

The Presence Of Greatness



Bible Studies on Luke 7-9

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Introduction

One of the brilliant features of the gospels is the way that they teach us about Jesus. The gospel writers could have simply given us a list of attributes and characteristics about Jesus that we could just memorise. Instead they have given us a narrative account of Jesus life and ministry as he interacts with different people in different circumstances.

As the readers of Luke's gospel, we have already been given critical insights into who Jesus is, such as the angel's pronouncement in Luke 2:11 and God's declaration in Luke 3:22. Luke 7-9 concludes Jesus ministry in Galilee. Here we see some more of people's reactions to Jesus. It is these interactions with others that give us a better understanding of our Lord and Saviour and what it means to be his disciple.

Study 1: The struggle to believe

Luke 7:18-35

Getting Started

1. What sort of circumstances might make it difficult for a Christian to keep believing? Why?

Investigate Luke 7:18-35

2. What are "all these things" that the disciples of John the Baptist refer to? (read Luke 7:1-17)

3. How does Jesus answer the disciples' question? (v. 22)

4. What do we learn about John the Baptist and Jesus from verses 24-27? (see also Malachi 3:1-2)

5. How do verses 29-30 help us understand the success of John the Baptist's ministry?

6. Why are the pharisees and experts in the law regarded as children? (vv. 31-24)

Thinking it through

7. Why do you think John the Baptist questioned Jesus' identity? (read also Luke 3:15-20)

8. Jesus answers John's question by quoting from Isaiah 61:1, but stops short of quoting the whole verse. Read Isaiah 61:1. Why do you think that Jesus stops short of quoting the whole verse to John?

9. Referring to verse 28, why might we who are least in the Kingdom of God, be counted greater than John the Baptist?

10. Read Deuteronomy 21:18-23. What is the significance of Jesus being called a "glutton and a drunkard"?

Prayer Points

Study 2: Forgiven much

Luke 7:36-50

Getting Started

1. What sort of difference should forgiveness make in the life of a someone?

Investigate Luke 7:36-50

2. How would you describe the woman's attention to Jesus in verses 37-38?

3. Why does Simon conclude that Jesus couldn't be a prophet? (v. 39)

4. How does Jesus describe the woman's sins compared to the pharisee's sins in vv. 41-42?

5. What does Jesus say is evidence that someone had been forgiven? (v. 47)

6. What saved the woman? (v. 50)

Thinking it through

7. Why do you think Simon the pharisee invited Jesus to dinner? (refer to Luke 7:16-17 and 7:39)

8. How does Jesus' parable in verses 41-42 explain the different sorts of responses to Jesus?

9. How have you been guilty of thinking a sinner was beyond forgiveness?

10. What do we learn about Jesus identity from this incident?

Prayer Points

Study 3: Listen Up

Luke 8:1-21

Getting Started

1. How would you answer this question raised by the Christian apologist Ravi Zacharius, "How do you reach a generation that listens with its eyes and thinks with its feelings?"

Investigate Luke 8:1-21

2. What does verse 1 tell us about Jesus' ministry priority?

3. Who is with Jesus in verses 1-3? Why do you think Luke lists these people?

4. What warning does Jesus give his disciples in verses 16-18?

5. Complete the following table from the information found in Jesus' parable and explanation:

The ground	The result	Life circumstance	The result
The path			
	Withered		
		Life's worries	
			Produce crop

6. What does it mean to be part of Jesus' family? (vv. 19-21)

Thinking it through

7. What important aspect of discipleship do these women and many others provide for us? (v. 3)

8. Why do you think Jesus needs to tell this parable of the sower to the gathering crowds?

9. What 'secret' knowledge has been given to the disciples? Why has it not been given to others? (vv. 9-10, see also v. 15)

10. How do Jesus' words regarding family, shape our expectations of belonging to our church family?

Prayer Points

Study 4: Lord of all

Luke 8:22-39

Getting Started

1. How do people exert their authority and power in our world?

Investigate Luke 8:22-25

2. Who initiates the trip across the lake into gentile territory? (v. 22)

3. Why are the disciples fearful? (vv. 23-24)

4. What challenge does Jesus give his disciples? (v. 25)

5. Why are the disciples still fearful? (v. 25)

Thinking it through

6. Read Psalm 65:5-8. How does this psalm answer the disciples' question in v. 25?

7. Read Jonah 1. What are the similarities between the incident on the lake and Jonah 1? Why might these similarities be significant?

Investigate Luke 8:26-39

8. How does the demon possessed man identify Jesus? (v. 28)

9. How would you describe the relationship between the demons and Jesus? (vv. 29-32)

10. Why were the people from the town and country afraid?

11. How does verse 39 answer the disciples' question in verse 25?

Thinking it through

12. How does this passage shape our understanding of demonic forces?

13. How is the man's response to Jesus a model for what it means to be a Christian?

Prayer Points

Study 5: Desperation & Faith

Luke 8:40-56

Getting Started

1. Can you recall a time in your life when you prayed to God out of desperation? What was the situation and why did you pray to God?

Investigate Luke 8:40-56

2. How would you describe Jairus in verses 41-42?

3. Read Leviticus 15:25-27. How does this verse help us appreciate the circumstances of the woman in v. 43?

4. How does Jesus know that he'd been touched by someone from the pressing crowd surrounding him? (vv. 45-46)

5. How does Jesus explain the woman's healing? (v. 48)

6. What challenge does Jesus give Jairus upon hearing of his 12 year old daughter's death? (v. 50)

7. How do the mourners respond to Jesus? (vv. 52-53)

Thinking it through

8. The number 12, which is repeated in this passage, can often symbolise the nation of Israel. What might these incidents tell us about the state of God's people Israel?

9. Why do you think Peter, James and John were allowed to witness this miracle? What might he have been preparing them for?

10. What do these two miracles teach us about the sort of desperate situations that we need Jesus as our saviour?

Prayer Points

Study 6: The Mission

Luke 9:1-9

Getting Started

1. What is your understanding of the Christian mission?

Why do we have a mission?

Who is involved in the mission?

Who supports the mission?

What is the focus of the mission?

Who is the focus of the mission?

Investigate Luke 9:1-9

2. Who does Jesus send out on this mission? (see also Luke 6:12-13)

3. What is the focus of this mission? (v. 2)

4. What sort of response does Jesus prepare his disciples for in verse 5?

5. Why was King Herod perplexed? (v. 7)

Thinking it through

6. If people witnessed God at work in Jesus, who should the people see at work in the disciples? (v. 1)

8. How might Jesus be seen by others in the life that we live?

9. Jesus and his disciples expected rejection from others. How does this help your understanding of following Jesus?

10. From this passage what do we learn about the gospel? (see vv. 2 & 6) How can this be considered good news?

Prayer Points

Study 7: Jesus is enough

Luke 9:10-17

Getting Started

1. How does Jesus bring contentment to our life?

Investigate Luke 9:10-17

2. How might Herod's question in verse 9 shape our approach to this passage?

3. How would you describe Jesus' ministry to the crowds who followed him?

4. How would you describe the apostles' attitude towards Jesus in verse 12?

5. How does Luke highlight the miraculous provision of food for the crowd?

Thinking it through

6. As you read verse 12, how might it recall Israel's experience in the wilderness? (see Exodus 16:1-7)

7. Read Mary's song in Luke 1:50-55. How does Jesus' ministry, described in Luke 9, fulfil these words?

8. How does this miracle answer Herod's question in verse 9?

9. How does our world tempt us to think that Jesus is not enough for life? How can we resist this temptation?

Prayer Points

Study 8: What are people saying?

Luke 9:18-27

Getting Started

1. Think of someone who has been in the media recently. How have they been described in the media?

2. How might you be described by the media?

Investigate Luke 9:18-27

3. How does Jesus prepare for the disciples' confession? (v. 18) What does this tell us about Jesus relationship with his heavenly Father?

4. How would you summarise the peoples' identification of Jesus? (v. 19)

5. How does Jesus say he will demonstrate his messiahship? (v. 22)

6. What does it mean to follow Jesus as the messiah? (vv. 23-26)

Thinking it through

7. How does 2 Samuel 7:11b-16 help your understanding of what it means to be God's messiah?

8. What do you think Peter had seen and heard that caused him to conclude that Jesus is the messiah?

9. With reference to verse 27, when did the disciples see the kingdom of God?

10. What sort of sacrifices in your life for the sake of Christ, will stand out to our world today?

Prayer Points

Study 9: Glory Displayed

Luke 9:28-36

Getting Started

1. What do you think is the difference between being famous and being a celebrity?

Investigate Luke 9:28-36

2. Who is involved in this incident and what did they go up the mountain to do? (v. 28)

3. How would you describe the relationship between Jesus and these three disciples? (see also Luke 8:51-52)

4. What happened while Jesus was praying? (vv. 29-30)

5. How did the disciples first respond to this incident? (vv. 32-33)

6. What did God want the disciples to do? Why? (v. 34-35, see also vv. 21-22)

7. How would you describe the effect of this event on the disciples? (v. 36)

Thinking it through

8. What do you think is the significance of Moses' and Elijah's presence on the mountain?

9. Read Exodus 34:29-35. What sort of similarities do you see in this event and the transfiguration on the mountain?

10. Read the following verses. How can we listen to Jesus?
What helps you to listen to Jesus?

John 2:22

John 14:25-26

Luke 24:25-26

Prayer Points

Study 10: True Greatness

Luke 9:37-50

Getting Started

1. What sort of characteristics and attributes does our society expect of those who would be leaders?

Investigate Luke 9:37-50

2. Who do you think Jesus is speaking about in v. 41?

3. How does Jesus demonstrate his greatness and glory at the base of the mountain?

4. Why did the disciples not understand what Jesus was speaking about in verse 44? (v. 45) When did they understand? (Luke 24:45-47)

5. Why does an argument break out amongst the disciples?

6. How does Jesus define greatness? (v. 48)

7. In verse 49, how does John demonstrate that he has not understood Jesus' teaching regarding greatness?

Thinking it through

8. How should we guard against being part of the "unbelieving and perverse generation"?

9. How might verse 46 explain the disciples' inability to drive out the demon? (see also Mark 9:28-29)

10. Why would a little child be such a good example of true greatness for the disciples?

11. In Philippians 1:15-18, how does the apostle Paul demonstrate Jesus' teaching in verse 50?

12. How might we guard against pride in our own life and in the life of our church?

Prayer Points