

Matters

Six Bible studies in Luke's gospel



Mission Matters

Six Bible studies in Luke's gospel

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Serving In Mission

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Why do these studies?

Serving In Mission is driven by the gospel conviction that no one in the world should and live and die without hearing the good news of Jesus Christ.

This short series of Bible studies is designed to help you, your small group and your church understand the full impact of what Christ calls his disciples to do.

Jesus is the one who calls us into his mission. We want to see mission workers being sent from the UK — and others from overseas brought into the UK — to share the gospel in communities where Christ is least-known.

Some of those communities are on our doorstep but the majority are in other countries. Some are in places where it is impossible to talk of Jesus openly.

These studies began life as a discipleship tool for Serving In Mission staff but they have a much wider application. They start in chapter nine of Luke's gospel and journey with Jesus on the road to the cross. They ask key questions of us and of what faith in Christ means.

What does it mean for us that our king is a suffering, crucified and risen king? What are the implications of this on our lives? What will it cost us to follow Jesus? How should we treat others? What about our approach to prayer, money and living in society?

We hope these studies will help those who are asking questions about mission and those who are working alongside mission workers. We hope they will equip churches and challenge those who are already committed to serving God in mission.

We pray all of us will be taught and trained by Jesus to deepen our trust in him, our risen and rescuing King.

How to use the studies

These studies are each self-contained but build into a complete whole. If at all possible, it would be best to fit them into a programme or a term of small group meetings.

The Bible references are all from the NIV UK translation. It would be good to have that translation open, but feel free to explore how other translations help with understanding.

If you are planning to lead these studies, then please find time to read through Luke 9:18-10:42 before you start. Think about some of the subjects and pray for God's help as you prepare to lead them.

We have included the leaders' notes at the end of each study. They are designed to help your understanding as you prepare the studies to suit your group.

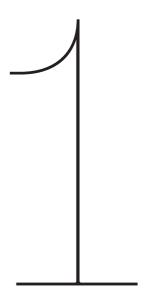
Acknowledgments

Thanks to Gen Eldred for coming up with the design and doing a lot of the original editing and to Nigel Head for making it happen. Thanks also to Tim Allan, Jo Ridd and Chris Watson-Lee.

If there are mistakes, they are entirely my responsibility.

Steve Smith

Wetheringsett, April 2018



Obey

Luke 9:18-27

Obey Jesus as a matter of first priority in life.

Aim: Rejoice in the privilege of following a king like Jesus.



Talk about

What does being a 'follower' involve in practical terms? List some examples of followers in today's society. In sport? In politics? In business? In other areas?



Read Luke 9:18-27

- 1. In v18 Jesus chooses a point during his personal prayer time to ask his disciples the question that has been on people's lips ever since his public ministry began: 'Who do the crowds say that I am?' What reason do they have for saying:
 - John the Baptist? (See Luke 3:4–6)
 - Elijah? (See Luke 4:24–27)
 - A former prophet come back to life? (See Luke 7:16)
- 2. In v20 Jesus makes it a personal question that the disciples must answer for themselves. What are the three good reasons Peter has for declaring that Jesus is God's promised king?
 - Luke 4:18-21, 9:2
 - Luke 8:28-32
 - Luke 8:25, 42-48, 49-56
- 3. Who do you say Jesus is and why?
- 4. Read verses 21–22. What do you find surprising about the way Jesus follows up Peter's confession?
- 5. Why do you think Jesus doesn't want his disciples telling other people about him right now? (See Luke 9:45)
- 6. What does Jesus promise to anyone who will follow him? (v23–27)
- 7. Look again at 9:23. What two things does Jesus say someone has to do if they're going to follow him?



Bringing it closer to home...

Think about different areas of your life where you have to make small daily decisions to 'deny' yourself and follow Jesus.

- At home
- At work
- In church
- Any other area



Pray

Pray you would be able to put into practice denying yourself and following Jesus. Pray the same for missionaries you know or are supported by your church.

Study notes - Obey

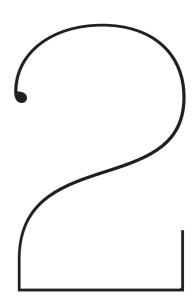
Talk about: It might be useful to look up a dictionary definition of 'follow'. Highlight the differences in expectations and commitments to being a follower in various situations, for example the difference between following someone on twitter and following someone on a mountain expedition.

1. **John the Baptist** — John's and Jesus' message of coming salvation from God are similar.

Elijah — Jesus likens their response to his ministry to Israel's response to Elijah. Also he didn't see death but was taken up to heaven (2 Kings 2:11–13).

Former prophet come back to life — Jesus speaks and acts with such divine authority and power (4:22, 36; 5:21; 7:16, 49; 8:25).

- 2. The three good reasons are
 - The message Jesus proclaimed and the power Jesus displayed (4:18, 9:2).
 - The declaration of demons and Jesus' saving authority (8:28–32).
 - Jesus' power and authority to save (8:25, 42-48, 49-52).
- 3. Provide time for people to explore or give testimony about how God led them to faith in Jesus as God's saving king.
- 4. v21: Jesus' strict warning to not tell anyone (see 4:33-35; 5:14; 8:56).
 - v22: What Jesus says will happen to him:
 - The Son of Man was promised complete and eternal dominion over all God's creation (Daniel 7:13–14).
 - Yet Jesus says he must go through great suffering on his way to glory.
- 7. Jesus says his followers must:
 - Deny themselves. This means putting loyalty to him before their own interests.
 - Take up their cross and follow him. This means the possibility of enduring public disgrace and death. It is not, of course, that every loyal disciple will be a martyr but following Christ's example means sacrifice, sometimes hardship and perhaps even the possibility of dying for Jesus.



Trust

Luke 9:28-45

God's Son, Jesus is the one chosen to deliver people from evil.

Aim: Trust what Jesus has come to do and marvel at his glory.



What do you think Jesus requires of his followers? Try to come up with practical ideas and suggestions.

Setting the scene

Luke puts two very different events next to each other. One sees a meeting on Mount Sinai, the other Jesus' healing of a demon-possessed boy. Through both, God reveals how Jesus is the one he has chosen to deliver humanity from evil.



Read Luke 9: 28-45

- 1. In v28, what had Jesus said eight days earlier?
- 2. Jesus then takes John and James up on a mountain to pray.
 - What happened while Jesus was praying? (v29–30)
 - What were they talking about? (v31)
 - Why are they talking about this at this point?
- 3. This was quite something for the disciples to wake up to! (v32)
 - How does Peter respond? (v33)
 - How does what happens next confirm Jesus' words to Peter in v20-22? (v32–36)
- 4. Luke places this incident alongside the healing of a boy with an unclean spirit in v37–43
 - What is the problem with the boy ? (v38–40)
 - To whom does Jesus direct his words in v41?
 - What does Jesus' response in v42-43 reveal
 - (i) about the disciples?
 - (ii) about Jesus?
- 5. The disciples, like us, still have a lot to understand. Looking at v44-45, what is it that Jesus wants his disciples to take away from this incident?

6. Reflecting on the whole section, what is it that we must understand and trust about the significance of Jesus' identity and death?



Bringing it closer to home...

If we are honest with ourselves, we often find that trying to understand all God is doing in and through Jesus can be completely baffling.

What is God saying to us in this passage that leads us to follow Jesus, even when we don't understand what he is doing?



Pray

Taking the truths of this passage, how would you turn what you have learned into prayers for missionaries overseas?

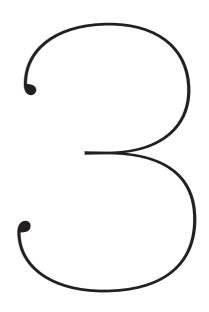
Study Notes - Trust

- 1. In v28, 'these sayings' relate to what Jesus requires of anyone who would follow him, spoken in v23-26, which Jesus' first disciples have still to understand fully.
- 2. In v29-31, Jesus takes John and James up on a mountain to pray, during which time the disciples fall asleep. Jesus' appearance is transformed in their presence as he is joined by two Old Testament heroes of faith in God's unfolding purposes, Moses and Elijah.

The word translated as 'departure' in the NIV UK version is the same Greek word that is elsewhere in the Bible translated as 'exodus'. They are talking about an 'exodus' for Jesus.

Draw out the comparison with the first exodus, when Moses rescued God's people by leading them out of Egypt, and this new exodus, when Jesus will rescue God's people from judgement and slavery by leaving earth (ie dying on the cross). This second 'exodus' is central to God's plan.

- Rescue from judgement in the first exodus a perfect lamb was slain
 in the place of the firstborn in every house. In this second exodus, Jesus
 identifies himself as the new sacrificial lamb (see Luke 22:19–20)
 who will give his life so that God's people will not perish under God's
 future judgement.
- Liberation from slavery in the first exodus, God delivers his people from physical slavery in Egypt to worship him at Mount Sinai. In this second exodus, God is delivering his people from slavery to sin and evil to worship him in his kingdom (Luke 7:36–50; 9:37–43; 11:14–22; 24:44–48).
- 3. Cloud in the Old Testament is sometimes associated with the presence of God (see Exodus 40:34ff), also here a veiling of divine glory. In v32–36 this is hard for the first disciples to take in, just as it is for us! The main message from God comes in v35 listen to Jesus, because of who he is. We need not only to listen to what he says about his death/departure, we need also to listen to him and obey what he says about following him.
- 4. In v41–43, Jesus' response reveals how faithless his disciples are when they think about his power over evil; they also reveal his power to deliver humanity from evil. His words underline the truth that listening to Jesus calls for us to trust Jesus for who he is and for what he is able to accomplish.
- 6. It is vital that we keep trusting Jesus in his mission and lead others to listen to his words, just as those first disciples did.



Follow

Luke 9:51-62

Willingly proclaiming God's kingdom as our first priority.

Aim: To understand the cost of following Jesus wholeheartedly.



Complete this sentence:

Following Jesus involves		



Read Luke 9: 51-62

- 1. Until now Jesus has spent much of his public ministry around Galilee. What change of direction does Jesus make at this point and why? (v51)
- 2. What do James and John suggest when the residents of a Samaritan village show hostility? (v52–54)
- 3. In what ways can you relate to James and John?
- 4. Why do you think Jesus rebuked them? (v52–56)
- 5. Luke records three conversations Jesus has on the road with his would-be followers. What does Jesus want each person to understand?

 - (iii) v61–62:
- 6. What do you find most surprising and challenging about these conversations?



Bringing it closer to home...

On a piece of paper, list the 10 most important things in your life (the first being the most precious to you, the second less so, the third less again and so on) e.g. family, lifestyle, job.

What are you most fearful about losing?

7. What things could you change in your life in order to follow Jesus wholeheartedly?



Pray

In small groups or individually, spend some time praying through your list of important and precious things, thanking God for these blessings. Then ask God to show you the things in your life that have got in the way of you following him wholeheartedly and ask him to give you strength to change.

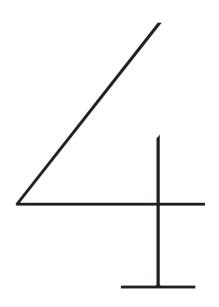
Study Notes - Follow

Talk about: This is one of the key subjects that Jesus' first disciples needed to come to terms with throughout His public ministry. On a number of occasions Jesus corrects and rebukes the misunderstandings that followers have about his gospel call on their lives to pray and go as workers in God's harvest field. Today's passage will most likely challenge our commonly held assumptions about mission in the 21st century as we learn from the mission Jesus sent his followers on in Luke 9.

- 1. Jesus starts out towards his final destination Jerusalem. He has already said what will happen to him there (9:22, 44) and that it will be the place of his departure to heaven (9:31). From this point on, Jesus is on a journey to reach Jerusalem, where he is determined to endure betrayal, suffering, mockery, death...and then resurrection. Along the way he teaches what following him and proclaiming God's kingdom will involve for them.
- 2. The Samaritans are negative because Jesus is going to Jerusalem (foreign territory for them) and not necessarily because the disciples are with Christ. Now isn't the time for those hostile to Jesus to be destroyed but to be offered peace (see 10:5).
- 3. It is easy to be angered when people deliberately choose not to follow Jesus, but this is not how Jesus calls us to respond. Our job is to share the gospel and to bring peace, not condemnation.
- 4. Jesus' ministry at this stage is not to bring judgement, nor to make people follow him through the threat of immediate punishment. It is to offer them the good news of the gospel.
- 5. v57–58 following Jesus does not guarantee you a comfortable life or an earthly home (see 9:23).
 - v59.—60 —This man may have wanted to fulfil the oldest son's duty to bury his father (a common practice amongst Jews at the time), to be near his father in order to obtain an inheritance, or to remain near the body of his father for up to one year to rebury the bones. While Scripture, and Jesus, are clear that we are to honour our parents (See Ephesians 6:2), we have to understand that Jesus is to come first, and this would have been especially so in this instance, with a direct command from the Lord. For the people of this world, nothing is more important than our response to the gospel. So once we make the decision to follow Jesus and preach his good news, we must deny dead, worldly pursuits and comforts, and do the Lord's work.

- In v61–62 'ploughing' God's word into people's lives requires an enduring loyalty to kingdom service.
- 6. It is interesting that the word 'follow' appears in all three interactions. This section is about following (discipleship) and, strikingly, the disciples are called to follow Jesus on his journey to the cross; a self-sacrificial other-person-centred journey. The cost is high, but it's worth it because by following Jesus we'll be with him now and forever.

Bringing it closer to home: Provide time for people to explore the areas in their lives where their commitment to Jesus is compromised, diminished or in danger of becoming sidelined by other things. It is worth reminding the group that we will only be prepared to pay the high price of following Jesus if we realise who he is. This is why Jesus reveals himself before showing what following him will involve.



Go

Luke 10:1-24

Jesus instructs his followers to pray and sends them out to share the news of God's kingdom.

Aim: Share the good news of Jesus Christ, leaving the ultimate outcome to God.



Talk about

What are the fears that hold you back from sharing God's good news in your sphere of influence?

Setting the scene

Some of those who make it through Jesus' selection criteria (9:57-62) are then sent ahead of Jesus 'to every town and place he was about to go' (10:1).



Read Luke 10:1-16

- 1. What job does Jesus give to the 72 messengers? (v1–9)
- 2. The instructions Jesus gives mean the 72 won't be slowed down by unnecessary baggage what's the hurry? (v9, 11, 9:51)
- 3. List the ways in which Christians today are both similar to, and different from, the 72 messengers.
- 4. How will things turn out for those who reject the kingdom of Jesus? (v10–15)
- 5. How does v16 make you feel about the task of sharing your faith?



Read Luke 10:17-24

- 6. Why do the disciples rejoice? (v17)
- 7. Where does Jesus tell them to root their joy? (v18-20)
- 8. Why is this important for ministry?



Connection...

What ideas connect these Old and New Testament passages?

- Exodus 32:32–33
- Daniel 12:1
- Malachi 3:16
- Revelation 20:12–15
- 9. What does Jesus' praise to God reveal about:
 - God's role in people becoming Christians? (v21–22)
 - The privilege we have as New Testament believers? (v23-24)



Pray

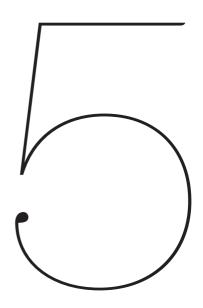
Pray through the fears you discussed at the start, asking God to give you courage and remembering that he alone is sovereign over who comes to know him.

Pray specifically for people that you know who don't currently see Jesus for who he is.

Study Notes - Go

- 1. Jesus gives the messenger the same job he has: inviting people to receive God's peace and respond to the kingdom of God.
- 2. The time is approaching for Jesus to be crucified, rise and ascend into heaven.
- 3. Work through the nine commands Jesus gives in the passage:
 - Sent out 'two by two' (10:1)
 - Pray for labourers (10:2)
 - Like 'lambs among wolves' (10:3)
 - 'Carry no money bag...greet no one on the road' (10:4)
 - Give a greeting 'peace to this house' (10:5)
 - Accept hospitality (10:7-8)
 - Heal sick people (10:9)
 - Share the message 'The kingdom of God has come near to you' (10:9)
 - 'The one who hears you hears me' (10:16)
- 4. The people of Korazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum had the opportunity to witness Jesus' miracles and hear his teaching. Therefore they will be held to greater account than Sodom, Tyre and Sidon (notoriously sinful cities) because they saw a greater work of God yet still rejected him. This is a warning to us that the more we hear God's truth and the more we see him move, the more we will be held to account if we reject him.
- 5. Just as Jesus is God's messenger, we too are his ambassadors, so rejecting us is a rejection of him. It is a privilege to represent Jesus and his words.
- 6. The disciples are filled with joy at seeing people being set free from spiritual bondage and having power over the demons but Jesus rejoices in the Holy Spirit that people are seeing Jesus for who is really is, and accepting the gospel message.
- 7. Jesus warns the disciples about rejoicing too much in what God is doing through them, however great that is. Instead, they should be rejoicing that they have eternal salvation their names are written (by God) in heaven (see the Bible references in the 'Connection' box).
- 8. Our joy is in the salvation we've been given by Jesus rather than the results of our ministry which guards us from pride and despair!

Connection: The idea of the names of God's faithful people being written down in heaven is common in the Bible.



Love

Luke 10:25-37

Those who inherit eternal life must love God with all they are and love others as themselves.

Aim: Repent of any self-justifying behaviour and instead show mercy wherever we can.



In your day-to-day living, whom would you consider a neighbour? Who wouldn't you? Explain what the difference is.

Setting the scene

We learnt over our last two studies that while rejecting Jesus leads to condemnation from God, following him demands we give God first priority in our lives.

Jesus has set himself on course for Jerusalem, where he will suffer, die and rise. Along the way he deals with questions relating to the issue of what it means to follow him. In this section Jesus is confronted with a crucial question that all would-be disciples need to be clear on (v25).



Read Luke 10:25-37

- 1. In v25 we're introduced to a man whose job involved knowing the Law of Moses back-to-front and inside out. What does this lawyer want to know first?
- 2. Jesus' answer is based on commands in the Old Testament (See Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18), which would have been well-known to the lawyer. According to Jesus, what is right about the man's answer?
- 3. Looking more closely at the lawyer's answer, what does he fail to understand? (v25b, 29)

Jesus goes on to answer the lawyer's question directly by telling a story (v30–35), asking a question (v36) and then giving a final command (v37). The distance from Jerusalem to Jericho is about 17 miles and descends sharply towards the Jordan River just north of the Dead Sea. The road curves through rugged, bleak and rocky terrain.

- 4. Imagine you are the priest or the Levite. List as many reasons as you can why you might think it is a mistake to help the wounded man (v30-35).
- 5. Do you think any of the reasons you listed would also apply to the Samaritan? Are there any other reasons why the Samaritan might have had second thoughts about helping this man?
- 6. What is striking about the nature of the compassion the Samaritan shows this man? (33–35)



Bringing it closer to home...

What does Jesus' parable teach us about our ability to put ourselves right with God?



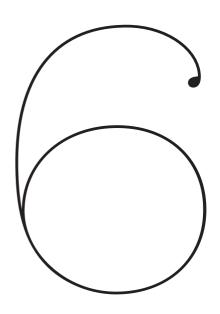
Pray

Ask God to show you opportunities (and give you the courage and conviction to take them) to be a true neighbour to those who are in need. Pray for strength and protection for mission workers that you know.

Study Notes - Love

- 1. The lawyer asks a good question and one that many people wanted to know the answer to (see 18:18, Acts 2:37, 16:30). Eternal life is life in God's kingdom (John 3:3, 5, 15–16, 36).
- 2. For Jesus, the Old Testament is the definitive standard of faith and practice (Luke 18:19-20) and the man's reading of it is exemplary he really understands God's commands. However, Jesus knew that the lawyer was only trying to justify himself and was not genuinely seeking to be taught by him. That explains why Jesus goes on to tell the parable of the Good Samaritan, highlighting the negative side of the man's argument (i.e. his self-justifying attitude).
- 3. Think about the lawyer's attitude towards Jesus and salvation. There is nothing in his answer that acknowledges he is a sinner (5:30–32) and that Jesus is his saviour (9:20–27). He thinks eternal life can be 'earned' rather than 'received' through Jesus Christ.
 - It is important to look at the context at this point. When Jesus tells the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37) he is reinforcing what he just said in 10:21–24 and what he is going to say in 10:38–42. In order to understand the significance of all three pieces of teaching, we need to read them together. The first and third alone tell us that Jesus is important but don't fully tell us why. The parable may appear to be only about how to love our neighbour, but if we read it in context we see that it is also about the way that eternal life cannot be obtained on our merit.
- 4. Numbers 19:11 is a good starting point: 'Whoever touches a human corpse will be unclean for seven days.'
- 5. As well as the reasons in question 4, Jews and Samaritans hated each other (Luke 9:51–56; see also 2 Kings 17:24–41 and Nehemiah 4:1–9). The Samaritans lived in part of the land that had once belonged to Israel and were part descended from those Israelites of the old Northern Kingdom who had not been sent into exile in the eighth century. They had intermarried and their religion was corrupted.
- 6. Understanding the broken and bitter relationship between the Jews and the Samaritans makes the behaviour of the Samaritan in the parable utterly remarkable. His compassion is costly! It knows no boundaries of class and doesn't consider what people deserve, but rather what they need.

Bringing it closer to home: Eternal life can only be obtained through Jesus. If we want to achieve it on our own we need to achieve God's standard, including loving him perfectly, which is impossible. If we think we can love God *perfectly*, an honest attempt to obey 10:30–37 will show us the impossibility of achieving even the much easier task of loving our neighbour.



Listen

Luke 10:38-42

Assessing our priorities in learning and serving.

Aim: To make listening to Jesus a daily priority.



Talk about

How do you feel when you are interrupted and prevented from finishing a task? Do you struggle to engage with what else is going on or do you welcome unexpected distractions?

Setting the scene

We saw in our last study (Luke 10:25–37) that if anyone is to inherit eternal life they need to love God with all that they are and to love others as themselves. They cannot limit their compassion to those they already know and love, or justify their behaviour and choices in this way (10:29).

In this passage Jesus stops at a house to teach another important lesson about what really matters in life.



Read Luke 10:38-42

- 1. What scene does Luke describe in verses 38–40?
- 2. What characterises the different attitudes of Mary and Martha to Jesus' visit? What is particularly telling about what Martha says to Jesus?
- 3. Why is Jesus' response surprising? (v41-42)
- 4. What is Mary choosing that won't be taken away from her?
- 5. How do verses 38-42 help us to answer the question the lawyer asked Jesus in v25 (*See study five*)?
- 6. Is your 'service' of Jesus helping you to listen better to him, or is it keeping you from truly sitting at his feet and responding to who he is and what he's saying?



Connection...

How do the following passages help us understand the importance of listening to Jesus?

- Luke 8:4–15
- Luke 10:21-24
- Romans 10:16–21



Bringing it closer to home...

- What are the common results you experience when you lose your focus on Jesus?
- List some specific changes you could make in your life to have a more Mary-like response to Jesus, in order to better listen to him as you serve him.



Pray

Ask God to help you be more attentive as you listen and obey the words of Jesus.

Study Notes - Listen

- 1. Help the group to draw out the details of this incident.
- 2-4. Encourage your group to work out these answers from the text.
- 5. Eternal life is obtained first and foremost by listening to Jesus' words attentively and not by busying ourselves with loving others according to their needs whether that's the man on the street (30-37) or guests in the home (v38-40).
- 6. In Luke 10, having lost her focus on the Lord and having been consumed with worry, Martha lashes out and blames her sister when, according to Jesus, it was her own poor choice.

Bringing it closer to home: The important thing to note, for busy and active people, is their need to slow down and take time to be with Jesus. While this might not be a natural inclination, it is a necessity. It would be good to get people to be as practical as possible here, such as thinking through the best time of day to be quiet with God, etc.

What do I do next?

We very much hope you've enjoyed working through these studies and that you feel you now have a better understanding of Jesus' call to mission.

As a long-standing mission agency, we have opportunities to serve God in a vast range of ministries across more than 70 countries. At any one time, we have 900 or more opportunities to serve Christ in hard to reach places.

We work hand-in-hand with evangelical churches to send and receive gospel workers who are equipped to make disciples where there is no witness to Christ.

We would be happy to supply more copies of these studies to any churches which might find them helpful. We also produce a wide range of resources to help you pray for global mission and to help you support global mission financially.

To find out more please go to www.sim.co.uk or email our communications manager, Tim Allan (tim@sim.co.uk).



Mission Matters

Six Bible studies in Luke's gospel

Jesus gave us the perfect example of how to 'do' global mission. In these studies, which cover less than two chapters of Luke's gospel, we learn from him how we can be effective in global mission.

The lessons Jesus teaches us apply whether we head overseas as a missionary, or if we stay at home and share the gospel with those around us.

As you work through the studies, you will see Jesus' unfolding plan for mission and come to a deeper understanding of why it must lie at the heart of church life — and in the heart of every Christian.



Serving In Mission

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