

# Love Letters

Reading Through the Gospels



Reading Guide  
Week #10

Luke 11-16



NEW HORIZON  
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

## Love Letters Reading Guide for Week #10

Luke 11-16

**A Week in Review.** The teachings of Jesus are both glorious and challenging. It's very difficult to argue with the moral implications of the Gospel, and we would have a hard time faulting Jesus' life. Jesus describes a glorious Kingdom, and the wisdom of its design is stunning. But His teachings present incredible challenges. In fact, they cause many to stumble and turn away. Yet others choose to follow because they have come to believe He is indeed *the Christ of God* (Luke 9:20.) What conclusions are you drawing?

**This Week's Reading.** We are well into Jesus' journey to the cross. Luke has already told us where we are headed. Luke will now knit together a host of stories, parables, and incidents as Jesus teaches and preaches along the way. Perhaps these stories are familiar to you. Indeed, they comprise some of Jesus' most meaningful and memorable teachings. May Christ's words speak to our hearts as we read...

### ○ MONDAY—LUKE 11

**Consider.** Today, Luke contrasts those who recognize Jesus as the Messiah with those who don't. Notice the results: Those who believe and obey find blessings in their nearness to God, while those who reject and disobey will suffer the consequences of their distance from God. Where are you along a line between "near" and "far" from God? What keeps you from being nearer?

#### **Read.**

- Throughout both his Gospel and the Book of Acts, Luke emphasizes the power and work of the Holy Spirit. Here Jesus reveals the Father's eagerness to extend the work of the Holy Spirit to His children: "*How much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?*" (v.13). Are you as eager for the presence of God's Spirit in your life as your Father is? Have you asked the Father for the gift of His Spirit?
- Jesus reveals the key to effective faith: "*Blessed...are those who hear the Word of God and obey it.*" (v.28). Believing on Christ is critical, but obeying Christ's words is

essential. What are examples of obedience to Christ in your life?

**Reflect.** A devotional thought for today: If the "*finger of God*" is powerful enough to drive out demons (v.20), what is possible in your life as you permit God to fully embrace you? Are any of your needs greater than your God?

### ○ TUESDAY—LUKE 12

**Consider.** Today we find some of Jesus' most personal teachings. God offers Christ's followers limitless love, provision, peace of mind, security, and care. We also learn the responsibilities that accompany faith: Acknowledging Jesus before others, guarding against greed, trusting God for our needs, providing for others, and watching for His return. Our faith is anything but passive. God initiates and we respond. Is this a description of your walk with Jesus?

#### **Read.**

- Jesus' statement in v.2 is startling: "*There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known*" (v.2). Do the thoughts of that day make you uneasy? What can you do about it today?
- Jesus' words in v.8 are profound: "*Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before the angels of God.*" Jesus is quick to acknowledge His love for you. In what ways do you do the same?
- Jesus' sentiments in v.15 are: "*A person's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions.*" When are you tempted to forget this truth?

**Reflect.** The disciples are multiplying in Luke! Jesus sends out the Twelve, then seventy-two; now a crowd follows Him (v.1). The same happens in Luke's Book of Acts: The Twelve become one-hundred twenty (Acts 1:15); about three-thousand trusted Christ on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41); then "*the Lord added to their number daily...*" (Acts 2:47), and "*the number of (disciples) grew to about five-thousand*" (Acts 4:4). In what ways do you feel a part of this "movement?"

### ○ WEDNESDAY—LUKE 13

**Consider.** Today Jesus compares the Kingdom of God to "yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough" (v.21). Consider the wisdom of God, depositing believers in cultures around the world, each as "yeast" working into the community. In what ways are you and your church successfully "mixing" in your community?

**Read.**

- Jesus' followers discuss two current events involving unfortunate and unjust deaths (v.1). They are under the impression that misfortune comes as a result of a person's sin. Jesus replies "Unless you repent, you too will all perish" (v.3). Jesus says all are sinful and deserve death. Have you ever considered your sin in those terms? If that is true, how does this help us appreciate God's incredible gift of grace?
- Jesus is blunt: "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many will try to enter and will not be able to" (v.24). Are there times when you've made excuses for yourself or others when the narrow door doesn't suit?

**Reflect.** When Jesus healed a woman who had been crippled for eighteen years (v.13), the synagogue leader became angry because Jesus "worked" on the Sabbath. In his concern for externals, he completely missed the Kingdom. When might you do the same?

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○ **THURSDAY—LUKE 14**

**Consider.** The goodness and mercy of God is free because God paid an incredible price in Christ. Today, notice the free-ness of God's gift: A crippled man is freely healed (v.4); God prepares a "banquet" and invites free of charge (v.16-17). Yet, "any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be My disciple" (v.33). What might it "cost" you to fully follow Christ and receive all God has for your life?

**Read.**

- Today, Jesus is a guest for dinner, and we learn around His table. Plato and other ancient writers also postured their writings around table conversations. Luke's culture, therefore, influenced his writing style. In

what ways has our culture shaped our church, our worship, and the way we understand and present the Gospel?

- In v.18, Jesus says many whom God invites make excuses rather than participate. When might God have invited you to be a part of His work, only to have you decline?

**Reflect.** Many scholars see humor in some of Jesus' remarks. For instance, "If your son asks for a fish, will you give him a snake?" (11:11). Or, because every crowd has balding men, "The very hairs of your head are all numbered!" (12:7). And today, "If one of you has a son or an ox that fall into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out" (v.5). How does it affect your view of Jesus to picture Him as a clever, witty, charming Personality?

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○ **FRIDAY—LUKE 15**

**Consider.** Some scholars view Luke 15, "The Chapter of Lost-ness," the greatest chapter in the New Testament. Here we comprehend God's heart. Instead of being stern, wrathful, we discover One Who grieves for those who lose their way, go astray, and reject Him. In what ways do you find yourself in these parables?

**Read.**

- Each Parable includes a head-count: ninety-nine sheep (v.4), ten coins (v.8), and two sons (v.11). Perhaps numbers *do* matter when talking about eternal souls. And, those who suffered loss kept track and knew when each disappeared. We learn that God is intimately acquainted and ultimately concerned with *all* people, lost and found. That includes you. How does it feel to be God's prized possession?
- It would seem that a woman who loses one of ten coins still has nine left (v.8). Why the fuss? Some scholars suggest that the coin was part of her dowry—which would greatly affect her eligibility for marriage and her future. How does it strike you that God's eternal joy is affected by finding you?

**Reflect.** Celebrations occur when the lost are found: "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep!" (v.7); "Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin!" (v.9); "Let's have a feast and

celebrate!" (v.23). How does it feel to be at the center of the celebration in Heaven as you turn to God?: "In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (v.10).

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○ **SATURDAY—LUKE 16**

**Consider.** Riches are a big deal for Jesus—not *having* things, but the *distraction* things can become to both those who have plenty and those who wish they had more. Jesus' gave stern warning: "You cannot serve both God and Money" (v.13). When has your lifestyle or ambitions taken place over your pursuit of God?

**Read.**

- Jesus can be outrageous when making His point: "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings" (v.9). The lesson is direct: At best, wealth and gaining others' approval earn dividends in this lifetime, but cannot provide for the next. Are you ever tempted to thinking your successes will secure your eternity with God?
- Notice who Jesus is speaking to as this chapter begins: "Jesus told His disciples..." (v.1). Edwards (p.71) suggests that Luke was challenging believers in his day to be watchful while waiting for Jesus' return. How does it strike you to live each day "watching" for Christ's return?

**Reflect.** Being blind to the things of God is a sorrowful state. Trading God's riches for the things of this life leads to a calloused and insensitive heart towards God, one which "will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead" (v.31). No wonder "what is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight" (v.15). The treasures of this world have spelled ruin for many. It's well worth an honest inventory: are we in any way compromising our walk with Jesus with greater interest in other things?

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Spring, 2011



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April 4-9  
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