

'On the road'

Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus

Luke is up front about his intention in writing his gospel record: it was to help a man called Theophilus to have the confidence to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. He wanted to bolster the embryonic faith of this man in the face of both the hostility he was likely to face and the adversity which almost certainly would be his experience.

The aim of this study of Luke's gospel, therefore, is to help us all "*fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*", to the end that we "*run with perseverance the race marked out for us*" (see Heb.12.1-2)

You can find the background to this series [here](#).

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21. Luke 11.37-54 [w/b Sunday 14th October 2018]

“.. but you neglect ...”

Remember the context: this whole section of Luke’s account, most of the material in which is unique to him, narrates Jesus travelling from Galilee to Jerusalem through Samaria. This is classic ‘mission’ work, Jesus ministering in an environment which is culturally different and intrinsically suspicious if not hostile towards Him and His message.

Dinner with a Pharisee could provide an equally ‘suspicious if not hostile’ setting! With this one difference - the Pharisees (and the experts in the law) should have known better than the ill-informed people of Samaria. Not afraid to occasion offence, Jesus speaks with a challenging, unequivocal clarity: and there are times when we must too!

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 1, 2, and 5. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

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1. Read Luke 11.37-54. This encounter with a Pharisee and an expert in the law sees Jesus ‘shooting from the hip’ and exposing in no uncertain terms the fatal ‘fault-lines’ in mere ‘religion’.

How do you find yourself reacting as you see Jesus in action here?

What was the heart of the issue which triggered this 'fusillade of woes' from Jesus (vv.38-41)?

2. Read Luke 11.42. Jesus doesn't mince His words! He exposes the way in which the Pharisees, for all their commendable commitment to the Scriptures, had 'majored on the minors'.

What might be contemporary illustrations of such focusing on the wrong priorities?

To what do you think Jesus was pointing when He said that the Pharisees 'neglect justice and the love of God'?

Tithing was clearly not unimportant: to what extent should it still be a feature of our discipleship?

3. Read Luke 11.43. The catalogues of 'woes' continues as Jesus highlights another feature of the 'religion' of the Pharisees which He has observed.

Why is the behavior which Jesus exposes here so damaging and fatal (thus warranting His 'Woe!')?

From your observation (of yourself and others) how do we sometimes subtly use religion to promote ourselves?

4. Read Luke 11.44. Walking over a grave, and the dead corpse within, left a person contaminated and in need of cleansing: graves were thus often marked and indeed 'whitewashed'.

What did Jesus mean by likening Pharisees to such 'unmarked graves'?

How would you describe the 'religion of the Pharisees? And how does Pharisaical 'religion' 'contaminate' people?

5. Read Luke 11.45-46. If the cap fits wear it! An expert in the law had got rather 'twitchy' hearing what Jesus was saying and now enters the fray.

In what way did the 'experts in the law' load people down?

What did He mean by saying that the 'experts in the law' didn't lift a finger to help them?

How (if at all) have you found this sort of thing being paralleled in church life today?

6. Read Luke 11.47-51. This lengthiest 'Woe!' relates to the way that those who ostensibly loved the Word of God scorned and did away with the prophets who delivered the Word of God.

What was it about the prophets which sometimes saw them being killed?

Read **2 Tim.4.1-5**: this phenomenon recurs throughout the history of the church - how is it seen today?

What did Jesus mean by declaring that *'this generation will be held responsible for it all'* (vv.50f)?

7. Read Luke 11.52-54. Jesus concludes by pointing to the sheer perversity of the Pharisees and teachers of the law: and His plain speaking predictably didn't go down well with them!

How had the 'experts in the law' 'taken away the key to knowledge'?

What is the *'entering'* to which Jesus refers in v.52?

The message of the gospel is always challenging - read **Luke 3.7ff** to see something similarly challenging!: how do we ensure that we are faithful to the gospel but don't come across as simply negative?