



Term 1 - 2017



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About Growth Groups

We are about _____ or _____ and doing that alongside one another. Let's describe these as '_____ and '_____.

Coaching

- 1. Learn to Read.** The bible is a book and learning how to read it is so important to Christian **maturity**. The Growth Group study material is a tool only and must not overshadow the primary goal of learning to read and listen to God's word.
- 2. Learn to Pray.** The primary way of learning how to pray is by listening to others and practising. Sing praises to God in your prayers and learn how to **magnify** God with your prayers together.

Caring

- 1. Learn to Care.** Growth Groups provide a close community of people who can be praying, sharing and caring for one another. One reason we encourage groups to be formed from the same congregation is for easier follow-up and strengthening the sense of church **membership**.
- 2. Seek to Grow.** Your congregation is the **mission** field for your Growth Group. Remember, there's no such thing as a full Growth Group - only groups that are ready to multiply! A large group of 15, with two leaders added, can become two new groups of 8 or 9.
- 3. Work Together.** What **ministry** or initiative could your group do together this year? Sunday morning-tea or supper? Letterbox leafleting for the church? A street party in your area? Gardening at the church? A BBQ at a church event? A dialogue dinner with friends?

Group Contract

A clear understanding and agreement on the expectations of your group will help keep your group sailing smoothly throughout the year. Use the questions below to agree on the commitments of each group member. Write down your initial thoughts on each question, then listen to what others have written. Finally, write down what your group is happy to commit to together.

With regards to...

Attendance ... I expect...
 ... we agree...

Timeliness ... I expect...
 ... we agree...

Preparation ... I expect...
 ... we agree...

Participation ... I expect...
 ... we agree...

Other ... I expect...
 ... we agree...

People in my Growth Group

Name	Phone
Email	Birthday
Who's at your house?	Your week is mostly filled with...
If you had tomorrow off, what would you do?	

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Study 1 Luke 2:41-52

Context

We come to the last account of Jesus' childhood years and the end of Chapter 2 of Luke. We've listened to Gabriel announce to Mary that Israel's king and saviour is coming (1:26ff). We read of the not yet born John bouncing in Elizabeth's womb because he was in the presence of the not yet born Jesus (1:39ff)! We've listened to Mary respond with songs of praise for all that God has done, all that he promises to do and all that he is fulfilling in her time (1:46ff). We pictured a night sky lit up by angels singing glory to God (2:8ff). The shepherds who witnessed this then raced to Bethlehem to see the baby born and spread the word of this child. Mary and Joseph heard what the shepherds said about their baby, and Mary treasured all of these things in her heart and pondered them (2:19). When Mary and Joseph presented Jesus to the Lord, they watched as a devout Jew named Simeon took Jesus and praised God for sending his salvation and light into the world. Jesus' parents marveled at what was said about him (2:33). Simeon then prophesied to Mary concerning her and her son (2:34-35). Lastly, Anna the prophet spoke in the presence of Mary and Joseph about this special child who will bring redemption to Jerusalem (2:36-38). We arrive now at the final installment of Mary and Joseph with Jesus as a child.

What do you think?

Think of a time when you lost something of great value. How did you feel? How did you respond?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 2:41-52

⁴¹ Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Festival of the Passover. ⁴² When he was twelve years old, they went up to the festival, according to the custom. ⁴³ After the festival was over, while his parents were returning home, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but they were unaware of it. ⁴⁴ Thinking he was in their company, they traveled on for a day. Then they began looking for him among their relatives and friends. ⁴⁵ When they did not find him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for him. ⁴⁶ After three days they found him in the temple courts, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. ⁴⁷ Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. ⁴⁸ When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you."

⁴⁹ "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" ⁵⁰ But they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁵¹ Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them. But his mother treasured all these things in her heart. ⁵² And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

- 1. Re-read Verses 41-45. How do Mary and Joseph feel and respond in the three days it takes to locate Jesus in the temple courts?**

2. Look at Verses 46-48. Discuss the picture Luke creates of Jesus in the temple court.

3. Why does Jesus respond to Mary and Joseph as he does in Verses 49-50?

4. Look at Verses 51-52. What does Jesus' decision to be obedient to his parents and go home with them allow him to do?

What is the purpose of this passage?

The son of Joseph and Mary was destined to lead Israel into the true kingdom of God. He called the Temple of God his Father's house. He displayed an amazing understanding of the word of God. He grew into an impressive man of God in every way. However, Mary and Joseph needed to be ready to let their son be exactly who he is. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" We can be impressed by Jesus; we can boast that he is for us; but we cannot restrain him or presume to tame him.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: The difference between knowing about Jesus and knowing Jesus.** It is one thing to be an expert in the gospels and the rest of the bible but quite another level to know God and know Jesus. Meditating on God's word rather than simply reading it and moving on is one way of growing in this way. It's becoming engaged beyond knowing the content of the bible and growing in awe and wonder at the person who stands behind it all.
- **Topic B: Growing in Christian maturity.** Similar to the first application point but pushing the idea of not settling with what you know. Mary and Joseph had become accustomed to their relationship with Jesus and seemed almost to assume it would stay that way. Christians will grow in their relationship with God when they bring God into every conscious aspect of their life. We will continue to learn to relate to him in the way that he deserves and not simply in the way that we would like.
- **Topic C: Being clear about what is important in life.** Jesus knew his destiny was in bringing the light of God and salvation to the world, and yet he showed great patience and humility to do this. It is not enough for us to know what we need to do but also how we do it! While Jesus was in the right to abandon his earthly parents, he chose to submit to them for a while longer. This is not an invitation to simply cruise through life waiting for things to happen for us, but to see the balance between knowing and discovering our work and then pursuing it with grace and wisdom.

Prayer for the week

Study 2 Luke 3: 1-38

Context

As the third chapter opens, we notice time has passed. The birth narratives and early years of Jesus are left behind, and the story of Jesus and John as adults begins. If Chapter 2:41-52 was a farewell story to Mary, then Chapter 3:1-23 is a new beginning to Luke's gospel centred around the life, teaching and ministry of Jesus. The twelve year old boy of Chapter 2:42 has become a man of about thirty (3:23) and the eighteen years between has passed by in silence.

Luke began his book with the promise to give accurate details of the events that have taken place and been fulfilled so that we may have certainty of the truth. Chapter 3 begins with some specific detail of the political landscape and historical data.

What do you think?

Robert Frost's poem 'Mending Wall' explores how a fence divides two men's properties and the two approaches they have to life. What 'barriers' need to be removed in our lives so that we have a Christ-like attitude and approach to life?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 3: 1-38

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—² during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. ³ He went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁴ As it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet:

“A voice of one calling in the wilderness,
‘Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.
⁵ Every valley shall be filled in,
every mountain and hill made low.
The crooked roads shall become straight,
the rough ways smooth.
⁶ And all people will see God’s salvation.’ ” ◦

⁷ John said to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? ⁸ Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. ⁹ The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”

¹⁰ “What should we do then?” the crowd asked.

¹¹ John answered, “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same.”

¹² Even tax collectors came to be baptized. “Teacher,” they asked, “what should we do?”

¹³ “Don’t collect any more than you are required to,” he told them.

¹⁴ Then some soldiers asked him, “And what should we do?”

He replied, “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay.”

¹⁵ The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Messiah. ¹⁶ John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷ His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." ¹⁸ And with many other words John exhorted the people and proclaimed the good news to them.

¹⁹ But when John rebuked Herod the tetrarch because of his marriage to Herodias, his brother's wife, and all the other evil things he had done, ²⁰ Herod added this to them all: He locked John up in prison.

²¹ When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

²³ Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli, ²⁴ the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, the son of Melki, the son of Jannai, the son of Joseph, ²⁵ the son of Mattathias, the son of Amos, the son of Nahum, the son of Esli, the son of Naggai, ²⁶ the son of Maath, the son of Mattathias, the son of Semein, the son of Josek, the son of Joda, ²⁷ the son of Joanan, the son of Rhesa, the son of Zerubbabel, the son of Shealtiel, the son of Neri, ²⁸ the son of Melki, the son of Addi, the son of Cosam, the son of Elmadam, the son of Er, ²⁹ the son of Joshua, the son of Eliezer, the son of Jorim, the son of Matthat, the son of Levi, ³⁰ the son of Simeon, the son of Judah, the son of Joseph,

3. Discuss the picture John creates of Jesus in Verses 15-18 and the need for repentance.

4. Look at Verses 21-38. Adam and Jesus are God's sons. One sinned and one was free from sin. How is Jesus described in this section?

What is the purpose of this passage?

On the playing field of human history, none has been more pleasing and loved by God than Jesus Christ, his Son. Adam's descendants all need a saviour. Abraham's descendants, children of the promise, also need to repent and turn back to God. John is unworthy to even untie the sandals of Jesus. However, when the promised one is ready to begin his ministry, he will not only prove himself to be without sin, he is declared from heaven above to be approved by the Father and the Spirit of God. The second Adam and the true King has come. Prepare the way. Repent and be ready. He comes to baptise with the Spirit and fire. This is the announcement of the beginning of Jesus' ministry.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Preaching repentance.** John's ministry was to call people to repent and show themselves repentant. The baptism ritual he performed among the people meant nothing unless their lives were turned around. He said that their safety is not in their upbringing or religion but in their hearts being changed. What would you say to someone who says 'do you mean I can just live as I please but then say sorry to Jesus and he'll forgive me?' How can we talk about Jesus as both saviour and judge?
- **Topic B: Being repentant.** Review the ways John preached to the crowds in Verses 10-14 and discuss some modern equivalents to these applications. Which hits home to you?
 - "Share" Verse 11
 - "Fair" Verse 13
 - "Care" Verse 14
 - "Beware [of envy, greed or covetousness]" Verse 14
- **Topic C: Placing Jesus both in history and above humanity.** We see in this passage that Jesus is both a son of Adam and the Son of God. John himself was unworthy to treat him as an equal. Consider how we describe and talk about Jesus and even how you talk to him. Are there helpful and unhelpful ways that we talk of Jesus in conversation and in prayer?

Prayer for the week

Study 3 Luke 4: 1-13

Context

It is the fourth chapter of Luke's gospel account and for three chapters Jesus' coming has been thoroughly described. Two miracle births provided two vantage points to see how unique this son of Mary would be. About 30 years has passed since the angel Gabriel first appeared to Zechariah and Mary to explain who was coming: the King who will reign forever, who will bring light into the world, who will bring salvation to the world and who has been approved by God and declared to be His Son. Now, Jesus begins his ministry and we are ready to hear what he will do first.

Chapter 3 concluded with the earthly genealogy of Jesus and Luke leaves the name Adam fresh in our minds as we enter the next story. Where Adam is remembered for his failing the human race when tested by Satan, we join Jesus now in the wilderness about to be tested by the same deceptive being.

What do you think?

Think of a time when you have been tempted to do the wrong thing/eat something you shouldn't. How did you feel? What happened?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 4: 1-13

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry.

³ The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.”

⁴ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’”

⁵ The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. ⁷ If you worship me, it will all be yours.”

⁸ Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’”

⁹ The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. ¹⁰ For it is written:

“ ‘He will command his angels concerning you
to guard you carefully;

¹¹ they will lift you up in their hands,

so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’”

¹² Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

¹³ When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

What is the purpose of this passage?

Where mankind has always failed, Jesus has been proven worthy. Jesus' tests have highlighted three areas that we must devote ourselves wholly. Listen to the word of God like it is your last meal. Love the Lord our God like there is no other. Praise the one who has passed every test and has passed the test for us!

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.** How do you think this plays out in reality? What does that say to us about the priority we need to give to the bible? Explore how you can apply this in your life, acknowledging that reading the bible is not enough (see James 1:22) and considering that Israel needed to learn this in Deuteronomy 8:3
- **Topic B: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.** Given that the word for 'worship' can be interchanged with the word 'fear' (compare Luke 4:8 with Deuteronomy 6:13), how are we to live out this command? Discuss this considering our weekly worship services as well as how we ought to worship with our whole lives.
- **Topic C: Resist the devil and he shall flee away.** Martin Luther is recorded to have said, "You cannot keep birds from flying over your head but you can keep them from building a nest in your hair." Discuss that quote and share what has been useful to you in practically resisting temptation.

Prayer for the week

Study 4 Luke 4: 14-30

Context

Jesus grew up in Galilee with his earthly parents, Mary and Joseph. He impressed the Jewish teachers at a very young age but waited until about 30 before his public ministry would begin. Jesus was blessed by God the Father and the Holy Spirit on the day he was baptised by John. He was full of the Holy Spirit and led by the Spirit into the wilderness where he was tested and approved like no other person ever before him. The devil, failing to persuade Jesus to bow to him, fled to wait for an opportune moment to return.

What do you think?

Discuss how we feel about leaders in our world. How does their physical appearance, their words, their actions, the beliefs they share, the way in which they are presented by the media impact us?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 4: 14-30

Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.

¹⁶ He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read,¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ “The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,

¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”^a

²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him.

²¹ He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn't this Joseph's son?” they asked.

²³ Jesus said to them, “Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”

²⁴ “Truly I tell you,” he continued, “no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶ Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷ And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this.

²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

- 1. Re-read Verses 16-21. Explain the significance of what happens when Jesus goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath.**

2. Compare how Jesus is received by his hometown and the rest of the countryside in Verses 22-30.

3. Look at Verses 23-26. What is Jesus really saying to the people?

4. How did Jesus' trials in the desert prepare him for the people's reaction in Verses 28-30?

What is the purpose of this passage?

In this first example of Jesus speaking with people, we see the way Jesus will be treated in the gospel. Right from the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus did not have high hopes for his own people putting their trust in him. He has come to proclaim freedom, sight and favour but the people of Israel will proclaim, 'crucify him!' The gospel is destined to go abroad and leave Israel behind.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Taking God at his word.** Jesus is the fulfillment of all that God has promised for mankind. When he spoke to his hometown they liked what he said but wanted to see Jesus prove himself. The question for us is whether we will receive Jesus and his message or critique him as though he is just another man. What holds you back from being a disciple of Jesus 110%?
- **Topic B: Un-domesticating the gospel.** The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is both a local and a global message. It fits everywhere in the world because it is the message of salvation for the world. Yet, we can attach all sorts of local cultures and customs to the message and reject the idea of Christianity taking shape and finding a home in the hearts of anybody, everywhere. How have you seen the gospel be domesticated, making it fit a certain pattern rather than leaving it powerfully in the hands of God?
- **Topic C: Words of truth delivered graciously.** Jesus was praised for his gracious words and when he spoke sharply to the people, he allowed his point to be carried by illustration. It can be very tricky to say what we want to say and package it well. Our aim is not to change our message to be received well by all, but to package our message so that the truth is delivered effectively.

Prayer for the week

Study 5 Luke 4:31-44

Context

While Chapters 1 and 2 worked as an introduction to the book of Luke and laying the foundation of the fulfillment of God's promises, Chapters 3 and 4 have given us the introduction to Jesus' public ministry. He rejected the devil's temptations in the wilderness and then was rejected himself from his hometown of Nazareth. The testing scene showed us how Jesus has passed when all other humans have failed. The last passage gave us the illustration of how God's own people will reject Jesus and put him to death, only to be miraculously released. These final verses in Chapter 4 will show us the power Jesus has over evil and sickness and yet reveal what is his higher priority.

What do you think?

"Demon possession" was just the ancient's way of explaining mental illness or a range of other naturally occurring human behaviours. Discuss.

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 4:31-44

Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath he taught the people. ³² They were amazed at his teaching, because his words had authority.

³³ In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an impure spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, ³⁴ “Go away! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

³⁵ “Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

³⁶ All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What words these are! With authority and power he gives orders to impure spirits and they come out!” ³⁷ And the news about him spread throughout the surrounding area.

³⁸ Jesus left the synagogue and went to the home of Simon. Now Simon’s mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked Jesus to help her. ³⁹ So he bent over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. She got up at once and began to wait on them.

⁴⁰ At sunset, the people brought to Jesus all who had various kinds of sickness, and laying his hands on each one, he healed them. ⁴¹ Moreover, demons came out of many people, shouting, “You are the Son of God!” But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew he was the Messiah.

⁴² At daybreak, Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” ⁴⁴ And he kept on preaching in the synagogues of Judea.

What is the purpose of this passage?

The Boss of all has been sent to smash evil. He has smashed the agents of evil. He has smashed the curses of evil. And finally, when he dies and rises to life again, he will smash the power of evil. Jesus is the one who has come to point us all to his kingdom and to set us free from the clutches of the evil one.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: The curse of sin.** Notice that Jesus rebuked a virus! We live in a world that is under the curse of sin and has been since Adam and Eve chose to go against God's word. Every cold, every splinter, all cancer and even hay fever are all the result of sin in our world. It's so nice to have late night chemists that supply us with solutions and preventions to all sorts of issues in this world but they are all just band-aids. When Jesus tore into that fever, he intended to show us that it is not welcome in his creation. Reflect on all that you have done in your day today that would look differently if we didn't live in a sin-cursed world. Now thank God that one day he will undo the curse forever. Read Revelation 21:1-8.
- **Topic B: Spreading the news and bringing people to Jesus** (Verses 37 and 40). It is common for Christians to feel unsure how to bring others to Jesus. Perhaps our hesitation is because we think too broadly about who Jesus is and what he has done for us. Yes, he has paid for our sins and promised us paradise one day but hasn't he done more for you than that? What do you know is true about your life now because you have been brought to Jesus? What's one thing you know that Jesus has done for you? Finish this sentence, "One thing I know is that Jesus has ..." Would that be an easier conversation to have with other people?
- **Topic C: Finding a solitary place.** There is no law specifying when, where and how we are to take time out to spend it with God. But the scriptures convince us that it is a wonderful, life-giving thing to do. Genesis 24:63; Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1; 19;

77:22; Psalm 119:9-16, 27, 48, 97, 148; 143:5; 145:5; 2 Timothy 3; Luke 4:4! Encourage one another with how you can start or continue to read the bible and meditate quietly with God. Can you set a goal to do 21 days in a row? Jesus clarified his goals after stepping aside to be alone with God. Perhaps you can journal some new convictions resulting from your meditation times for your own encouragement.

Prayer of the Week

Study 6 Luke 5:1-16

Context

Checking off where Luke has brought us so far, we know that Jesus is the promised Messiah who will bring freedom and redemption to God's people. The birth of Jesus and of John were both surrounded by acts of God and promises fulfilled and the baptism of Jesus introduced the 30 year old child of Mary as a man approved by God. Ready for ministry and proven to reject the tests of the devil, Jesus began preaching in synagogues around Judea and people were blown away by his words, saying that he spoke with authority and power. People equally loved his ability to heal and cast out impure spirits. Word of Jesus was spreading fast and he was freely able to speak although not everybody loved what he had to say. This man from a poor family in Nazareth was making an impression on all the people in the country areas of Galilee.

What do you think?

Share something (good or bad) that you would find hard to give up.

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 5:1-16

One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God.² He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets.³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat.

⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."

⁵ Simon answered, “Master, we’ve worked hard all night and haven’t caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.”

⁶ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. ⁷ So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink.

⁸ When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, “Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!” ⁹ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, ¹⁰ and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon’s partners.

Then Jesus said to Simon, “Don’t be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.” ¹¹ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.

¹² While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. ^e When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, “Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.”

¹³ Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” And immediately the leprosy left him.

¹⁴ Then Jesus ordered him, “Don’t tell anyone, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

¹⁵ Yet the news about him spread all the more, so that crowds of people came to hear him and to be healed of their sicknesses. ¹⁶ But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

What is the purpose of this passage?

In the midst of a “crowd rush”, Jesus honed in on one man to become a committed follower and in the midst of second “crowd rush”, Jesus was determined to stay connected and directed by his personal communion with God. He was a man focused on his mission and determined not to be swayed by the whims or motivations of the people. Peter shows us what it looks like to surrender everything to follow Jesus and the leper shows us what it looks like for someone who has nothing to come to Jesus and find life.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Leaving everything for Jesus.** When you think of leaving everything for Jesus, do you picture going overseas as a missionary? Or do you picture, rather, regarding no other relationship or thing as more valuable than serving Jesus where you are at? Read Philippians 3:7-11 and consider what “gains” you may be still clinging to. Peter seemed to drop everything and leave it where it was to follow his Lord. He didn’t wait to tie up loose ends or finish something else he had started. Is this the type of response you are making to Christ?
- **Topic B: Praying as pleading.** Peter bowed his knees to Jesus and the leper begged him for healing. Psalm 4:1; 27:7; 69:16; 86:7; 102:2 are passages that describe prayers as cries for help and pleading for God to listen. They also purvey a trust that God is the only real source of help and the One they can turn to for help. Genesis 4:27 is perhaps the first evidence of prayer to God and it is described as calling on the name of the Lord (to be saved from the curse of sin). Philippians 4:6 tells us to petition God and 1 Peter 5:7 instructs us to cast our worries on God because he cares. All of these help us to treat prayer as a passionate, persistent plea to God for help. Are your prayers directed in this way?
- **Topic C: Gaining everything.** The leper was an outcast and destined for an early grave. He could not participate in going

to the temple to worship and offer sacrifices, however, he could come to Jesus and he was willing to restore his health and his soul. We can talk about leaving everything for Jesus but we must confess that we gain everything too. This world is passing away and the world trains us to make something of ourselves when the fact is that anything we achieve will be short lived. The chances are that you are not going to be famous or rich or important in the world's eyes, however, you are important to God and knowing him through Jesus is the only reward that is important. Christians call this finding your "identity in Christ" and not in what you can make of yourself. The former is eternal while the latter is like mist (Ecclesiastes). Read Colossians 3:1-4 for our view of everything in Christ.

Prayer of the Week

Study 7 Luke 5:17-26

Context

Luke has carried us from the beginning of Jesus' ministry and the calling of his first disciples with examples of his preaching, healing and casting out impure spirits. Crowds have come to him to hear the word of God and individuals have left everything to follow him. He has welcomed the attention but also resisted unnecessary and misdirected praise by regularly taking solitude to meditate and pray.

What do you think?

Have you ever received a gift that showed the person knew you really well OR have you received a gift that showed the giver really didn't know you?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 5:17-26

¹⁷ One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. ¹⁸ Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. ¹⁹ When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.

²⁰ When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

²¹ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

²² Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? ²³ Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? ²⁴ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ²⁵ Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. ²⁶ Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

1. Are the Pharisees and teachers of the law hostile to Jesus in this passage?

2. This passage is not about roof destruction. Re-read Verses 18-20 and read James 2:14-17. How is this passage an encouragement to us?

3. What exactly did the paralyzed man and his friends “have faith” in?

4. Jesus performed two miracles here. Was the healing of the paralyzed man necessary? What did it achieve?

What is the purpose of this passage?

Jesus is greater than a teacher of the law and his concern for humanity is more than skin deep. He knows what our hearts are thinking and has the power to forgive sins in response to faith. From our perspective, we need to see coming to Jesus as the highest calling in our life. From Jesus' perspective, forgiveness of sins is of greater importance than any other need we have. We need to praise God that our sins can be forgiven and that Jesus can make us right with God.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Making every effort to save our souls.** Just as the men worked hard and earnestly to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus, we ought to make no excuses for putting our life with Jesus first. Prayer, bible reading, church and Christians fellowship are means of grace through which God blesses us and grows our faith. How often do we allow other things in life to get in our way and without much of a battle from us, we neglect them. How important is your soul to you?
- **Topic B: Jesus is able to forgive sins because he is God.** He is not our mate or equal. He is our saviour and Lord and we need him or else our sins cannot be forgiven. The cross is the means by which we can be forgiven but it is God's favour on us that grants us the forgiveness. Remembering our sins before God is a valuable discipline. Read 1 John 1:8-9 and enjoy the knowledge that Jesus forgives sin.
- **Topic C: Jesus knew what they were thinking.** Let's never forget that our God operates on the level of the heart and not on external appearance. There are no secrets that we can keep from him. We may easily fool our fellow man on how we are going in life but God knows better. This truth gives us further motivation to walk closely with our God. He already knows what is going on in our hearts so share more honestly with him about our hopes and worries, our angers and our desires.

Prayer of the Week

Study 8 Luke 5:27-32

Context

With Jesus' ministry in full swing now, he has shown that he can heal, catch fish, call people to follow him, understand the secret things of a person's heart and forgive sins! He was in the presence of the great Pharisees and teachers of the law and rebuked their doubting hearts. He has recruited some fishermen to follow him and promised that they will be taught to catch people for the kingdom of God.

With the Roman Empire lording over Israel, they had local citizens collect taxes on their behalf. Tax collecting was a lucrative business since a portion from every collection was kept for themselves. On top of that, it was seen as a betrayal of Israel and partnership with Gentile Rome. Since all Gentiles were sinners, according to the Pharisees, tax collectors were branded the same.

What do you think?

What is an occupation that you would just never do?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 5:27-32

²⁷ After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, ²⁸ and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

²⁹ Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. ³⁰ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

³¹ Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ³² I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

1. What can we say about Levi from the passage?

2. What can we say about the Pharisees from the passage?

3. Discuss Jesus’ response in Verse 31. What more does he add in Matthew 9:13?

What is the purpose of this passage?

Jesus calls us all to see our bankrupt hearts and come and follow him - not because of our righteousness but because he is righteous. Not because we are healthy but because we want to be. "We are all in this position. We need the Great Physician!" (Colin Buchanan).

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Salvation is worth celebrating!** Why is it that so many Christians are downcast? Have we fallen into the trap of the Pharisee? We may believe that Jesus loves sinners but somehow we are living out our deep belief that Jesus loves the successful and well rounded person who has things in order. Why can't we stop chasing the wind and just come back to grace? Praise God if you are called, forgiven and healed - irrespective of what your life looks like.
- **Topic B: Gathering a crowd to be with Jesus.** Who knows how Levi talked about Jesus to his colleagues and friends? But he talked to them about him and they came to meet him too. Talking to others about our faith is not the same as telling them why you go to church or what you believe but it is most importantly about who we love! Do you talk about Jesus like he is someone worth meeting?
- **Topic C: Seeing the world through the lense of sin.** Rather than promoting two types of people in this world (righteous vs sinners), Jesus pushed the Pharisees to see everybody as sinners. Jesus came to heal but he didn't have only a certain class in mind when he came. He came to save sinners! And there's a whole world of them! We live in a world infected by sin. It's as if it is a disease and we need the antidote! Now, if you are someone who knows how to be saved from hell, it's like you are in a world dying from a breakout disease and you have the only thing that can cure people! Would you keep that a secret? Would you gather around with other saved victims and bunker down while the rest of the world dies? Or do you think we should be telling everyone to get the Jesus solution?

Prayer of the Week

Study 9 Luke 5:33-39

Context

Gaining followers and protesters seems to be the theme of Luke's gospel from Luke 4:31 to 6:16. While Peter, James, John and Levi (Matthew) have been gathered to Jesus as disciples, the Pharisees and teachers of the law have arrived as antagonists to Jesus' ministry. It is through their doubts and questioning, however, that we have learned that Jesus is able to forgive sins and that he calls on all of us to come to him as sinners who need healing.

What do you think?

Do you enjoy riddles? Do you have one to share with the group?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 33-39

³³ They said to him, "John's disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking."

³⁴ Jesus answered, "Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? ³⁵ But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast."

³⁶ He told them this parable: "No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. ³⁷ And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. ³⁸ No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins. ³⁹ And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, 'The old is better.' "

What is the purpose of this passage?

Why on earth would you expect someone who is in the presence of Jesus to be mourning and fasting? Salvation and deliverance has come and the King is with his disciples. Jesus brings with him peace and rejoicing. Seeing who Jesus is invites a change of perspective to the mourner who cries out to God for help since God's help is here! Fasting in prayer has its place but never in the face of God's deliverance being here already!

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Should Christians fast today?** Jesus cannot be declaring an end to fasting for his disciples but only while they were with him. Acts 13:2 and 14:23 give two examples of Christians after Jesus' death and resurrection praying with fasting. Jesus himself fasted in Luke 4. There is no directive in the New Testament, however, for Christians to pursue fasting. What then, can we say about how to fast, when or why not fast? Perhaps Leviticus 23:26-32; 2 Samuel 12:15-23; Ezra 8:21-23 and Isaiah 58 will help your discussion.
- **Topic B: Jesus is the bridegroom.** In his parable, Jesus told his disciples that the presence of the bridegroom makes a big difference to the celebrations of his friends. Jesus says that he is enough reason to celebrate. He is God's answer to our prayers. While Christians will continue to suffer and mourn, we cannot live as though we have no hope of deliverance. Jesus has come and when you taste friendship with Jesus, you can never go back to wondering and struggling through life as if answers are out of reach. This passage is one subtle message for us to know that the Christ has come!
- **Topic C: Interpreting the bible.** Jesus answered the Pharisees with a parable which is much like a riddle. It is metaphorical. It requires careful thought to uncover its meaning. The word 'interpretation' is misused if it suggests that what you read can come to mean whatever you believe it means. The word 'interpret' is about meaning, not feeling. The only times when multiple interpretations can be allowed is when the meaning

can, in context, be taken more than one way! If you decide to interpret something out of context or based on what you feel it should mean then you are not actually interpreting the text but importing your own meaning and belief. You have failed to listen to the text correctly. What we want to do is uncover the Author's meaning. Don't ask, "what does this say to me" but "what did the author have in mind when he wrote this?"

Prayer for the week

Study 10 | **Luke 6: 1-11**

Context

While Jesus' reputation for healing and teaching has grown, this has also attracted the attention of the Jewish elite, namely the Pharisees and teachers of the law. They have witnessed Jesus heal and declare himself able to forgive sins. They have heard him pardon his disciples for revelling in his presence. We now read of the Pharisees seeking out ways to trap Jesus.

What do you think?

What does the Sabbath day mean to you?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 6:1-11

One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and his disciples began to pick some heads of grain, rub them in their hands and eat the kernels. ² Some of the Pharisees asked, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?”

³ Jesus answered them, “Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry? ⁴ He entered the house of God, and taking the consecrated bread, he ate what is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions.” ⁵ Then Jesus said to them, “The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath.”

⁶ On another Sabbath he went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. ⁷ The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. ⁸ But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Get up and stand in front of everyone.” So he got up and stood there.

⁹ Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?”

¹⁰ He looked around at them all, and then said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so, and his hand was completely restored. ¹¹ But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were furious and began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.

1. Read the following passages to get some Old Testament background.

a. Exodus 16:23-29

b. Exodus 20:8-11

c. Exodus 31:13-1

d. Deuteronomy 23:24-25

e. 1 Samuel 21:1-6

2. Now that we have some background on this account, what do you suppose Jesus is getting at in Verses 1 to 5? Look up Mark 2:27 and compare what Jesus says there.

3. What can we say from Verses 6 to 8 about the hearts of the Pharisees and the mind of Jesus?

4. Compare Jesus' question in Verse 9 with the response of the Pharisees in Verse 11. Who is guilty of breaking the Sabbath?

What is the purpose of this passage?

The Sabbath observance is to promote dependance on God, not dependance on law. It was made for man's sake. Religion fails to see the good that things are given for and turns them into burdens and masters. The commandments are for loving God and loving our neighbours, and will promote goodness and life that the Spirit grows in us. Observing the law as the Pharisees did does not care for God and fellow man as God intended. While the Pharisees thought they knew the law and how to live it out, Jesus knows the thoughts of man and how to point them to life.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Does the fifth commandment still apply to Christians today?** Jesus' lessons on the Sabbath to the Pharisees give us an excellent approach to discussing this question. Was Jesus attempting to abolish the law or was he trying to teach the Pharisees how to see the law clearly? As humans, we have hearts by nature which break all ten of the commandments regularly but we know that we find forgiveness in Jesus' name (1 John 1:8-9). The question is not whether the commandments are still applicable or not but what do the commandments teach us? The Sabbath is given for man's sake to stop and deny himself and acknowledge that God is in charge (sovereign), that God provides and that the law of utmost importance is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength.
- **Topic B: Being conscious of evil in us.** Jesus brought a challenge to the Pharisees even though they had not said anything to him. He knew what they were thinking and this in itself was a problem. The Pharisees only cared about what people did but Jesus cares about what people think. One way to bring our evil thoughts to the surface is to speak with God about them. Jesus forced the Pharisees' opinions to be public even though they did not engage verbally with Jesus. God calls on us to confess our sins and be made right with him through Christ's blood. (1 John 1:5-7ff)

- **Topic C: Souls that seek a saviour.** Here is a truth: we are not to model our lives after the Pharisees in this passage. They were ‘looking for a reason to accuse Jesus’ and then ‘began to discuss with one another what they might do to Jesus.’ Even as Christians we can practice, at times, the heart of the Pharisee that seeks to accuse and critique at the expense of hearing the truth. Of course, the bible teaches us to be discerning and when there are wolves in sheep’s clothing that is prudent. But would you describe yourself as eager to learn more from God or more often critical, cynical and sore toward people explaining the word of God?

Prayer for the week

Study 11 Luke 6: 12-16

Context

Since Jesus' baptism in Chapter 3 of Luke, Jesus has been making a splash (pardon the pun) in the country area of Galilee and from Chapter 4: 31, he has been collecting both followers and critics. We read about Simon, James, and Levi following Jesus when called and the Pharisees recognised that Jesus had disciples who walked with him in ministry. We come to a short section where Jesus names his twelve disciples before beginning a long recorded sermon to crowds of people. We'll complete our study series and this section of Luke by noting who was chosen by God to become the apostles of the early church.

What do you think?

How easy is it for you to pray when you have an important decision to make?

What does the bible say?

Read Luke 6:12-16

¹² One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. ¹³ When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: ¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶ Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

1. How is Jesus' time of prayer described in Verse 12? Read also Luke 4:42-44; 5:16; 9:18, 28; 11:1 and 18:1. What do these teach us about prayer?

2. As a result of his night of prayer, Jesus chose twelve of his disciples to be The Apostles. The word 'apostle' means 'commissioned messenger'. What does Acts 1:15-22 and Luke 24:45-48 teach us about the purpose of these twelve?

- 3. Although we are not one of the twelve Apostles, Christians are described in the bible as chosen and called by God. How might the following passages encourage you?**

1 Peter 1:1-2

Romans 8:33

Ephesians 1:4, 11

Colossians 3:12.

- 4. For further study, read through the information about each apostle listed at the end of this study. What do you notice as common to these men and what do you see as different?**

What is the purpose of this passage?

Dependance on God through prayer is essential in making and executing plans for the gospel; but the result of prayer is clarity, not necessarily perfection. The disciples Jesus called after prayer was a group of men with many different backgrounds who needed to learn different lessons from Jesus. Their purpose for being called was to be authentic witnesses to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ our Lord.

How can we apply this?

- **Topic A: Vigilant prayer.** How often do we go swiftly from one event to the next and one day to another without stopping to talk with our God about all that is happening? Although we see that Jesus prayed often and regularly, these were moments too of special reflection and conversation with God. On top of the passing conversational prayers that you may enjoy with God, consider the discipline of stepping outside of our busy lives to be with God in prayer. A special and extended prayer time could be considered every morning? Once a week? Once a fortnight?
- **Topic B: Being called to discipleship.** Jesus chose twelve men to teach and do life with as he trained them for gospel ministry. He then sent them out in Matthew 28 to make more disciples (see also Luke 24:45-49). We are the beneficiaries of the ministry that Jesus started here in Luke 6. 1 Peter 1:1-2 describes the process of being made a disciple of Christ and it is not through importance or brilliance or beauty but through God's grace in calling and redeeming and refining. Do you identify yourself as a disciple of Christ?
- **Topic C: The before and after of Christian growth.** These twelve men began their traineeship with Jesus and went on to serve Christ with their lives (excluding Judas Iscariot). Consider the before and after shot of some of these men and praise God that he is doing his work in you and your group too. Read Ephesians 2:1-10 (especially Verses 8-10) or Titus 3:5 and thank God for his handiwork.

Prayer for the week

For Further Study: A Motley Crew of Names

Here is the list of men Jesus called to be his twelve disciples and some notes on each person. We know a great deal about a few of these men from the bible but other names require church history for expansion. This study will focus on what the bible teaches us about each man. Church history and tradition has its place to be sure, but putting our emphasis on what the bible tells us helps us stay clear on the bible's message and not on human history.

1. Simon (whom he named Peter),

- a. Jesus gave Simon this new name which means (Matthew 16:18; John 1:42)
- b. Luke refers to him as Simon up until this point but Peter from here on until 22:31 and 24:34. I've often enjoyed the thought that Jesus referred to Simon Peter from his worldly name (Simon) when sin was at his door but his born again name (Peter) when he is being forgiven and called.
- c. He lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:29) but came from Bethsaida. (John 1:44)
- d. Peter was recognised as the leader of the Jewish Christians. (Acts 2:14, 37; Galatians 2:7-8)
- e. His journey with Jesus gave him special privilege as he watched Jesus be transfigured to reveal his glory (Matthew 17:1-8). He was the first to confess Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:16), was assigned leadership by Jesus (Matthew 16:18), was prayed over by Christ (Luke 22:31-32) and personally sort after for forgiveness (Luke 24:34; John 21:15-17).
- f. Peter wrote the books of 1 and 2 Peter and tradition tells us that he authorised Mark's gospel.

2. his brother Andrew,

- a. He and his brother Simon were in the fishing trade together. (Matthew 4:18)
- b. He lived in a home with Simon. (Mark 1:29)
- c. He and Simon were both from Bethsaida. (John 1:44)

- d. He was a disciple of John the Baptist who pointed him to Jesus. (John 1:35-40)
- e. He introduced his brother to Jesus. (John 1:41)
- f. While not of the top three disciples closest to Jesus, he had a private relationship with Jesus. (Mark 13:3; John 6:8; John 12:22)

3. James,

- a. James and John were brothers known as the sons of Zebedee (Luke 5:10) and sons of thunder. (Mark 3:17)
- b. Their mother was Salome who was also Mary's sister, making them cousins of Jesus. (see John 19:25, Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 combined)
- c. He was one of the early church martyrs. (Acts 12:1-2)
- d. He did not write the book called James, that would be James the brother of Jesus.

4. John,

- a. See above regarding his relationship with James.
- b. John is listed second in the list by Luke in Acts 1:13.
- c. He wrote the gospel called John as well as the three letters of the same name.
- d. He, with Peter and James, were often close to Jesus and formed a privileged close circle around him. (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28)

5. Philip,

- a. The following three stories give us insight into this man. He comes across as a people person perhaps.
 - i. John 1:43-48
 - ii. John 12:20-22
 - iii. John 14:8-10

6. Bartholomew,

- a. This name/word means 'son of Tolmai'.
- b. His actual name is quite possibly Nathanael - here are the arguments why:
 - i. Bartholomew is arguably not his actual name since it simply means who he is the son of.
 - ii. Matthew, Mark and Luke do not mention Nathanael, while John does not mention Bartholomew.

- iii. The lists of the disciples in the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) all place Bartholomew and Philip together (Philip and Nathanael were close according to John 1:43-48).
- iv. All the men named in John 21:2 are apostles except for Nathanael (unless he is also Bartholomew).

7. Matthew,

- a. Matthew is probably another name for Levi the tax collector (compare Luke 5:27-32 with Matthew 9:9-13).
- b. He wrote the gospel which opens the New Testament.

8. Thomas,

- a. His name means twin and he is also known as Didymus. (John 11:16; 20:24; 21:2)
- b. Although given the reputation as the doubter (which I dislike), he delivers some of the best statements about Jesus in the gospels and shows us a man who will not follow blindly but he will follow to his death. (John 11:16; 14:5; 20:28)

9. James son of Alphaeus,

- a. It is difficult to know much about this James. He is not the martyr of Acts 12 nor is he the brother of Jesus since it seems Jesus' brothers did not believe until later. Some have suggested that he is the brother of Matthew since they both are sons of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14) but Alphaeus was a common name and this is speculation.

10. Simon who was called the Zealot,

- a. James II, Simon II and Judas II each require some extensions to their first names to distinguish them from others.
- b. The Zealots were a nationalistic radical group who aggressively opposed the Roman state. So in Jesus' crew we have a tax collector who worked with the state and a radical who strongly opposed it.

11. Judas son of James,

- a. Some say that Thaddaeus of Mark 3:18 and Matthew 10:3 are Judas son of James since they occupy the same place in the list and many disciples had two names.

b. John 14:22-31

12. and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

- a. If Iscariot refers to a certain region in Judea then Judas is the only non-Galilean in the group. The name does have the Aramaic meaning of “false one” but is that a meaning assigned to the word at a later date? It could also mean “Dyer” as a reference to his occupation. The region suggestion is most likely given John 6:71 and John 13:21-22.
- b. John 7:71; 12:4; 13:2, 26; Matthew 26:14; Mark 14:10; Luke 22:3
- c. Judas Iscariot who would betray Jesus and the group completes the list of people Jesus, after a night of vigil prayer, called his disciples.