

Week 19

<p>May 7 Luke 1 Luke 2</p>	<p>* Take time to read carefully the introduction to Luke (1:1-4). Luke emphasizes that this is an historical account of Jesus’ life. He has carefully researched the facts and recorded the events in an orderly manner. Then as you read the Gospel of Luke, notice the names, dates, and details of the record. Of all the gospels, Luke gives the most detailed account of Jesus’ life and ministry.</p> <p>? Lk 1:38 - Underline the phrase, “let it be to me according to your word.” Mary faces months of shame and years of suffering, but she willingly submits to God’s will. Do you show that willing submission to God’s will?</p> <p>* One theme of the Gospel of Luke is the humanity of Jesus. He is the Son of God, but he is also the “Son of Man.” He is fully human. We see this emphasis in Luke 2-4. These chapters include Jesus’ birth, his human genealogy, and the temptation. Each of these stories demonstrates the real humanity of Jesus of Nazareth.</p>
<p>May 8 Luke 3 Luke 4 Luke 5</p>	<p>? Lk 3:8 – John the Baptist required converts to “Bear fruits in keeping with repentance.” They showed a change of life the demonstrated genuine repentance. To be a Christian is more than simply adopting a set of beliefs. To become a Christian means to change one’s entire direction in life. What are the “fruits” of your repentance? Can your family, neighbors, and coworkers see a change in your life as a result of your Christian testimony?</p> <p>? Jesus had three tools as he faced temptation. Do you use these tools when you face temptation: Do you follow the leadership of the Holy Spirit? Do you spend time in prayer and fasting? Do you memorize Scripture to use when you are tempted?</p> <p>? Read Luke 4:22 and then 4:28. Why does the attitude of the people change so dramatically? Is the answer found in 4:25-27?</p>
<p>May 9 Luke 6 Luke 7</p>	<p>* Luke 6 contains an abbreviated version of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount recorded more fully in Matthew 5-7. Compare these two sermons and notice Luke’s emphasis on the sections regarding our treatment of other people.</p> <p>? Lk 6:46 - Do you call Jesus “Lord” without obeying His commands?</p> <p>? Lk 7:47 - Think of the sins for which God has forgiven you. Does this increase your love for Him?</p>
<p>May 10 Luke 8 Luke 9</p>	<p>* Luke gives more attention to the role of women in Jesus’ ministry than any other gospel. This is noteworthy in a society where women were usually ignored. The Christian church gave far more respect to women than the Greco-Roman culture. Notice the list of women in Luke 8:2-3. They come from all levels of society – from a high social position in Herod’s castle to a demon-possessed woman who would be an outcast.</p> <p>? As you read the story of the demon-possessed man in Luke 8:26-39, notice the shocking fact that the townspeople were more afraid of Jesus’ power than they were of the demon-possession. Instead of praising Jesus for this miracle, they asked him to leave! (Lk 8:37) Why? What would cause a person to be afraid of Jesus’ power?</p> <p>? Read Luke 9:23-26 and 9:57-62. Ask these questions: -What is the price of discipleship? (9:23-24) -What are the rewards of discipleship? (9:25-26) -What excuses do I find to avoid discipleship? (9:57-62)</p>

<p>May 11 Luke 10 Luke 11</p>	<p>? As you read the story of the Good Samaritan, ask, “When I see a person in need, do I respond like the priest and Levite or like the Samaritan? Do I see a problem to avoid or a person to love?”</p> <p>? Personalize the Lord’s Prayer (Lk 11:2-4) as your own prayer. -Is God <i>your Father</i>? -Do you glorify His name? -Do you seek His kingdom, power and glory? -Do you obey His will on earth as it is obeyed in heaven? -Do you trust Him for your daily needs? -Do you forgive others so that He will forgive you? -Do you seek to be delivered from temptation?</p>
<p>May 12 Luke 12 Luke 13 Luke 14</p>	<p>? What is your attitude towards money? -Do you trust in money? (Lk 12:15-21) -Do you worry about money? (Lk 12:22-30) -Do you seek the Kingdom of God? (Lk 12:31-34)</p> <p>? Lk 14:7-14 - What is your motivation for giving? Do you give to others for personal reward or do you give to have God’s blessing?</p> <p>? Lk 14:26-33 – Have you paid the cost of discipleship?</p>
<p>Weekly Summary</p>	<p>Write down one “big lesson” that you have learned from this week’s readings. Each day next week, review this lesson and ask God to help you to apply the lesson in your daily life.</p>

Week 20

<p>May 14 Luke 15 Luke 16 Luke 17</p>	<p>* One of Luke’s themes is God’s care for the undeserving. Few stories show that better than the three part parable in Luke 15. Jesus tells about a shepherd who lost one of his hundred sheep, a woman who lost one of her ten coins, and a father who lost one of his two sons. In each case, there is rejoicing when the lost is found. Luke shows the heart of the heavenly Father who cares for the lost – even though we are lost because of our own rebellious choices.</p> <p>? Do you have the judgmental heart of the Elder Brother or the loving heart of the Father?</p> <p>? Lk 16:13 – Who is your master? Who holds controlling power in your life?</p> <p>? Lk 17:11-19 – It is easy to receive God’s blessings without taking time to thank Him for the blessings. Make a list of God’s blessings in your life. Each day this week, stop and thank Him for at least one blessing that you have received. Develop a habit of thanksgiving.</p>
<p>May 15 Luke 18 Luke 19</p>	<p>* The parables in Luke 18 teach about prayer.</p> <p>-The parable of the Unrighteous Judge shows the importance of persistent prayer. As you read this parable remember <i>God is not the unrighteous judge</i> of the story. Instead, Jesus says, if an unrighteous judge will eventually give justice to a persistent widow, <i>how much more</i> will our righteous loving Father give justice to His children?</p> <p>-The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican shows the importance of humble prayer. The person who exalts himself receives nothing from God. The person who humbles himself before God “will be exalted.”</p> <p>? What is your attitude in prayer? The pride of the Pharisee or the humility of the publican?</p> <p>? The parable in Luke 19:11-27 teaches us to be faithful while we wait for God’s kingdom to be revealed. Are you using your gifts to serve God?</p>
<p>May 16 Luke 20 Luke 21</p>	<p>* Luke 20-21 shows the final conflicts between Jesus and the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They are not seeking truth; they are seeking to trap Jesus into saying something that will cause Rome to arrest him.</p> <p>? According to Luke 21:28, prophecies of the end-times should bring hope to Christians. “Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” Do you read prophecy with fear and dread, or with hope and anticipation?</p> <p>? According to Luke 21:34-36, prophecies of the end-times should warn Christians to remain spiritually alert. “Stay awake at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are going to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.” Are you living in constant readiness for the Lord’s Return?</p>
<p>May 17 Luke 22 Luke 23</p>	<p>? During the Last Supper, the disciples were arguing about “which of them was to be regarded as the greatest.” Jesus was certainly the greatest one in the room, but He became “the one who serves” (Lk 22:27). Do you seek greatness, or do you seek to serve?</p> <p>? When you read Luke 1, you saw Mary’s submission to God’s will; “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Lk 1:38). At the end of Luke, you see Jesus’ submission to his Father’s will; “Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done” (Lk 22:42). Do you live in daily, willing submission to God?</p> <p>? Read Luke 22:31-34 and 22:54-62. Why did Peter fail in the time of testing? What could he have done to prepare for this test?</p> <p>? Imagine that you were at Golgotha watching Jesus die. What would you think about Jesus in that hour? What would you feel about his promises of an eternal kingdom?</p>

<p>May 18 Luke 24 Acts 1 Acts 2</p>	<p>* The gospel of Luke and Acts were both written by Luke. Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2 to see the similarities. Luke 24 and Acts 1 show this connection. Luke 24 ends with the promise of the Holy Spirit and the story of Jesus’ ascension; Acts 1 begins with the story of the ascension and the promise of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>? As you read Acts, highlight each reference to the Holy Spirit. Notice how central He is to the work of the early church.</p> <p>? Imagine that you were one of the first people to visit the empty tomb. What would you think? What would you feel? What would you say to the other disciples when you returned from the tomb?</p> <p>? Acts 1:8 – Where is your “Jerusalem?” Where is your “Samaria?” Are you witnessing to Christ in your world?</p>
<p>May 19 Acts 3 Acts 4 Acts 5</p>	<p>* Many Bibles give a subtitle for the “Book of Acts.” It is often called the “Acts of the Apostles.” However, it is better to call it the “Acts of the Holy Spirit” because the miracles and signs in Acts are done in the power of the Holy Spirit.</p> <p>? Two things marked the early Christians: their power and their boldness in the face of persecution. What gave them such boldness? (See Acts 4:13 for one answer).</p> <p>? When the religious leaders commanded the apostles to quit preaching, the early Christians began to pray. Before you read this chapter, ask “What would I pray for if I were facing persecution?” Then read Acts 5. Notice 5:29. Their prayer is not deliverance from persecution; their prayer is for boldness in the face of persecution. What would you pray for?</p> <p>? What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? (Remember, they were not <i>required</i> to give the money to the apostles. They were judged because they claimed to give the money when they had kept back part of it. In their pride, they wanted honor for giving more than they actually gave.</p>
<p>Weekly Summary</p>	<p>Write down one “big lesson” that you have learned from this week’s readings. Each day next week, review this lesson and ask God to help you to apply the lesson in your daily life.</p>

Week 21

<p>May 21 Acts 6 Acts 7 Acts 8</p>	<p>* Throughout Acts, we watch as the Holy Spirit works through the early church to accomplish God’s mission in our world. In this week’s reading, you will see as the gospel begins to move beyond Jerusalem. Philip takes the gospel to Samaria. Saul is converted and begins taking the gospel to Gentiles. Jesus’ great commission is being fulfilled in the church.</p> <p>* In Acts 6, we read about one of the early conflicts in the church. The Greek-speaking Jews felt they were treated with less care than the traditional Hebrew-speaking Jews. Notice the solution: Greek-speaking deacons were appointed. The members who raised the problem were given responsibility to solve the problem.</p> <p>? Acts 6:3 – Notice the qualifications for these deacons (men appointed to care for the Christian widows). Do you look for spiritual qualifications for every position in the church?</p> <p>? Notice the church’s care for its widows. The early church was known for its care for those who suffered. How does your church follow this example?</p> <p>? Read Stephen’s sermon in Acts 7. Why is Old Testament Jewish history so important to this New Testament sermon?</p> <p>? When you read that Saul “approved of Stephen’s execution,” would you expect that Saul will become Paul, the first great Christian missionary? Think about God’s power to transform lives!</p>
<p>May 22 Acts 9 Acts 10 Acts 11</p>	<p>? As you read the story of Saul’s conversion, stop and remember your conversion. Maybe it was not as dramatic as Saul’s story, but can you remember the transformation that God brought in your life?</p> <p>? Think of the difficult change Peter had to make in his thinking. The laws about unclean food were not just a tradition; they were his entire way of life! But Peter was open to God’s teaching. What things has God taught you as you seek to follow His will? Are you open to His teaching?</p>
<p>May 23 Acts 12 Acts 13 Acts 14</p>	<p>* As the church began to spread, persecution was the result. This is the pattern throughout church history. The spread of the Reformation led to the Inquisition. The Puritans were put in prison. The missionaries to China were killed in the Boxer Rebellion. The leaders of the house church movement were persecuted under Mao. Russian Christians were martyred under Stalin. Persecution is “normal” for a growing church (Matt 5:11-12). Despite persecution, “the word of God increased and multiplied” (Acts 12:24).</p> <p>? Would you be faithful to share the Word of God if it brought persecution to you? The reason the church in Acts grew is that they preached the Word despite persecution.</p> <p>? Acts 14:11-14 – Would you be tempted to accept the honor of the people? How do you think God would have responded if Paul and Barnabas accepted this worship?</p>
<p>May 24 James 1 James 2 James 3 James 4 James 5</p>	<p>* James was the brother of Jesus. After Jesus’ resurrection, James became a believer and was soon a leader in the church at Jerusalem. His epistle was an early letter and was probably written sometime around the period of Acts 14-16. James is one of the most practical New Testament letters; it is sometimes called “Proverbs of the New Testament” because of its practical advice about things like the tongue, anger, temptation, etc.</p> <p>? Only one assignment for James.... As you read James, make a list of the practical areas he addresses. For example, chapter 1 includes teaching about: temptation (1:12-15); anger (1:19-20); obedience to Scripture (1:21-25); speech (1:26); care for the poor (1:27). Choose one topic from James that speaks to an area of struggle in your life. Throughout the rest of this week, re-read that section in James and pray daily that God will help you apply James’ teaching in your life.</p>

<p>May 25 Acts 15 Acts 16 Galatians 1</p>	<p>* The “Jerusalem Council” (Acts 15) met in AD 49 to determine how Gentiles could be made part of the church. They asked, “Must Gentiles be circumcised in order to be a part of God’s people? Must Gentiles follow the Jewish food laws?” After praying and studying Scripture, they determined that the Gentiles had to follow only four guidelines, from Leviticus 17-18. Leviticus says that these laws apply to “any one of the house of Israel (Jews) or of the strangers who sojourn among them (Gentiles).” Because of this, the early church determined that only the four laws in Acts 15:20 must be followed by Gentile converts; Gentile converts did not have to be circumcised.</p> <p>? The early church settled conflict by meeting together to study the teaching of Scripture and to pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance. How does your church settle conflict?</p> <p>? As you read Acts 16, notice how the gospel speaks to all levels of society. Lydia is a wealthy businesswoman. The demon-possessed slave girl is an outcast. The Philippian jailer is a Roman official. The gospel speaks to all levels of society. Is your church reaching people at all levels of our society? If we are failing to reach some groups, how can we better reach them?</p>
<p>May 26 Galatians 2 Galatians 3 Galatians 4 Galatians 5 Galatians 6</p>	<p>* Galatians was probably Paul’s first letter. It addresses problems related to the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. Some Jewish Christians were still trying to force Gentiles to follow the laws of circumcision and the food laws. Paul writes to attack this false teaching. Notice the urgency of his message; “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel.... If anyone is preaching to you a gospel contrary to the one you received, let him be accursed” (Gal 1:6-9).</p> <p>Paul’s response to this false gospel is to proclaim the wonderful truth that we are justified by grace through faith in Christ alone. This message is central to the Christian faith. Because of this, Galatians has been one of Paul’s most influential letters.</p> <p>? Gal 2:20 – stop and reflect on this image. As Christians, we have joined Christ on the cross; we are crucified with him. Because of this, we live with him. We cannot be joined with him in resurrection unless we are willing to be joined with him in dying to ourselves and our desires.</p> <p>? Gal 5:16-23 – Paul’s message is <i>not</i> “Since Christians do not live under the law, we are free to fulfill our own sinful desires.” No! His message is “Since Christians are led by the Spirit, we will fulfill God’s commands <i>through the power of the Spirit living in us.</i>” A fruit tree does not struggle to produce fruit; fruit is natural to the tree. In the same way, the Christian does not struggle to produce love, joy, peace, etc. Instead, when the Holy Spirit lives in us, this fruit is the natural result. Are you producing the fruit of the Spirit in your life?</p>
<p>Weekly Summary</p>	<p>Write down one “big lesson” that you have learned from this week’s readings. Each day next week, review this lesson and ask God to help you to apply the lesson in your daily life.</p>

Week 22

<p>May 28</p> <p>1 Samuel 1</p> <p>1 Samuel 2</p> <p>1 Samuel 3</p> <p>1 Samuel 4</p>	<p>* The books of 1 & 2 Samuel record the early days of Israel’s monarchy. After the chaos of the days of the Judges, the anointing of Saul as king united the nation under one ruler. 1 & 2 Samuel tell the stories of Saul and then David.</p> <p>* The story of Eli shows the failures of Israel’s religious leaders. Eli misunderstands Hannah’s spiritual fervor (1:13-14); he rebukes his sons for their sin but does not banish them from service (2:22-24); and God judges Eli for his failure as religious leader (2:27-36).</p> <p>? Are you careful to listen to God’s voice? Are you sensitive to His leadership?</p> <p>? Israel trusted in the ark of the covenant to protect them from the Philistines. They did not understand that the ark was important <i>only</i> because of God’s presence. Without God’s presence, the ark alone would not protect Israel. What are the symbols of God’s presence in your worship? Do you have the symbols without the reality of His presence?</p>
<p>May 29</p> <p>1 Samuel 5</p> <p>1 Samuel 6</p> <p>1 Samuel 7</p> <p>1 Samuel 8</p> <p>1 Samuel 9</p> <p>1 Samuel 10</p>	<p>* Even the Philistines learned to respect the ark of the covenant. They soon returned the ark to Israel. They learned that Jehovah is a God of unimaginable power.</p> <p>? 1 Sam 7:3 – in order to “return to the Lord,” Israel had to put away all other gods. Jesus later said, “You cannot serve God and money” (Matt 6:24). We can serve only one God. What “god” is a temptation to you? What pulls you away from serving God alone?</p> <p>? Like Eli, Samuel tolerated the sins of his sons (1 Sam 8:1-3). Why do we tolerate the sins of our adult children when we severely judge those same sins in other people?</p> <p>? Notice Saul’s humility early in life (1 Sam 9:21). Later you will see how Saul becomes proud and trusts in his own strength. Remember, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). How does 1 Samuel 10:27 demonstrate Saul’s humility?</p>
<p>May 30</p> <p>1 Samuel 11</p> <p>1 Samuel 12</p> <p>1 Samuel 13</p> <p>1 Samuel 14</p>	<p>? If you hold a leadership position in the church, read carefully Samuel’s farewell in 1 Samuel 12. Aim to follow his example of integrity as a leader.</p> <p>* 1 Samuel 13 is the beginning of Saul’s decline as king. At the beginning of his reign, Saul was humble and trusted God. Soon, he became careless. He failed to wait for Samuel to offer the required sacrifices before battle. Instead, he trusted his own actions.</p> <p>? As you read 1 Samuel 14, is Jonathan a positive example (winning victory over the Philistines) or a negative example (showing disrespect to his father in 1 Sam 14:29)?</p>
<p>May 31</p> <p>1 Samuel 15</p> <p>1 Samuel 16</p> <p>1 Samuel 17</p>	<p>* Saul’s tragic decline continues in 1 Samuel 15. He disobeys God’s clear instructions (15:3); lies to the prophet (15:13); and blames the people instead of taking responsibility for his own actions (15:15). In judgment, Samuel tells Saul that God will take the kingdom away from Saul.</p> <p>? 1 Sam 15:30 – Even in a time of judgment, Saul was more concerned for how people judged him than for how God judged him. Which is more important to you: the approval of people or the approval of God?</p> <p>? 1 Sam 16:7 – Throughout Scripture, God shows that He judges the heart, not the external appearance. As you read, ask God to give you a heart that is right and pure before Him.</p> <p>? 1 Sam 17:45-46 - Notice the difference between David and the backslidden Saul. Saul is most concerned for the approval of people; David is most concerned for the glory of God. David fights Goliath so that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” Do you seek your own glory or the glory of God?</p>

<p>June 1 1 Samuel 18 1 Samuel 19 1 Samuel 20 1 Samuel 21</p>	<p>* These chapters show the continuing decline of Saul. He becomes so paranoid that he tries to murder David, the man he recognizes as a rival for the throne. At the same time these chapters show Saul's decline, they show the rise of David. God protects David from Saul (19-20) and from Achish (21).</p> <p>? When Saul was first anointed king, he was humble. Now he is proud and jealous of the attention that David received (1 Sam 18:8-9). Are you able to see other people praised without becoming jealous of their success? That is one sign of a humble heart.</p>
<p>June 2 1 Samuel 22 1 Samuel 23 1 Samuel 24 1 Samuel 25</p>	<p>* By 1 Samuel 22, Saul is so controlled by his anger and jealousy of David that he accuses his son Jonathan of conspiracy, and murders the priests who gave food to David.</p> <p>? 1 Samuel 24 – How much do you respect those in authority over you? If you were in David's situation, would you take the opportunity to kill the man who was trying to murder you? Even though Saul has failed as a king, David respects the position of the king.</p> <p>? How did Abigail show that she was wiser than her husband Nabal?</p>
<p>Weekly Summary</p>	<p>Write down one "big lesson" that you have learned from this week's readings. Each day next week, review this lesson and ask God to help you to apply the lesson in your daily life.</p>