on to meaningless tradition or practices even though they tend to hurt or ostracize others? Is your mindset different from that of the Pharisees?

RESPOND

Confess to Jesus any patterns in your lifestyle that are contrary to God’s teachings. 

Jesus, help me to make love my guide as I interpret your teachings.
FAITH ERASES DOUBT

PRAY

God, help us to trust you for our future, by remembering how you have helped us in the past.

READ

LUKE 7.1-50

In this chapter, Jesus’ ministry is marked by his continuous care of those who are sick and suffering. Jesus heals a Roman army officer’s servant. He raises a grieving widow’s only son from the dead. And, at the home of an arrogant, judgmental religious leader, a woman with a checkered past, repents and finds salvation as she anoints Jesus’ feet with her most precious possession—an expensive perfume. In each of these situations, someone is the recipient of a blessing.

Between this flurry of healings, a distraught, imprisoned John the Baptist sends his followers to ask if Jesus is truly “the one” (v. 20). Jesus encourages John’s followers to share with John the miracles they have witnessed, and he ends his conversation with them saying, “God will bless everyone who doesn’t reject me because of what I do” (v. 23). Perhaps Jesus’ response was a reminder to John to hold fast to his faith.

It is almost unimaginable that John, the forerunner of Jesus, would question whether Jesus was indeed the Messiah. Yet, if we put it in context, John is languishing in prison for the sake of the gospel and probably wonders why, despite the miracles that Jesus is doing, nothing has been done on his behalf. It is human to doubt; however, being in the presence of Jesus erases doubt and brings hope.

When facing difficulty we may question if God will work out our circumstances. Or we may wonder how long our pain and suffering will last. We may even have doubts about what happens after death, but may we never doubt Jesus and his purpose for our lives.

Jesus has come to restore us, and will do so, if we have faith and give him access to our hearts. Having Christ does not mean, however, that we do not experience suffering or distress. It means that Jesus will be with us always—in the midst of all of our struggles—even when we experience doubt.
REFLECT
What situations most often cause you to feel that Jesus has forgotten about you? How can trusting in Jesus’ nature and character help to dispel those doubts?

RESPOND
Ask God to help you use past victories as stepping stones to greater faith, when you are plagued by doubt.

Father, remind me always that you are my hope, my tower of strength. I will patiently wait for your deliverance in times of trouble.
Lord Jesus, interrupt me at those junctures of my life where I have become comfortable in my sin.

Imagine a small town on the shores of a lake. In this quaint village, a deeply troubled man is a constant disturbance to the residents. More than just a nuisance, this demon-possessed man is naked, living in a graveyard, and able to smash through chains and leg irons whenever he is bound. Can you imagine a more dysfunctional presence in a small community?

Jesus shows up and interrupts their lives; he brings freedom and deliverance not only to this man, but also to the entire community. The demons that once plagued the man have been sent into a herd of pigs that promptly rush off a steep bank and drown in the lake below. Jesus breaks the cycle of dysfunction in that town and leaves in its place freedom, peace, and order. Yet, how did the townspeople respond? They were terrified by the change in the man, terrified by the chain of events, and begged Jesus to leave.

Sometimes, we fear the unknown. We refuse to embrace change because it is uncomfortable. The townspeople were distressed over the loss of the herd, and would rather continue in the dysfunction of the plagued outcast than celebrate his deliverance. The dysfunction was comfortable, perhaps even predictable, but Jesus wanted them to experience something greater.

The same is true of our lives. When Jesus interrupts our lives to bring us freedom, we often balk at life adjustments we are forced to make. While these adjustments are often uncomfortable and unfamiliar, they are always for our ultimate good.

How do you react when God interrupts your life with changes that seem uncomfortable?

Father, give me the strength and peace to embrace the changes you want to make in my life.
PRAY

Lord, you have entrusted us with power. Give us wisdom to manage it.

READ

LUKE 9

As the chapter opens, Jesus calls his twelve disciples together and empowers them in a way they would never have imagined. He gives them great power and authority and sends them out on a journey that would take them from village to village, with a clear mission to serve others and proclaim the kingdom of God (v. 2).

They experience the miraculous as God’s power flows through them. They are supernaturally charged to preach God’s Word and heal the sick. (Heady stuff for a bunch of recently retired fishermen!) This power boosted their confidence, their faith, and perhaps their egos.

They go on to participate in Jesus’ miraculous feeding of more than 5,000 hungry people (vv. 14-16). Later, they find themselves in a discussion, maybe to compare stories. Perhaps they were passionately speaking over each other – the way excited schoolchildren speak – all talking at once, no one able to listen, eventually slowing down a bit to hear each tale. Stories may have been exaggerated or adapted and told in a way that was sure to top the previous story, with egos surfacing as the events were recalled. We can’t be certain of how this discussion went, but we do know that it eventually spirals to a level where they begin to compare themselves to each other, arguing about who is the greatest among them (v. 46).

Let’s be honest, this kind of conversation still plagues Christ followers today – especially leaders. God supernaturally empowers us, through his Spirit, to do amazing things for his purpose. When God’s power is at work in us, miraculous things begin to happen! But, if we aren’t careful, our ego may take over and we find ourselves elevating our role in the story.

REFLECT

How well do you handle power? Do you lose sight of the fact that whatever you are able to accomplish is by God’s grace and power?

RESPOND

Ask people around you for candid feedback on how you handle power. Ask God to help you make changes, where necessary.

Lord, thank you for choosing me to accomplish your mission. Help me to always keep my ego in check.
IDENTIFYING THE NEEDS OF OTHERS

DAY 10

PRAY

Lord, remove prejudice from my heart and give me eyes to see the needs of those around me.

READ

LUKE 10.25-37

Jesus tells a parable in response to an expert in the law’s tongue-in-cheek question, “Who are my neighbors?” (v. 29). In the story, a traveler is ambushed by thieves, beaten mercilessly, and left half dead. The first two men to happen upon the scene—a priest and a temple helper—are aware of their fellow Jew’s predicament, but are not moved to compassion and so do not become involved. It seems Jesus is pointing out the hypocrisy of the religious, who talk at length about displaying charity but are too preoccupied to give it, even to their own kind.

In contrast, a Samaritan stops by and acts immediately to help the badly wounded man. He applies a salve, bandages the victim’s wounds, then he places the man on his own donkey and takes him to an inn to recuperate. Not only does the Samaritan pay the necessary fees for the man’s stay, but he also guarantees the innkeeper more money in the event that the wounded man needs additional care.

Why does the Samaritan stop? Why would he administer aid to someone who belongs to an ethnic group that hated Samaritans and who Samaritans, in turn, despised? What makes him different?

In his telling of the parable, Jesus reorders the expert’s question “Who are my neighbors?” to “Which one… was a real neighbor…” (v. 36) where the onus is on each of us to be a neighbor and act out the gospel by showing love.

REFLECT

Have you ever allowed a busy schedule and the pace of life to justify your lack of love and care of those in need? Would you willingly help someone even if it were inconvenient for you?

RESPOND

Volunteer in a homeless shelter or a facility that serves poor immigrants. Ask God to show you ways to meet their needs.

Father, let me not shy away from helping others who are different from me. Remind me that they, too, are your children.
PRAY

Lord, remind me that I am never too old to learn more about you.

READ

LUKE 11.1-13

In a very poignant moment, Jesus’ disciples ask him to teach them to pray. They had just watched him pray, a practice they had no doubt witnessed repeatedly. But in this moment, one of them, wanting to learn even more of their master and mentor, asks to be taught. Jesus complies, and then like a Master Class instructor, he provides the steps and shows them how to apply what he has taught them.

Jesus’ model prayer begins with honoring God the Father and recognizing that God’s will and reign are sovereign over everything. It asks God not only for day-to-day provision, but also for forgiveness as we engage with others daily. The prayer ends with a plea for protection from being tempted. Jesus shows the disciples the importance of sustained prayer and explains that just as we might ask a parent or friend for a favor and it is granted; when we come before God in prayer, we are coming to our Father who loves us beyond comprehension, and who knows what we need even before we ask.

God our Father is passionate about us. God’s love may provide us with an answered prayer, an unsolicited gift, a word of knowledge, or even enough adversity to drive us back to depending on him when we stray. God is a good Father whose gift to us of the Holy Spirit surpasses any gift we could ever desire.

REFLECT

Reflect on your prayer life. Do you spend enough time talking to and listening to God? What lesson would you like God to teach you?

RESPOND

God is omniscient and all-wise, and that is why he does not always give us everything for which we ask. Think of times when you prayed for something that you later found out would have been detrimental to your well-being. Give thanks for God’s wisdom.

Father, thank you for your constant care of me. Let me learn more of you each day so that my spirit may be strengthened.
PRAY

God, I've shared my unmet needs with you in the past. I've shared my doubts and disappointments, too. Jesus, as I read your words in a moment, give me your perspective. Shape my thinking. Help me to trust you more. Amen.

READ

LUKE 12.13-40

The popular television series “Hoarders” highlights those people with homes that are stuffed with thousands of items the people will never use. While only a small percentage of Americans are compulsive hoarders, most of us still have a tendency to accumulate stuff. There was a UCLA study in 2001 that focused on the home life of 32 middle-income families in Los Angeles. The study found that only 25 percent of their garages could be used to store cars because they were so packed with stuff. This same study also found that managing the volume of possessions elevated levels of stress hormones for mothers.¹

In today’s passage, a man displays his desperate need for more. In fact, he wants Jesus to help him get more property. The man thinks he knows what he needs, but Jesus wants him to see the answer is not in the stuff, but in the Great Provider.

REFLECT

Dig into this passage for a few minutes and note any intriguing words or phrases.

What is the point of Jesus’ parable (vs. 21)?

What does Jesus say we are typically concerned about (vs. 30)? What does Jesus want us to be concerned about (vs. 31)?


Continued on the next page »
RESPOND
What does it mean for you to be “rich in God’s sight” in this season of your life (v. 21)?

Give God control of everything. Ask him to help you give him those areas that are most difficult to relinquish. Is there something God would want you to give away right now? If so, ask God for the strength to do it, knowing he will.

Generosity is a wonderful way to combat materialism. With whom does God want you to be generous this week?

_Dear Father, thank you for the way you feed the birds and the many ways you provide for me. You have given me so much. Thank you. You are faithful and generous. Help me to trust you and see everything I have from your perspective. Help me to trust and obey, and to be generous with others. Amen._
A HEART OF COMPASSION

PRAY
God, give us a heart like yours. Fill us with mercy and compassion for each other.

READ
LUKE 13.1-30
Many of the people Jesus taught were bound by strict laws that prescribed the correct ways to worship God. They presumed holiness followed a certain hierarchy where the religious leaders, Scribes and Pharisees, headed the list, and Gentiles and sinners sank to the bottom.

When Jesus heals the woman who had been bound by illness for 18 years, his actions suggest that the Pharisees did not have a monopoly on holiness (or healing), and that in fact, a greater form of worship is to serve God with a pure heart and restore those who struggle with sickness and disease. Jesus shows that recognizing and reaching out in love to those who are marginalized honors God more than being bound to a prescribed mode of worship.

Jesus’ call to repentance in this chapter is not a call to assume guilt or anxious rule-keeping, but rather it’s an acknowledgment that all of us are in need of God’s loving grace and kindness. Jesus invites us to turn away from self-centeredness and strive toward living lives that honor God and uplift others around us. When we are unhindered by guilt and selfishness, we are free to carry out acts of mercy and compassion that reveal the heart of God and the miraculous, deep peace and joy of God’s kingdom.

REFLECT
Will you turn away from selfishness and put others first? Will you, with a servant’s heart, lead others to crave God’s peace, hope, and love?

RESPOND
Ask God to give you compassion for those who are often ostracized.

Father, cause me to see those who need your love. Let me commit to being kind and compassionate even when my love for others is rejected.
DAY 14

SALTY CHRISTIANS

PRAY
God, help us to be disciples who retain our saltiness and remain of value to you.

READ
LUKE 14

One day I joined friends for dinner for one of their famous home-cooked dishes. I had long anticipated this mouth-watering meal, yet as I raised my fork and took the first bite, I was terribly disappointed. My friends had not added sufficient salt and it left the food bland and lacking its usual burst of flavor.

In this chapter, Jesus is invited to a Sabbath day dinner hosted by a very important Pharisee and “everyone was carefully watching Jesus” (v. 1), most likely to see if they could catch him breaking the law. During the course of the evening, he heals a man with swollen legs, tells a parable about guests who spurn an invitation to a special banquet, teaches a lesson on the cost of true discipleship, and warns those who would be his disciples not to lose their saltiness.

Because salt was a highly valued and extremely important preservative in the ancient world, no doubt Jesus’ audience hung on to his words wondering what he meant. It was not for everyone, but for those whose inner ears were attuned to his teaching.

Jesus teaches that being salty means being willing to go against cultural norms and even to be willing to lose everything for the cause of the kingdom of God. Jesus also reminds us that by our behavior we influence our environment and those around us who are carefully watching. As Christians, how often are we like my friends’ dish, not salty enough? We need to actively maintain our saltiness so we will prove worthwhile disciples of Jesus.

REFLECT
Do the values you uphold point others toward the gospel of Christ?

RESPOND
Ask God to show you areas where you need to be countercultural for the sake of the gospel.

Lord, let me live the truths of the gospel and bring meaning to life’s circumstances by applying your Word.
PRAY

*Dear Lord, give us a willing heart and the courage to embrace those who wish to restore their relationship with you.*

READ

**LUKE 15.11-32**

God is the epitome of a good father, so it is difficult to grasp why anyone would walk away from such a loving God. But the fact of the matter is that many people do, and later, when they come to their senses, they decide to come back to the family of God.

Sadly, the church is very often not ready for their return. We can be judgmental, unforgiving, always bringing up the individual’s past, or continually using the errors of this individual as examples of what the good people ought not to do. Do we, as believers know how to truly love and embrace those who turn back to God with a humble spirit? Or do we conduct ourselves as the older brother did and say in a jealous and selfish tone, “For years I have worked for you like a slave…. But you have never even given me a little goat….now that he has come home, you ordered the best calf…” (vv. 29, 30)

Are we ready to lovingly receive those who repent of their sin and return to the family of God? Can we be equally gracious to the offender if the offense is against us? In the face of God’s amazing grace, may God help us to understand that we are all God’s precious children and that his love and kindness is sufficient for all of us.

REFLECT

Are there ways in which you can help someone restore their broken relationship with God? Can you be forgiving and let their past mistakes be forgotten?

RESPOND

Ask God to help you be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, who has the heart to embrace those who seek a renewed relationship with God.

*Heavenly Father, help your church be a healing agent and not a stumbling block in the lives of those who seek restoration.*
MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE

PRAY
God, let me choose wisely and take the path that leads to you.

READ
LUKE 16.10-15

One of the most important decisions we can make is whether we will serve God or money. Jesus puts it this way, “You cannot be the slave of two masters. You will like one more than the other or be more loyal to one than to the other. You cannot serve God and money” (v. 13).

The Scriptures speak a lot about money because we are often captivated by it, and sometimes use it to define ourselves. In this passage, Jesus chides the Pharisees for their greed and preoccupation with money, saying, “You are always making yourself look good, but God sees what is in your heart. The things that most people think are important are worthless as far as God is concerned” (v. 15). While money may buy us material things, and may lead us to prestige and power, it does not bring lasting happiness. Only a relationship with God does that.

When we honor God with our finances, it breaks the grip of materialism off our lives. We cease being money’s slave and learn to use it sensibly as a tool to further God’s kingdom. Tithing and giving to the poor are ways in which we can use money to be a blessing to others. Such giving moves us away from self-centeredness, and allows us to rely on our faith in God to supply our needs.

REFLECT
What “masters” are currently vying for your attention? How do you balance these voices with your commitment to Christ?

RESPOND
Be intentional about your decisions this week. Check if they are driven by your desire for money or your desire to serve God.

Father, give me insight to discern what’s right. I declare that you are my master, and the desire of my heart is to serve you.
PRAY

Lord, help me to be a more faithful disciple.

READ

LUKE 17.1-33

This chapter focuses on the call to radical discipleship, and in it Jesus warns that our concern for the welfare of others must be strong and consistent. Jesus points out that dire consequences await those who cause others to stumble. When there are matters of disagreement, we must introduce reconciliation as a necessary part of the healing process. It requires confrontation, contrition, and a conscious decision to forgive.

As disciples of Jesus, we are marked by faith, service, and submission. Our faith should be so deep that we can believe for, and do, what others think is impossible. Jesus uses the example of a mulberry tree, a tree well known for its longevity and, as a result, its complex root system. Jesus says we should be able to tell the "mulberry tree to pull itself up, roots and all, and to plant itself in the ocean. And it would!" (v. 6) That’s radical faith!

When the roots of our faith are hidden deep in the Word of God, we no longer are concerned about ourselves, but we stretch ourselves to sacrificially serve our brothers and sisters who may lack the opportunities we have. True discipleship, then, begins with a change of heart, not merely following religious rules and regulations. As true disciples we are convicted to stand up for our beliefs despite the tide of public opinion, and we are willing to deny our own needs and aspirations in order to further the cause of Christ.

REFLECT

How do you make decisions about your ambitions, service, and financial stewardship?

RESPOND

Pray that you will grow in your faith and exhibit traits of being a disciple of Jesus.

Lord, I confess to falling short of the mark at times. Help me to submit willingly to you.
PRAY
Lord Jesus, help us to embrace the knowledge that all who humbly accept you are welcome in your kingdom.

READ
LUKE 18.15-17
At the center of Luke 18 is a thought-provoking, countercultural lesson. As people crowded around Jesus that day, the disciples were shooing away the children, assuming that Jesus had more important people with whom to spend his time. However, Jesus encourages the children to come to him and he uses the opportunity to teach a lesson that is at the heart of the entire chapter. Jesus tells those gathered around:
“You will never get into God’s kingdom unless you enter it like a child!” (Luke 18.17).

What? Did they hear Jesus right? Jesus’ words were a complete reversal of what they believed. What, then, are some of the childlike qualities that we must possess? Early in life, we are trained to be independent. Each activity we learn is designed to make us less dependent on our parents or caregivers. Yet, Jesus used the example of children to teach us a different lesson. Consider these character traits of a child: humility, dependence, willingness and eagerness to learn, and expectant hopefulness—even in a world filled with grown-up pain and problems.

There is no place in God’s kingdom for those who are self-sufficient, prideful, arrogant or cynical. To be assured of our place, we need to adopt a childlike faith as we humbly depend on God to lovingly take care of us and teach us how to be more like Jesus.

REFLECT
Do you struggle with pride? In what ways can you adopt a childlike heart as you follow Jesus?

RESPOND
Review decisions that you will make this week. Depend on God for guidance in these matters.

Father, sometimes pride gets the best of me and I try to go it alone. Help me to depend on you only and grow in childlike faith and humility.
PRAY

Lord Jesus, my heart overflows with love for you. Help me to praise you in whatever season I find myself.

READ

LUKE 19.1-10, 28-40

How do you approach Jesus? Do you find yourself reticent to enter into his presence? Or is it a joyful, exuberant experience? When my children were young, they would run to me when I arrived home from work each day, shouting, “Dad’s home,” and start jumping on me and hugging me.

Zacchaeus, a grown man, has such a strong desire to see Jesus that he runs ahead of a crowd and climbs a tree to get a glimpse of Jesus. As Jesus is starting down the Mount of Olives on a young donkey, his friends and disciples greet him with shouts of praise. They had heard him teach and had seen the miracles he performed and can’t resist proclaiming, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory to God” (v. 38).

With what level of excitement and determination do we pursue encounters with Jesus? When we get to know Jesus intimately and see him working in our lives, we will not be able to resist praising him. Each personal encounter with Jesus changes us. Just as Zacchaeus was radically changed from being a greedy tax collector, after being in the presence of Jesus, we too will find our hearts radically changed when we intentionally find ways to have regular fellowship with Jesus.

REFLECT

How have you seen God at work in your life in recent weeks? What stories can you share with a family member or friend today?

RESPOND

Take time to praise God for sending Jesus to be our Savior.

Lord God, my ordinary days become extraordinary when I spend time with you. Give me the eyes to see you at work in my life.
A SUBMITTED HEART

PRAY
Lord, help me surrender my heart to you as I approach you in prayer.

READ
LUKE 20

As Jesus taught in the temple one day, the religious authorities and others fired question after question at him in an effort to trap him, discredit his message, and ultimately destroy him. Jesus had no problem with the questions of these haughty men, and in his answers he confounded them and left them speechless.

Jesus has no problem with questions—yours or mine. Yet, the tone of his response is so different when we ask as a follower with a surrendered heart. God loves it when we approach him with a surrendered heart.

The Scriptures say, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind” (Luke 10.27). The operative word is ‘all.’

You may be at a place right now where you’re trying to figure out what to do with your life; what course of action you should take as you face a major decision; or what you should do with what God has placed in your hands. Ask the Father! He can handle your questions. And as you approach God, come with a heart of submission. What are your needs? Bow before God as your way of saying, “Father, I’m submitting to what you desire for my life.”

REFLECT
Consider your prayers of the past week. Have you ever thought that the condition of your heart is far more significant than how you phrase your request?

RESPOND
If you struggle with submission, remind yourself that Jesus submitted willingly to God the Father.

Father, I submit myself to you and your best for my life.
PRAY
God, help me to trust you beyond what I see with my physical eyes.

READ
LUKE 21.1-6

Jesus cautions his disciples and those around against using social conventions to puff themselves up. He stands aside in the temple and watches as the rich “toss” their gifts into the offering box. Also among the givers is a poor widow who “put” the few cents she has in the box as well. Her gift captures the Lord’s attention and becomes a focal point in teaching the disciples an important lesson. Jesus commends her for giving more than the others.

One could argue how she could have given more than the others when all she placed in the box was a few cents. Jesus’ answer suggests that giving begins with the posture of our hearts. The offering that the rich gave was not a sacrifice for them; they gave from their excess. Note that they tossed their gifts in, perhaps in a show of arrogance for onlookers to see how much they gave. The widow, on the other hand, being poor, gave out of her meager funds. In humility she put her coins in, perhaps not daring to stand around too long in the presence of those who had so much to give.

When a person has exhausted most of their resources, it is difficult to release the last of their finances to any cause, no matter how worthy, because their personal need is so great. The widow lost her earthly provider (her husband) and was now a person of extremely limited resources. Yet, her gift displayed a willingness to give to God, and to trust God to meet her needs. Jesus seeks men and women who would take their eyes off temporal things and place their trust in him.

REFLECT
When was the last time you stepped out in faith and experienced the joy of believing God without knowing what the outcome would be? Do you honor God above your own needs?

RESPOND
Ask God to expose areas where you have trouble trusting him. Then ask God to give you an opportunity to display a renewed faith.

*Lord, I acknowledge you as my provider. In matters of finances, help me to open my heart to give generously to your work.*
SUBMITTING TO GOD’S WILL

PRAY
Father, remind me always that stewardship of your mission and message requires service and sacrifice.

READ
LUKE 22.14-22, 39-45
During Jesus’ last night of fellowship with his disciples, we get a glimpse of his journey of loneliness, rejection, and suffering. Realizing that his time to go to the cross was approaching, he prayed earnestly to God asking if there was another way. In those agonizing moments, Jesus communicated with his Father in authentic and honest language, resigning himself to do God’s will: “Father…do what you want, and not what I want” (v. 42). Ultimately, Jesus was confident that his Father’s will was the catalyst for everything that happens in the world and in the lives of every created being. Imagine Jesus, his heart heavy, speaking to God: “Father, this is what I see in front of me, and at a certain level it seems daunting and overwhelming, but I place my trust firmly in you. You know best. You see the beginning from the end. So I rely and defer to you. Your will, Father, not mine.”

This close-up of Jesus praying reminds us that disappointment, rejection, and suffering are an inevitable part of every one of our stories. But God is rich in mercy, and is the dispenser of grace. If we submit our will to God, we will find that as we journey through the varied terrain of life, God’s faithfulness is consistent and reliable. Whatever challenges confront us, may we say like Jesus, “Father…do what you want, and not what I want.”

REFLECT
What secret fears have you kept hidden from God? Are there prayers you’ve been afraid to pray?
There is no value in hiding your secret fears from God.

RESPOND
Bring all your fears to God and ask for peace. Then rest in the assurance that God will do what is best.

Father, sometimes I am terrified and overwhelmed. At those times, teach me to pray and rest in you like Jesus did.
THE VOICES OF THE CROWD

PRAY

Lord, help me to block out the strident voices of the crowd and listen for your voice only.

READ
LUKE 23

Jesus was handed off to Pilate based on false accusations and trumped up charges. And even though Pilate told the chief priests and the crowd, "I don’t find him guilty of anything" (v. 4), Pilate still lacked the courage to more boldly support an innocent man. Pilate passed the buck and deferred to Herod when he had it in his power to advocate for Jesus. Still Jesus endured the accusations of “the chief priests and the teachers of the Law of Moses” (v. 10) as well as Herod and his soldiers who insulted him (v. 11). Then the whole crowd shouted, "Kill Jesus! Give us Barabbas!" (v. 18). Finally, Pilate gave in to the demands of the crowd. He released a murderer and handed Jesus over to be crucified. Jesus willingly allowed himself to be put to death and responded with grace saying, "Father, forgive these people! They don’t know what they are doing" (v. 34-35).

Did you hear the ugly voices throughout the narrative? Accusing, lying, insulting, shouting? Have you ever caved in to peer pressure or the influence of a boss or someone with a strong personality, even though you knew it was contrary to your personal convictions? Have you ever endured being verbally abused because you stood your ground for what was true?

There will always be voices that try to drown out truth and try to influence our behavior, but God desires that we listen closely for God’s voice so we can make appropriate decisions.

REFLECT

When you look at Jesus’ sacrifice and willingness to forgive the people from the crowd who falsely accused him, how are you challenged to respond to those who falsely accuse you? Which voices are influencing your actions and thoughts?

RESPOND

If there are people who have wrongly accused you and hurt you in the past, ask God for grace to forgive them. 

Lord, help me to live above the voices of the crowd. Make my character and convictions resilient to negative influences around me and teach me how to forgive.
RECOGNIZING JESUS

PRAY
God, help me to recognize Christ in every situation I face.

READ
LUKE 24.13-35
The Sunday after Jesus’ death, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem toward the village of Emmaus. They were sorrowful as they rehashed the events of the past three days. Although some women had gone and found the tomb empty and had heard from angels that Jesus was alive, and some of the men corroborated their story about the tomb, neither party had seen Jesus. This news did not ease the pain of these two disciples, and they are sorrowful even when Jesus walks alongside them and engages them in conversation. The pair does not recognize Jesus and is surprised that this stranger seems unaware of the events of the previous week. As they share their past hopes and their present disappointment, Jesus begins to explain the Scriptures to them how it was written “that the Messiah would have to suffer before he was given his glory” (v. 26).

When the two constrain the stranger to stay with them because of the lateness of the hour, he complies and later shares a meal with them. As they eat, Jesus takes bread, blesses it, breaks it, and gives it to them (v. 30). Immediately the two recognize that the stranger is indeed Jesus, but he vanishes from their sight. In hindsight they realize that when Jesus spoke to them as they traveled, his words had warmed their heart. Now, filled with joy, they go back to share the good news of the risen Lord with the others in Jerusalem.

Sometimes, like these two disciples, we are so engulfed in our pain and frustration that we cannot recognize Jesus. We hear good news but we refuse to believe it without proof. Yet, Jesus comes alongside us to warm our hearts and to explain God’s Word, so we, though not seeing, might yet believe. When we invite Jesus into our hearts, he will not be a stranger but a gracious host who will open to us the good treasures of his heart and give us faith to see him as he is.

REFLECT
What things in your life often block you from seeing Christ? Do you need proof to believe that God is always with you?

RESPOND
Take time to read God’s Word, to praise him, and to experience God’s transforming presence.

Father, open my eyes and my heart that I might be a witness of the good news of Jesus.
PRAY
Lord Jesus, stir my heart so I would gladly love and serve others.

READ
LUKE 4.16-21
Two thousand years ago the advent and resurrection of Jesus Christ changed the world forever! For the past 24 days we have journeyed together reading, praying, and living the truths found in the Gospel of Luke – the fascinating, biblical account of the life of Jesus Christ. Our goal is to ignite our nation and world by living out God’s Word through our congregations and organizations, in our small groups, and as individuals. Our fervent prayer is to see our cities and communities transformed for God’s glory!

We believe that God’s Word is not meant just to inform us, but also transform us. We are called to put God’s Word into practice – to become ‘doers of the Word’ (see James 1.22) - to live God’s Word. Luke 4.18,19 declares, “The Lord’s Spirit has come to me, because he has chosen me to tell the good news to the poor. The Lord has sent me to announce freedom for prisoners, to give sight to the blind, to free everyone who suffers, and to say, ‘This is the year the Lord has chosen.’"

REFLECT
Do you sense that God has been calling you to care for those who are poor and those who suffer? How will you respond? Can you identify people in your community who are in need of the good news of Jesus?

RESPOND
Begin to put into practice what you have learned from your journey through the Gospel of Luke, by selecting, planning, and carrying out the Luke 4 Assignment – an individual and group outreach project to serve your community and city. Pray that God will empower you as you live out God’s Word and follow Christ’s example.

Lord, by your Spirit, empower me to carry out all that you have assigned me to do. Let me live your good news each and every day!
AMERICAN BIBLE SOCIETY THANKS THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR VOLUNTEERING THEIR TIME AND TALENTS TO CREATE THIS ADULT TRACK FOR NOW IS THE TIME: LUKE.

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