



grow. pray. study.

March 1, 2020 A Most Uncomfortable Supper

Scripture: Luke 7:36-50

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Family Activity: One amazing thing about Jesus is that he forgives. Talk with your child about what forgiveness is: a choice to let go of anger/sadness towards someone who hurt you. Forgiveness is not weak—it takes strength and courage. It is also not forgetting, condoning or putting up with being hurt. And forgiveness is different than reconciling with someone; you can forgive even without an apology. To practice this, have your child write or draw a picture illustrating something that they would like to forgive. Going to the person they need to forgive, encourage your child to share their picture to show him/her what made them feel sad or hurt. Then have your child let the person know they have forgiven him/her. When your child finishes sharing, have them walk away, tear up their picture and throw it away. It is forgiven! Explain that this is what Jesus does for us when we do things that make him feel anger and sadness. We are forgiven!

Note to readers:

During Lent, the GPS will lead us to read the entire gospel of Luke. To reach that goal, some daily readings are longer than usual. Mondays will highlight the “meal” passage from the previous Sunday’s sermon. Tuesdays through Saturdays will cover the rest of the gospel. Have an extra cup of coffee, or maybe use your lunch break—make the time to read the whole gospel with us.

A most uncomfortable supper

MONDAY 3.2.20 Luke 7:36-50

Luke said the uninvited woman at Simon the Pharisee’s home was “a sinner.” Women then had many fewer options (they couldn’t, for example, embezzle, or be tax collectors), so “sinner” almost always meant a prostitute. The Pharisee Simon only saw a fallen woman. But this story had an unseen “prequel.” Verse 47 made it plain that this was not the first time Jesus met this woman. He said he’d already forgiven her “many sins. Jesus saw Simon (who felt no need for forgiveness) as in far greater spiritual danger than the woman, deeply grateful for forgiveness.

- In verse 44, Jesus asked Simon a telling question: “Do you see this woman?” “Simon only saw sin, but Jesus saw the woman and her lavish display of humility, nurture, generosity and love.” * How did Jesus’ pointed contrast in verses 41-47 show the spiritual hollowness of Simon’s pious front, fed in part by his patriarchal assumptions of male superiority?
- Jesus gave this woman the priceless gift of freedom from guilt, which also freed her from feelings of shame before others. If not, she would not have been able to be so socially bold in expressing her gratitude and love to Jesus. Have you ever felt “ashamed to show your face” for any reason? How can opening your life to God’s love and forgiveness set you free to live more fully?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I realize that like both the woman and the Pharisee with Jesus, I owe a debt I couldn't possibly pay. Keep me rejoicing in your forgiveness and forgiving others as you did. Amen.

* Ginger Gaines-Cirelli, "Portrait" note on "Woman Who Washed Jesus' Feet" in *The CEB Women's Bible*. Nashville: Common English Bible, 2016, p. 1301.

Two world-changing announcements

TUESDAY 3.3.20 Luke 1:1-38

In the next seven weeks, we'll read the gospel of Luke. Why? As Pastor Hamilton wrote, "My relationship with Jesus is largely made possible by reading and meditating upon the Scriptures." * Luke relied on eyewitness testimony (verses 2-3). Luke's careful investigation of Jesus' story added to what we know. His gospel, for example, was the only one that told of an angel announcing that aged Elizabeth would bear Jesus' forerunner, while young Mary would give birth to the Savior himself.

- Angels don't usually appear to tell us what God wants from us. In what ways have you learned to listen for God's voice in your life? If you think a message or call may be from God, what ways have you learned of confirming that? If (or when) God calls you to something tough, are you willing to respond to God as Mary did in verse 38?
- In Luke 1:13, God's messenger said, "Do not be afraid, Zechariah." Months later, the same messenger said, "Do not be afraid, Mary" (verse 30). "Do not be afraid" is the most common command in the Bible. In what part of your life do you most need to hear and apply God's "Do not be afraid" message?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for Luke, for the attraction to Jesus that led him to carefully trace out and record the story. Give me an understanding, worshipping heart as I read his gospel. Amen.

* Adam Hamilton, *The Walk: Five Essential Practices of the Christian Life*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2019, p. 61.

God "lifted up the lowly"

WEDNESDAY 3.4.20 Luke 1:39-66

In Elizabeth and Mary's time, women were second-class citizens. No male leader of their day would have greeted this woman of almost no status by saying, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." That's why Mary sang that God lifts up the lowly. She and Elizabeth were living examples—a childless older woman and an unmarried teen from a backwater town given key roles in God's saving plan.

- Elizabeth affirmed and encouraged Mary with God-given insight. She knew Mary's child was unique. Elizabeth was the first person to call Jesus "Lord": "Why do I have this honor, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (verse 43) When has someone affirmed you by noticing God at work in your life? Who can you affirm and encourage today?
- How did verse 58 describe the caring, supportive network that surrounded Elizabeth and Zechariah? Who enters into your joys, and supports you when you encounter challenges? How well are you able to enter into others' joy or pain and support them in return?

Prayer: Lord God, you worked out your plan through ordinary people like Zechariah, Elizabeth and Mary. That gives me hope. I'm ready to follow you in whatever you have in mind for me. Amen.

"A mighty Savior"—born in a stable

THURSDAY 3.5.20 Luke 1:67-2:20

Zechariah, John the Baptist's father, said of Mary's child, God "has raised up a mighty savior for us in his servant David's house.... He has brought salvation." Zechariah said his son would proclaim, "The dawn from heaven will break upon us, to give light to those who are sitting in darkness." Yet the "mighty Savior" was born to two poor parents in a starkly simple birthplace.

- When people in the Judean hill country heard of the events around John's birth, they asked, "What then will this child be?" Zechariah knew about his son John's mission, as Luke 1:76 showed. Who played John's role in your life—who prepared the way for your faith, and introduced you to Jesus?
- Bethlehem was probably too small to have a viable "inn." Pastor Hamilton wrote, "The Greek word *kataluma* is more accurately translated as "guestroom," as we find in the *Common English Bible*." Jesus was born in an animal shelter because all other options were too crowded for Mary to give birth in. Many of us live very crowded lives. How are you making room in your heart and your life for Jesus?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for the good news of your birth, for me, and for all people. Help me this day to live in a spirit of gratitude for your great gift of yourself. Amen.

* Adam Hamilton, *Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017, p. 107.

The emotional challenges of parenting the Messiah

FRIDAY 3.6.20 Luke 2:21-52

Simeon and Anna, two elderly servants of God, saw in the infant Jesus the hope they'd waited for. Simeon warned Mary that her life would hold pain as well as joy. Then Luke told about Jesus' first Passover. Jesus showed a precocious insight into issues of faith. But Mary and Joseph felt a taste of the pain and perplexity they would face at times as their exceptional son grew up.

- Reflect on each of Simeon's phrases in verses 34-35. How did each phrase point to one aspect of what happened in Jesus' life and ministry? In what ways has your loyalty to Jesus brought your life challenges and adjustments? Has facing those challenges for Jesus' sake been worth it?
- Luke 2:41-52 is the only glimpse of Jesus' life as a boy in any of the gospels. What does the story show you about the special challenges his parents faced in raising God's son? How did the story foreshadow Jesus' effectiveness when, about 18 years later, he began preaching and teaching?

Prayer: Lord God, thank you for the courage, commitment and sensitivity to your will that Mary and Joseph brought to their amazing life calling. Shape me into a person who reflects your love in all my relationships. Amen.

The baptizing prophet and the baptized Messiah

SATURDAY 3.7.20 Luke 3:1-22

Nearly four hundred years had gone by with no clear prophetic voice in Israel. When John the Baptist began preaching, forcefully and urgently calling people to change their lives, he drew crowds hungry for a word from God. He baptized people as a symbol of cleansing and change. Faithful to his life mission, he pointed beyond himself, and had the privilege of baptizing the Savior whose way he'd prepared.

- John the Baptist passionately called people to accept baptism as a sign of their desire to change inwardly. But his baptism was not an end in itself. He was preparing the way for the Messiah. As scholar N. T. Wright explained, "John was doing what the prophet Isaiah had said: preparing a pathway for the Lord himself to return to his people. This was the time. Rescue was at hand." * *The Walk* shows us five essential practices (Worship, Study, Serve, Give and Share) that empower us to prepare the way for the Lord in our own and other people's lives. How are you preparing the way for Jesus Christ to work in your life? In the lives of others? What choices and practices help you keep your commitment to God's call strong and focused?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to see clearly your call on my life. Give me the courage and conviction of John the Baptist in living out that calling and doing your will. Amen.

* N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, p. 34.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Shari Schmok and family following the death of Carlos Crain (father), 2/11/2020

Kelly Hanson and family following the death of Doris Hanson (mother), 2/20/2020

Jeanette Lee and family following the death of Josephine Borello (mother), 2/20/2020

Tony Weigel and family following the death of Sandra Patrick (mother), 2/20/2020

Steve Rampy and family following the death of Richard Rampy (father), 2/21/2020

Beth Boal and family following the death of Norma Lois Allen (mother-in-Law), 2/24/2020