

<sup>Luke 24:44</sup> Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup> Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, <sup>46</sup> and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, <sup>47</sup> and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup> And see, I am sending upon you what my Father promised; so stay here in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”

<sup>50</sup> Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and, lifting up his hands, he blessed them. <sup>51</sup> While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven. <sup>52</sup> And they worshiped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy; <sup>53</sup> and they were continually in the temple blessing God.

May 8, 2016

## Book Hangover

Luke 24:44-53

Have you ever heard of “Book Hangover”? I hadn’t until this week, but, evidently, it is a thing. I’ve had it lots of times in my life and never knew what it was. According to the internet, which is always right, book hangover is *“the struggle a person goes through trying to reconnect with reality after finishing an amazing book.”*<sup>1</sup> Another way to say it is, “You’re done with the book, but the book isn’t done with you,” and if any book should give us book hangover, it is Luke’s gospel.

We’ve spent a lot of time in Luke this past year, so let me just give you a quick review.

We have the birth of Jesus, complete with angels and shepherds and mangers.

We have miracles and parables,

mountaintop highs and valley bottom lows.

We have last suppers and lost sheep,

prodigal sons and beady-eyed little tax collectors named Zacchaeus.

We have Jesus sweating blood in Gethsemane and Peter hearing the cock crow as he denies his Lord a third time.

We have the women weeping as Jesus walks to Golgotha, and the crowds mocking him as he dies on the cross.

The women watch as his body is placed in the tomb, and then return on Sunday to find the tomb empty except for two angels asking why they are looking for the living among the dead.

Then there’s the walk to Emmaus with the two disciples who suddenly realize the risen Jesus has been there all along, then Jesus appearing among the disciples inviting to touch him. He even eats some fish just to prove they’re not seeing a ghost.

And then, in a farewell as breath-taking as they come, he disappears and is carried up into heaven.

The final scene is wondrous: the disciples in the temple, worshiping, celebrating, filled with joy because the Lord was dead and is alive, at the right hand of God, forever.

Talk about your happy endings!

Book hangover. When the story sticks with you and won’t let go. It touches you so that you don’t even want to go back to real life – at least not the way real life was before “the book.” I also came across some suggestions about how to cope with book hangover. Of course, the suggestions are directed toward reading novels and secular books. But I think we can adapt them to a more spiritual use. It may be a good way to let the Gospel of Luke continue to have an effect on you, even though you’ve finished reading it.

The first idea I found is to seek out what they call “fanfiction.” In the world of great novels, “fanfiction” is stuff that other fans of the book write about the book, or even fiction they write in the style of the book, or with the book’s characters. Since this isn’t fiction, it doesn’t quite apply, but the principle does. There are tons of books out there that do something similar. They’re called commentaries. They open your eyes to new things you can understand about the book; information that makes some parts which seem a little confusing a lot clearer. Our church library upstairs has some great commentaries on Luke and all the other books of the Bible. They’re sitting up there, kind of lonely, in really good condition because they’re hardly ever touched, just starving for attention and a little physical contact.

Another thing they say you can do about book hangover is **Find a community**. It says you can find other people who want to share conversations and interpretations of what you just read. It says, *“Find kindred spirits with a quick search of the internet.”* Guess what? You don’t even have to do the internet thing. You are surrounded by a community already! It’s called a church, and there are smaller groups in this community that get together and talk about this stuff all the time! Women’s Bible circles, Men’s Prayer Breakfast, Wednesday Bible study, and, did I mention Sunday school? We actually have groups that are already meeting every Sunday morning at 9:45, and they have a great time talking about all of the books of the Bible. They would love to have you join them!

**The third thing you can do is Take a piece of the book with you.** Just because you’re no longer carrying the book around doesn’t mean that you can’t feel physically close to the world and its characters.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.buzzfeed.com/keelyflaherty/signs-youre-suffering-from-a-book-hangover?utm\\_term=.cvVK79B6Z#.ctWNvPOG0](https://www.buzzfeed.com/keelyflaherty/signs-youre-suffering-from-a-book-hangover?utm_term=.cvVK79B6Z#.ctWNvPOG0)

What if you took one of your favorite quotes from Luke's gospel and turned it into a wall hanging or a desk paper weight?

Things like, "Judge not and you will not be judged; forgive and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you."

"Do not be anxious about your life."

Or, "Love your enemies and do good to those who hurt you."

Find your favorite quote from Luke and then find a way to carry it around with you all the time so it continues to inspire you.

**The fourth thing is to find things in real life that excite you again.** Here's one you can really sink your teeth into with Luke's gospel, because of all the gospels, Luke's has the most to say about putting your faith into action; how to live the way Jesus lived and love the way he loved. Luke's gospel has more to say about seeking justice for the poor and reaching out to the marginalized. Mary herself sings when she learns she's pregnant about proclaiming release to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, lifting up the lowly. You don't have to leave Luke behind when you re-engage with the world, because Luke's gospel can actually help you change the way you live in the world. Here's an amazing thought – what if you were to make the world a little more like Luke's gospel? Feeding thousands, healing the sick. Heck, some of us could even just say hello to the people in the pew next to us and we'd be a little more like Luke's gospel!

Jesus' last words to his disciples before he disappears into heaven are, "Repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in my name to all nations." Here's a way to take Luke's gospel into your real life – share the message Jesus told us to share: repentance and forgiveness of sins. Of course, that would obviously begin with us. We can't go telling others to do it if we're not doing it ourselves.

John Calvin said that repentance is "the true turning of our life to God...that ... consists in the death of our old self and the experience of new life in the Spirit."<sup>2</sup> He said that it has to be authentic. No superficial "Oops, sorry" will do. It is deep, and it is sincere.

Second, it has to be ongoing. It isn't something that happens just once. True repentance takes a lifetime...is a lifestyle.

Third, repentance is a movement from death to life. Calvin calls this movement *mortification* and *vivification*. *Mortification* is continually working at putting that out of our lives. The more we remove the wrong, the more we can allow Christ's Spirit to take over. Repentance is like weeding a garden where the good vegetables and fruit can't grow because the weeds choke them out. Remove the weeds and the delicious vegetables and the beautiful flowers have space to grow and bloom and bear fruit.

Take time to discover the weeds in your life that are choking out Christ's love and compassion, and remove those weeds. One of those weeds is often the refusal to accept Christ's loving forgiveness of your own sins. Try living as a person free of guilt, free of the burden of your past. That's what Jesus has done for you. Try accepting this free and amazing gift.

Repentance and forgiveness of sins. Don't let go of Luke, and don't let Luke let go of you. Let it change your life, weed your garden and plant new seeds of love and compassion for others, for right living, and begin to live the life of someone who has been freed by forgiveness of your sins.

Don't *let go* of Luke, *live into* Luke and you could change the world instead of letting the world change you.

So, here's the last thing I found as a way to deal with book hangover. It says to try **a little hair of the dog**. Now, I've heard that phrase used in other situations, but what they mean is, dive back into another book. You don't have to stay there in your Luke hangover. Move on...to John! Thanks be to God, there are 66 books in the Bible. Don't let go of Luke, but add to this great life-changing experience with another. Move on...to John...or Genesis...or Psalms...or Ephesians...or, if you're in the mood for a juicy love story, Song of Solomon! The Bible is filled with great books that will not only leave you with incredibly wonderful book hangovers, they will actually give you the power to turn the world into something like the book!

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<sup>2</sup> Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 3.3.5.