

DISCOVERY

Discipling Programme for Young People

Course A



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This course covers biblical study of the Gospels, studies in Christian living and biographies of heroes of the faith. It has been prepared for the International Literature Programme by Colonel Derek Elvin

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INTRODUCTION

This book is the first of a series of three providing a course in Christian discipleship for young people from the age of 12 years upward. It is suitable for use by corps cadets. We hope you will find it to be both interesting and challenging as you think about the Christian faith and that you will enjoy the studies.

The studies in this book cover one year divided into monthly sections with four modules in each section.

The first two weeks in each month are Bible studies on the life and work of Jesus Christ, from his birth until his final entry into Jerusalem. All four Gospels are used, although the studies follow the course of Luke's Gospel. You will learn about what Jesus did and said and how his life showed God's love for us.

The third week in each month is about Christian Living – what we believe and how we should behave. You will need a separate book called *Never the Same Again* by Shaw Clifton as the textbook for these studies.

The fourth week in each month introduces you to some inspiring people who have served in The Salvation Army. You will need a book called *Heroes of the Faith* which tells their stories.

Four weeks in the year are left for your local leader to arrange some practical work in sharing the gospel with other people.



Each week's programme has a suggested subject for your prayers. This is indicated by this symbol.



There is also a subject for discussion provided each week. This will allow you to share your ideas with your leader and your friends. This is indicated by this symbol.



The passages from the Bible or the textbooks are shown by this symbol. You should make sure that you read the passages carefully, and that you understand them.



There are two suggested questions for each lesson. The Standard grade is indicated by this symbol.



For those who would like to try a more demanding question, you will find this marked by this symbol. You should seek the advice of your leader about which set of questions to answer.

We send this book out believing that it will be a help as you come to discover the exciting and adventurous way of life experienced by all who following Jesus, who came to be our Saviour.



Luke 2:1-3, 25-38
John 1:1-14



Pray that many people we know will find a 'turning point' in their lives because Jesus comes alive to them.



Many people in today's world still hope for something better. It often seems to be difficult to find a way to this better world. How can the message of God's truth and grace in the coming of Jesus help them to keep that hope alive?

**Month 1
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'The Turning
Point'**

The turning point

Christians believe that the coming of Jesus Christ to the world was the most important event in the world's history. It was the turning point. There had been many wonderful civilisations in different parts of the world. There had been many great people with remarkable achievements and inspiring ideas. But when Jesus was born, God himself came to our world to save it. That is why Christians began to number the years from the date when they believed that Jesus was born.

The right time (Luke 2:1-3)

In these verses Luke tells us when this happened according to events in the Roman world. This was the world into which Jesus was born. God had chosen the right time and prepared the world for the coming of Jesus.

A world at peace

It was a world that was relatively peaceful. Roman armies had conquered most of Europe, Asia and North Africa and Roman laws were in force there. Although there was a great deal of cruelty, there were few wars or rebellions. Travel was safe. The roads were good. The gospel could be spread around the world.

A common language

It was a world where Greek ideas and the Greek language were used by many people who lived in the Roman Empire. This shared language meant that gospel truths could be understood by many people.

A religious world

It was a world in which many people were tired of the old, false stories of many gods and goddesses. They longed for a faith that was better, less complicated and more moral. Jewish ideas of God's goodness and justice attracted many people.

Looking for hope (Luke 2:25-32)

It was a world where many people were looking forward to something better. They hoped and believed that someone would come to make things right for them. Some Jewish people used the word 'Messiah' (or in Greek 'Christ') to describe this person that they hoped for. When Jesus was born, Simeon, an elderly man who shared this hope, rejoiced because God had told him that Jesus was the person who would make this turning point in the world happen.

Hope for the world (Luke 2:33-38)

Simeon and Anna were among those who were looking for dramatic changes that the Messiah would bring. They believed that this was the only hope for the world. But Simeon also saw that the changes that the Messiah would bring would be difficult to achieve and painful for many. He foretold that Mary herself would experience great suffering. Nevertheless, the Messiah would bring great glory to Israel and be a light for the whole world.

God becomes a human being (John 1:1-14)

When John began to write his Gospel he thought about the importance of Christ's coming into the world. He says that, from before the creation of the world, Jesus Christ was with God. He was there when the world was made. But now, at the turning point of human history, this 'Word of God' became a person, a newborn baby, to bring the light of God's truth into the dark world. John says that, in Jesus, we saw the glory of God in his only Son. He was the One who would change the world for ever.



Galatians 4:4 says that God sent his Son 'when the right time had come'. How did God prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ?



How does the coming of Jesus fulfil the hopes of those who were looking for a 'Messiah'?



Luke 1:5-38, 39-45, 56-67, 76-80;
 Luke 2:1-52
 Matthew 2:1-12



Pray that we may always find room for Jesus
 in our hearts.



Jesus' birth was very humble but also
 miraculous. What do you think God was trying
 to teach us by sending his Son in this way?

**Month 1
 Week 2**

**Bible Study
 The Gospels**

**'God's plan for
 the world, two
 babies!'**

An unusual plan (Luke 1:5-25)

It is perhaps surprising that, when God decided to send the Messiah, he did not send a ready-made 'great man' who could start his work immediately. He sent a baby and waited for him to grow up. He waited for about 30 years.

A surprising start

The work of preparation started with two old people, a priest named Zechariah and his wife Elizabeth. Zechariah had a vision of an angel while he was working in the Temple. He was told that Elizabeth would have a son, to be called John. He would become a great and godly man and 'go ahead of the Lord', and 'get the Lord's people ready for him'. Though Zechariah was looking forward to God's action he found it hard to believe that he and his wife could be used in this way, especially as they were too old to have children. As a sign, Zechariah became dumb and did not speak again until John was born.

'The Lord's message . . . will come true' (Luke 1:39-45)

Mary was a relative of Elizabeth, and lived 60 or 70 miles away from Jerusalem in the Galilean town of Nazareth. She had been told by an angel that she too would have a baby. This, too, was surprising as she was not yet married, though her marriage was planned. Mary went to stay with Elizabeth, perhaps to escape from gossiping neighbours. Elizabeth had been pregnant for over five months (Luke 1:36). Without really knowing how, Elizabeth knew that Mary was to be

the mother of the Messiah. Both of them were happy because they believed that 'the Lord's message . . . will come true' even though it would mean much suffering for them.

Facing a hard future (Luke 1:26-38)

We often think of the birth of Jesus as a very happy event because of what it means to us. However, Mary would have been very fearful about what the angel told her. One reason is that the final ceremony of her marriage to Joseph had not yet taken place. He might think she had been unfaithful to him and have nothing more to do with her. Other people, who did not understand the truth about God's workings, would think of her as an unmarried mother and gossip about her. Perhaps Mary was also afraid of the future when she was told that Jesus would be the 'Son of the Most High God', thinking that she, who was only a country girl, would be shut out of her son's life. Nevertheless, Mary's immediate answer was, 'I am the Lord's servant . . . may it happen to me as you have said.'

Laid in a manger (Luke 2:1-7)

The Romans wanted to know how many people lived in each country so that they could make them pay taxes. Everyone had to go to his home town to register his name. Joseph's ancestors had come from Bethlehem, so he and Mary had to go there, 70 miles from their home in Nazareth. It was in Bethlehem that Jesus was born, in a place where animals were kept, because Joseph and Mary couldn't find anywhere else to stay.

'Great joy to all the people' (Luke 2:8-20)

Shepherds stayed out all night watching their flocks of sheep. Some shepherds near Bethlehem had a vision of an angel who told them about the special birth, telling them to go and see the baby. A huge choir of angels sang God's praises. The shepherds were the first to know that the long-looked-for Messiah had now arrived. They were ordinary working people, but when they had seen and heard the angels they went to find out what had happened for themselves, and then they told others.

Welcomed by strangers (Matthew 2:1-12)

As a contrast to Luke's story of welcome from the humble shepherds, Matthew tells us that the birth of Jesus was welcomed by some spectacular strangers from a far-off land. The 'wise men' may have been astrologers and some have thought of them as kings. Their homage shows that Jesus had come for all the world. Their gifts are intended for a king, for worship and to foretell his death.



Imagine you are Mary visiting Elizabeth. Tell her about the angel's visit and your response.



These studies show many people being obedient to God. Write about the obedience of three people and show how this was important to the fulfilment of God's plan.



Never the Same Again Chapter 1 pages 1-5



Thank God for his mercy and grace which welcomed us into his family.



How has being a Christian made a difference in your life?



Becoming a Christian is like coming home to a welcome. Describe how you came home to God.



Write a gentle and courteous letter to someone you know who does not believe in God, explaining why you are a Christian.

**Month 1
Week 3**

**‘What have I
done?’**

We commence our studies in Christian Living using a book written by General Shaw Clifton. It is called *Never the Same Again*. He originally wrote it for his son who had just become a Christian but it is helpful for everyone who is beginning the journey of faith. This week we think about how it feels to have just made the important decision to accept Jesus Christ as Saviour. Even if we have been brought up in a Christian home we have to make this decision for ourselves. What does it mean?



Heroes of the Faith Page 1.



Pray for courage to step out with God even when you are uncertain about the consequences.



William always had a passion for bringing people to Christ. Do we have that same passion today?



Name three of the crucial decisions that William Booth had to make in his life.



When William commenced his ministry in the East End of London he did not intend to start a new denomination. Why, do you think, the Army emerged as a result of his work?

**Month 1
Week 4**

**'William Booth
- The First
Salvationist'**

This series of studies about The Salvation Army introduces some people who helped to make the Army what it is today. This week's story is about the man who, together with his wife, began the work which led to the commencement of our movement. We call William Booth, 'the Founder', because the work of the Army began with a passionate conviction about sharing the good news of Jesus which he felt throughout his long life. The picture of him in the book is of an old man but you should think of him as the dynamic and dramatic young leader that he was when he first started out. We hope you enjoy the story and catch something of his vision.



Luke 3:1-22; John 1:29-40 (Mark 6:14-29;
Luke 7:18-35; 9:7-9)



Pray that God will prepare us for the task he wants us to achieve. Pray that we will be ready to accept God's preparation and ready to do his will.



Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest man who had lived. Yet John pointed away from himself to Jesus. The Christian way is not to draw attention to ourselves but to point to Jesus. How can we do that today?

Month 2 Week 1

Bible Study The Gospels

'Getting Ready'

Getting the people ready (Luke 3:1-6)

The first baby in our story became known as John the Baptist, when he became a man. He left the comfortable life of his home to live in the desert. It was here that the Word of God came to him. He began to call on people to repent (turn away from their sins). He also called on them to be baptised, which means that they were dipped in water as a sign of cleansing from sin. He conducted these baptisms in the River Jordan. Up till that time baptism was a custom by which non-Jews who wished to become Jews were accepted, but John was showing that everyone was a sinner, both Jew and non-Jew. He said that the Messiah was coming soon and that the people must get ready. Verses 4-6, which are a quote from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, describe this preparation as being like the repairs that would be carried out to straighten and level a road before a king travelled along it.

How to get ready (Luke 3:7-14)

John warned the people that simply being Jewish would not save them. They must live good lives producing 'good fruit'. Otherwise they would be caught like snakes escaping from a harvest field. He showed them what living good lives really meant. They should share clothes and food with those in need. Tax collectors should be honest. Soldiers should keep the law. Everyone could live a new way of life.

Looking towards someone greater (Luke 3:15-17)

Huge crowds came to listen to John the Baptist. People were so impressed by what he said that they thought he might be the Messiah, but he was honest with them. He told them to look out for someone 'much greater' than he was, whose sandals he was 'not good enough . . . to untie' (verse 16). He said that the Messiah would 'soak' them with God's Spirit instead of just dipping them in the water of the River Jordan. You will notice that John did not feel good enough even to be the servant of Jesus.

Jesus was getting ready for his work (Luke 3:21, 22)

Jesus was the second baby in our story. We know very little about the life of Jesus as a boy. We know he visited the Temple at Jerusalem when he was 12 (Luke 2:41-52). At this age it seems that he already knew that God had a special purpose for his life. He sometimes told stories that showed that he knew how children played (Luke 7:32). He stayed at home like a good son until he was about 30. We think he had to maintain the family business after Joseph died. During this time he was getting ready for his real work. No doubt he would visit the synagogue (the place where the Jews gathered for worship and teaching) and would spend much time in prayer.

God's blessing

John was very surprised when Jesus came to be baptised by him, because he believed that Jesus was much greater than he was, but he did what Jesus told him. Jesus was without sin and did not need to repent. However, he came to be baptised because he wanted to show that he was putting himself in the same state as all other people, so that he would share what we are. At this time, God showed his approval of Jesus and sent the Holy Spirit to make him fully prepared for his work as the Saviour. John describes the way the Holy Spirit came as being 'like a dove'. This is picture language for 'peacefully and gently'. This special sign marked the beginning of the wonderful ministry of Jesus. The voice from Heaven reassured him that God would always be with him.

Pointing out Jesus (John 1:29-40)

John did not believe that his work was finished (John 3:23). He went on with it until he was imprisoned, but in a very unselfish way. He pointed away from himself to Jesus (verses 29, 35). He said, 'He must become more important while I become less important' (John 3:30). He also encouraged two of his own disciples to become disciples of Jesus (verses 37-40). One of them was Andrew, who soon brought his brother Simon Peter to Jesus.



How did Jesus get ready for his ministry?



Compare the different patterns of ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus.
(John 7:18-35 will help you) Show how John prepared the way for Jesus.



Luke 4:1-13



Pray that God will give us his grace, strength and wisdom to resist temptation even if it is to do the right thing in the wrong way.



Many Christians and Christian organisations work to help people with their practical needs. (See Matthew 25:24-40 and James 2:14-17.) But we have to remember that, 'Man does not live by bread alone.' He needs God even more. How should we balance the need for evangelism and a practical caring ministry?

**Month 2
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'What might
have been!'**

Thinking it out

The message of Jesus was that God's Kingdom was coming. All the people knew about kings who controlled their lives. They could sometimes be very cruel, like King Herod. God's Kingdom was to be different. That was how Jesus wanted it to be. He could have had an earthly kingdom. There was a time when the people tried to persuade him to be their king (John 6:15). But just after he was baptised and before he started his work of preaching and healing, Jesus took time to think out in his own mind exactly how he was going to carry out the work which God had sent him to do.

Tempting thoughts (Luke 4:1-13)

Jesus went into the desert to think it all out. We need not think of the devil as a visible creature but as someone who tempts us from within ourselves. Satan put three tempting ideas into Jesus' mind about ways in which he could win the world for his Kingdom.

Give the people food

The first way was by meeting men's physical needs with such things as food, warmth and clothing. Although Jesus was concerned about such needs, he knew that this way of winning people would be a kind of bribery. Men would come to him if he gave them bread, but would not stay with him when he stopped giving. He would have to give all his time to meeting men's physical needs and have no time to spend on his spiritual work. And if people looked upon him as one who

supplied the needs of their bodies this might prevent them from realising that his main purpose was to teach them about God.

Let the devil have control

Secondly, Jesus could have allowed the devil to be in control (verses 5-8). Jesus realised that he could control the whole world if he worked with the devil. He was tempted to do things in the devil's way. But Jesus knew that God and evil could not work together and decided that God's will must have first place in his life. If he won the world as a friend of the devil, people would obey him because he had the power to force them to. He wanted people to serve him because they loved him.

Show them a miracle

Thirdly, Jesus was tempted to do miraculous and surprising things to attract people's attention and persuade them to follow him. The devil told him to jump from the top of the Temple and into the Kidron Valley below without being hurt. Jesus could have done this because he was God's Son, but he decided that people would be so interested in the miracle that they would not listen to his teaching about God. If he once started doing such tricks he would have to go on doing them all the time to keep people satisfied (verses 9-12).

The right decision

So Jesus decided not to win people by feeding them, by forcing them, or by fascinating them. He would win them by loving them, teaching them and giving them an example of the power of suffering love. His Kingdom was not an earthly one. This meant that he was giving himself a much harder task, for men are slow to understand the real truth about God and about life.

Using Scripture

Perhaps you have noticed that Jesus answered each temptation with some words from the Old Testament Scriptures. This shows that, if we understand it properly, the Bible can greatly help us to know the best way of living. It does not mean that anybody who quotes any part of Scripture in any circumstances is right. The devil also quoted from the Old Testament when he tried to tempt Jesus to do things the wrong way (verses 10, 11). Sometimes people who are very good at quoting verses from the Bible do not understand or accept the teaching of the Bible as a whole. The truth of a verse often depends on the person who said it and in what circumstances it was said. By itself it may give an impression that is different from the truth.



Consider two of the temptations that Jesus faced and say what you think would have happened if he had yielded to them.



Why was it wrong for Jesus to find an easy way of doing good things?



Never the Same Again Chapter 1 pages 6-11



God has made it possible for us to be made 'new people' in Christ. Let us fall on our knees and thank him over and over again.



The Cross was the sign of a very cruel method of execution. How has it come to be the most important sign of Christian faith?



'If you are a Christian, you have been born again.' What does this mean for you?



Arnolis Weerasoriya, an early-day Sri Lankan Salvationist, said, 'The Cross is the attraction.' Why, do you think, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is what attracts people to Christianity?

**Month 2
Week 3**

**'What have I
done?'**

This part of the chapter called, 'What have I done?' is about the meaning of Cross of Jesus and about the change that happens to a new Christian which Jesus described as being 'born again'. It is always difficult to fully explain what these words mean but the change in our behaviour should show the real difference that the willing suffering of Jesus has made for us. Even if you do not completely understand all the ideas shared in these pages try to grasp the importance difference that being a Christian can make in your life.



Heroes of the Faith Page 45



Pray for the many people in the world who have never heard the good news of Jesus' love for them. Pray that there will be many like Mbambo who will take the good news to them.



Mbambo challenged many of the customs of his people, teaching that Christianity was a better way. How can we do the same today?



What were the two most important tasks that Mbambo accomplished at Mountain View?



Mbambo and Sunshine forgave the young man who had poisoned two of their children and took him into their home. What, do you think, were their feelings at this time? How did the young man feel?

**Month 2
Week 4**

**'Joel Mbambo
Matunjwa -
Zulu Apostle'**

The Salvation Army is now at work in well over 100 countries. People of many nations accepted the idea of a disciplined and dedicated Christian community who wanted to share their faith with others. One such man was Joel Mbambo Matunjwa who became a Salvation Army officer in Southern Africa and had a special mission to his own proud Zulu nation. His story is one of great courage. We hope you will find it to be an inspiration for you.



Luke 4:14-44



Pray that God will help us to understand his Word well enough to speak to others with authority, and that we will be kept humble so that we draw attention to Jesus and not to ourselves.



Is it true that it is harder to witness in our own homes and in our own town or village than it is in a place where we are not known? How can we, like Jesus, have the courage to tell our own family and friends about the gospel?

**Month 3
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**‘Starting the
Work’**

Back to Galilee (Luke 4:14, 15)

Last month we saw how Jesus decided on the methods he would use to bring in the Kingdom of God. He turned his back on the devil’s temptations to try ways which seemed good and easy. After his temptation, Jesus left the wilderness to the east of the River Jordan, crossed the river, and returned to his own home area of Galilee. He showed that ‘the power of the Holy Spirit was with him’ (verse 14). He became well known, preaching mostly in the synagogues at this time.

Capernaum (Luke 4:31-36)

Jesus’ first centre of work was Capernaum, on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee. It was both his preaching and his healing that attracted much attention and brought him great fame. His preaching (verses 32,36) was not like that of the Jewish rabbis (teachers) who merely said, ‘the law says’. Jesus knew and understood what he was talking about. He made people feel that what he said was right: ‘He spoke with authority’ (verse 32).

Actions as well as words (Luke 4:37-44)

Preaching was combined with healing. Not only did Jesus speak boldly, but his powerful actions gave him the right to do so. (‘Actions speak louder than words’, verse 36). The first healing Luke tells us about took place in the Capernaum synagogue, when a demon-possessed man shouted in fear that he knew Jesus was ‘God’s holy messenger’ (verse 34). The man fell down in a fit, and then became calm under Jesus’ healing power.

The same day Jesus healed Simon Peter's mother-in-law who had a fever. She got better at once (verses 38,39). Then, when the Sabbath Day (the seventh day of the week, which was kept holy) had ended (verse 40), many people brought sick friends who were healed by Jesus, including some possessed by demons.

The people of Capernaum wanted to keep Jesus to themselves (verses 42-44), but he made it plain that he must spread his gospel as widely as he could. That was more important than healing every sick person who could be found in one town.

Back home to Nazareth (Luke 4:16-29)

Luke's Gospel puts this story before the beginning of the work at Capernaum but the other Gospels say it happened later. It shows a different reaction to Jesus. Although he was received well in many places, there were some people in his home town who were very angry to hear him speak as he did. They remembered him as a young boy and could not accept the authority he now had. Jesus knew this. 'You will also tell me to do here in my home town the same things you heard were done in Capernaum,' Jesus said (verse 23). Then he reminded them that 'a prophet is never welcomed in his home town' (verse 24). But although some of the people were so angry that they tried to throw him over a high cliff (verse 29), Jesus walked calmly through the crowd and went on his way.



Imagine you were in the synagogue at Nazareth when Jesus came to speak. Describe what happened.



Why did Jesus quote a passage from the Old Testament to explain his ministry to the people in Nazareth?



Luke 6:12-16; Luke 5:1-11, 27-32;
John 1:35-42



Pray that God will call those he needs as full-time workers today. Pray that God will make you ready to obey if he calls you.



Not all Christians are called to leave home and be full-time workers. Many stay at home and go on with their daily employment. But Jesus expects us to be full-time witnesses wherever we are. How should we do that today?

Month 3
Week 2

Bible Study
The Gospels

'Follow Me'

The first four disciples (John 1:35-42)

Soon after the start of his public work, when he began to be well known, Jesus looked around for men who would help him. We might think this surprising. Surely the Son of God would not need help from very ordinary men! We must remember that Jesus accepted the limitations of his human life. He could not do everything by himself, and, just like us, he needed friendship.

The first four to be called were Andrew and his brother Simon and James and his brother John (their father's name was Zebedee). Other Gospels (Matthew 4:18-22) and (Mark 1:16-20) simply say that Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, saw these two pairs of fishermen working separately, and asked them to go with him, which they did immediately. John suggests that they knew Jesus before this (verses 35-42), so perhaps it was not such a sudden decision as it seems. In any case they must have been very impressed by his character and what people said about him.

A fisherman's story (Luke 5:1-11)

Only Luke gives us more details and shows that they thought even more highly of Jesus because he gave them advice about fishing, which led to them getting a miraculously heavy catch of fish. Notice that Simon was not afraid to question what Jesus said (verse 5). Fishing was Simon's job and he had been using all his skill and intelligence all night. But Simon was willing to trust Jesus (verse 5), and the result was such that the strength of the nets and of their own muscles was not enough to cope with the catch (verses 6, 7). Simon thought it must be a miracle, because the fishermen hadn't caught anything all night (verse 5). Jesus

promised them that instead of catching fish they would in future be catching men for the Kingdom of God.

The tax man (Luke 5:27-32)

When the next man, Levi (or Matthew), was called, people were very surprised because he was a tax-collector working for the hated Roman rulers. Levi had invited many other tax-collectors to a party at his house, and when Jesus accepted Levi's invitation to the party the Pharisees and lawyers were shocked. It was not usual for a good Jew to mix with such people. Jesus showed that he wanted people to change their ways of thinking, saying that the doctor visits those who are sick, not those who are well. He meant that he must concentrate on the people who needed God most, not on those who had kept all the rules of religion.

Full-time workers (Luke 6:12-16)

Some time after the calling of Levi, Jesus was with a large crowd of followers, and decided to choose 12 specially close followers to be with him all the time. These were full-time workers who were prepared to leave home and go wherever Jesus went. It was usual for a Jewish religious leader to have a group of special disciples like this. There would be many other followers of Jesus who stayed at home but spread the message of Jesus to their friends and workmates. Before choosing the Twelve, Jesus spent a whole night praying for guidance and deciding who the right men were (verse 12). Then he chose them: Simon and Andrew; James and John; Philip and Bartholomew (probably the same as Nathanael in John 1); Matthew (Levi) and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Patriot (or Zealot); Judas son of James (or Thaddaeus); Judas Iscariot.



Why did the first disciples decide to leave their fishing business and follow Jesus?



What are the similarities and differences between catching fish and catching men?



Never the Same Again Chapter 2 pages 13-20



Pray for those people who are filled with doubt about their salvation. Pray that they may know the Holy Spirit's power in their lives.



Explain how you felt when you come to know Jesus Christ as your Saviour.



Describe the four biblical pictures which give us the assurance of salvation.



How does the Holy Spirit confirm our salvation to us?

**Month 3
Week 3**

**'Can I be sure
I'm saved?'**

When we first accept Jesus as our Saviour our hearts are full of joy and happiness. But after a time these emotions fade and sometimes are replaced with doubts and fears. This week's lesson explores this experience and helps us to be sure that we are truly saved.

The leader to arrange locally some practical work in sharing the gospel with other people

**Month 3
Week 4**

Locally arranged practical work



John 18:33-37; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 17:20-21;
 Luke 13:29; Matthew 25:34;
 Matthew 13:31-33; Mark 13:24-27



A verse of a Christian hymn says:
 ‘Kingdom of Christ, for thy coming we pray,
 Hasten, O Father, the dawn of the day
 When this new song thy creation shall sing,
 Satan is vanquished and Jesus is King.’



We still live in the time between the first
 beginnings of the Kingdom of God and its
 final triumph. How can we be good citizens of
 our nation and also good citizens of the
 Kingdom of God?

**Month 4
 Week 1**

**Bible Study
 The Gospels**

**‘A new kind of
 Kingdom’**

What kind of Kingdom? (John 18:33-37)

When we thought about the temptation of Jesus we saw that he rejected an easy way to create a new Kingdom. If this is what the Kingdom of God was NOT to be like we must now think about what Jesus saw as the true nature of the Kingdom he had come to build.

A Kingdom of the heart (Mark 1:14-15)

When Jesus announced that the Kingdom was near he did not call his followers to take up weapons and fight. He told them to turn from their sins and repent. His Kingdom was not based on an army to overthrow the Roman rulers but would be set up in the hearts of people who followed his truth. Jesus would rule in their hearts as their Lord and King.

An unseen Kingdom (Luke 17:20-21)

Jesus told the Pharisees that you could not see the Kingdom of God because the Kingdom is within you. On another occasion he told his disciples that if they did not receive the Kingdom like a little child they could not enter it. You needed to be trusting, obedient and loyal to be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom was to be a secret that was open to everyone who believed, whatever their situation or reputation. Jesus promised the repentant thief who died with him that he would be with him when he came into his Kingdom (Luke 23:40-43).

A Kingdom to change the world (Luke 13:29; Matthew 25:34; Matthew 13:31-33)

Although this Kingdom was unseen and personal there is no doubt that Jesus believed that those who would belong to the Kingdom would come from all parts of the world and would show their love for him in the way they treated those who needed help. The Kingdom would grow quietly just like a small amount of yeast makes bread rise. It would become much larger than we might expect, like a tiny mustard seed grows into a great tree. The Kingdom of God would make a difference for everyone in the world because of the character of those who belonged to it.

A Kingdom that will finally be established in glory (Mark 13:24-27)

Jesus taught that the Kingdom had already come in the hearts of those who believed in him but he also said that there would be a final moment when he would return and the secret Kingdom would become clear for all the world to see. This would be the climax of world history. He said that we should not guess when this would happen or believe those who say it will come now. Instead we should strive to be good citizens of the secret Kingdom just where we are today and wait patiently for the glory of the Kingdom to come.



From the statements of Jesus in this week's lesson describe to a friend what the Kingdom of God is like.



Jesus talked much more about the Kingdom than about the Church. Are they the same?



Luke 8:4-15; Matthew 13:31-51;
Luke 14:15-24



Pray that many will find the treasure that is God's Kingdom and will be willing to give all they have to know Jesus for themselves.



Do we take the task of persuading people to come to the party that is the Kingdom seriously enough? Or are we discouraged because, like the seed in bad ground, some people fail to respond?

**Month 4
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'The Kingdom
is like this'**

Kingdom stories

Jesus taught about the new Kingdom of God by telling simple stories. ('The Kingdom of Heaven' in Matthew's Gospel has the same meaning.) He would say, 'The Kingdom is like this ...' and then give an illustration from nature or from the lives of the people to whom he was talking.

Stories about growing the Kingdom (Luke 8:4-8)

We have already noticed that Jesus used a mustard seed and yeast to show how the Kingdom would grow quietly but strongly. He told another story showing that the growth of the Kingdom was like a farmer sowing seed on his land. Some seed falls on a path where the ground is hard. Some falls on stony land without much earth. Some falls where weeds choke it to death. Other seed falls on good ground and produces a wonderful harvest. This story shows that when the good news of the Kingdom is shared it will produce different results. We must be 'good soil' for the Kingdom so that it grows in our hearts. We must not be discouraged if all the seeds we sow do not produce the same good results. Another story about seeds growing (Mark 4:26-29) shows that we must be patient while the seed goes through various stages of growth before it is ready for the harvest.

A story about different kinds of people in the Kingdom (Matthew 13:47-48)

This is a fishing story. Into a fisherman's net come all kinds of fish and other creatures. Jesus was teaching that the Kingdom of God is for all kinds of people.

No one is excluded. The Kingdom of God is offered to those who have lived bad lives as well as the good. But the story also says that there will eventually be a judgment made. Those who reject the gospel will not enter the Kingdom of God.

Stories about finding the Kingdom (Matthew 13:44-46)

In these stories the Kingdom is seen as something very precious – a treasure hidden in a field or a valuable pearl. In both cases the person finding the Kingdom is willing to make great sacrifices to gain it. One has been searching for a long time to find it. The other finds it quite accidentally. Both are willing to give everything for the Kingdom. Jesus is the pearl of great price, the hidden treasure worth everything.

The Kingdom is like a party (Luke 14:15-24)

This story is also about the Kingdom of God being for poor people as well as those who are privileged. Jesus invites everyone to come to the party that is a picture of God's Kingdom. Some people make excuses and have other interests which distract them, but the invitation goes out to those who may not think themselves worthy. God's love for them is so great that he insists that they come to share the good things that he has to offer them.



Rewrite two of the stories about the Kingdom so that young people you know would understand them.



Why did Jesus use stories (parables) to teach these important truths?



Never the Same Again Chapter 3 pages 23-32



Pray for the work of the Bible societies and others who make Bibles available to people who do not have them. Pray that these Bibles may be read by those who receive them.



How can we set aside time to study the Bible and to pray in our busy lives?



What are the important parts of praying that we should include in our prayers?



'There is no such thing as unanswered prayer' (page 32). Discuss the different ways in which God may answer our prayers.

**Month 4
Week 3**

**'What are the
ground rules?'**

There have to be rules for every group that we belong to. Some of these are basic for the Christian. This week's lesson looks at two of them. First we have to get to know and begin to understand the Bible. Then we have to learn how to pray. It will be difficult, if not impossible, to remain a Christian without mastering these disciplines. The chapter gives some good advice about beginning to pray and read the Bible. We hope that you will find this helpful as you continue your Christian journey.



Heroes of the Faith Page 13



Pray that God will give us the courage to speak out against wrong and to do so in his name.



Spiritual leadership should be equally open to women as well as men.



Catherine often protested against wrongs that she saw. Describe two of her protests that made a difference to the world in which she lived.



How important was the part that Catherine played in the creation of The Salvation Army?

Month 4
Week 4
‘Catherine Booth – Queen of Protests’

One of the writers of Army history said that the Army was started on two motors and not one! Catherine Mumford, who became William Booth’s wife was a truly remarkable woman. She lived at a time when women were expected to remain silent in church but she became a powerful preacher. She combined the many responsibilities of bringing up her large family with a heavy commitment to working alongside her husband in founding the Army. She had very strong views on political and welfare as well as religious matters. All women Salvationists owe a great debt to her courage and energy.



Luke 4:38-41; 5:12-26; 7:1-22; 8:26-48;
9:37-42



Pray that we may have a compassionate heart like Jesus to care for those who suffer.



Why did Jesus not heal all the sick people in Galilee? What were the dangers of being known as a healer?

**Month 5
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'He healed
them all'**

Wonderful healer

Jesus lived at a time when many diseases were not understood and medicines were few compared with our time. Many people suffered unnecessarily and blamed their sins for their sickness. It is not surprising that Jesus saw a ministry of healing as part of his work. Jesus was a wonderful healer, dealing with all kinds of illness and even restoring the dead to life. Jesus had not come to the world to cure all the sick people. This was not the most important part of his ministry but, because he loved people whom he met, he often gave them back their life and health.

Doctor Luke

The healing miracles we are studying are recorded in Luke's Gospel. Luke was a doctor (see Colossians 4:14) and he recorded these events simply and accurately. This makes them even more believable for their simplicity.

Compassion (Luke 7:13)

Whenever Jesus met people who were in need, he felt a real sense of concern for them. It is this love that prompted his actions to heal them. The power to bring healing came from the compassion of Jesus. He wanted to end suffering and bring release.

All kinds of illness (Luke 6:6-11; 7:21-22)

Jesus dealt with blindness, deafness, paralysis, physical handicap, and even death itself. There was no limit to the power he exercised over all kinds of physical pain. Luke did not often describe the treatment that Jesus offered but simply showed that health was restored. Since Jesus certainly had divine powers there is no doubt that he had the power and authority to heal disease of all kinds.

Mental illness (Luke 6:18-19; 8:26-36)

Mental illness was often described as demon possession in biblical days. Luke's clear description of the behaviour of those thought to be mad or possessed by demons shows us that they were suffering from what we would describe as mental illness of differing kinds. Whatever the diagnosis Jesus had the perfect cure. Those who were helped returned to 'their right minds'. We cannot be sure that the 'demons' entered the pigs, but we can know that the man, thought to be mad, was calm and listening to Jesus.

Outcasts from society (Luke 5:12-14)

The biggest problem for people afflicted with a skin disease was that they were made outcasts from society. They were 'untouchable'. When Jesus healed these people he made a point of touching them to show that he was not afraid of catching the disease. He also helped them to become accepted into the community again, sending them to the priests to show that they were healed.

Healing by words alone (Luke 7:1-10)

Jesus was prepared to help people who were not from the Jewish nation. This Roman soldier's servant was sick and Jesus was prepared to go to him. However, the soldier knew that Jesus did not even have to go to the house to heal the man. If Jesus just spoke, the man would be healed. What great faith the soldier showed in Jesus' power to heal.

Not just a healer

Jesus knew that his power to heal would attract many people to come to him. He did not want them to come simply for the miraculous cures. He often told people who had been healed that they must keep the healing secret. Often he would seek to escape from the crowds to be alone with God. Using these healing powers drained him and he needed to be restored. Most of all he wanted people to hear his teaching and not to think of him simply as a miracle worker.



Why did Jesus touch the man who came to him with a skin disease (Luke 5:13)? What do you think the people around would have thought about Jesus' actions?



Consider Luke 4:38-44. What elements of the ministry of Jesus does this passage of Scripture demonstrate? How did Jesus keep these elements in balance?



Luke 5:17-26; 8:40-56; 18; 35-43; John 9:1-7



Pray for those who are suffering from HIV/Aids and other diseases which cannot be cured.



Does knowing that you are forgiven help you to overcome sickness?

**Month 5
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Your faith has
saved you'**

Faith healing (Luke 18:41; Luke 8:43-48)

We have already pointed out that Jesus healed people because he had compassion for them. The Gospels also show us that faith is an important part of healing. Sometimes people who wanted to be healed were expected to show faith themselves. Jesus asked the man with the withered arm to stretch out his arm (Luke 6:10). He would need great faith to believe that this was possible. The blind beggar at the roadside had to say clearly that he wanted to see. Jesus said it was his faith that healed him. The woman who had continual bleeding showed her faith by touching the edge of Jesus' clothes. Jesus recognised her faith and she was healed.

Other people's faith (Luke 5:17-26)

At other times it was the faith of friends that made the healing possible. It was the faith of the friends who broke through the roof to bring their sick friend to Jesus that was rewarded. Jesus said to Jairus, 'Don't be afraid: just believe, and your daughter will be healed' (Luke 8:50). It was the father's faith that made possible the restored life of his daughter.

Healing and the law (Luke 5:17-26)

The Pharisees, who were the strict enforcers of Jewish religious law, thought that healing was work. Even carrying your mat when you had been healed was work. No one was allowed to work on the Sabbath. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath the Pharisees criticised him. Jesus recognised the importance of the law but he

also knew it was more important to do good on the Sabbath. He was also criticised when he linked healing with forgiveness of sins. Jesus showed that he had power both to forgive sins and to heal sickness when the lame man walked.

Sickness and sinfulness (Luke 5:17-26; John 9:1-7)

It was often believed that sickness was caused by sin. Sometimes Jesus linked healing with the forgiveness of sins. But on at least one occasion Jesus dealt with this idea. The man, whose blindness from birth was noticed by the disciples, had not sinned himself to cause the blindness, nor were his parents responsible. His healing would glorify God. So today we must not blame people who are sick but be grateful to God for all the means of healing that are available to us.

Miracles

All the stories of healing that we have shared this month make a marvellous impression on us. Many of us know people who are sick and we want to pray that miraculous healing could come for them, just as it did when Jesus was on earth. Sometimes God does use his servants to bring healing in miraculous ways, but more often he uses the dedicated skills of doctors to bring healing. This is just as wonderful. If God always answered the prayers of Christians for healing, people would become Christians for wrong reasons, just as Jesus realised when crowds followed him.

We should always pray for sick people but accept that often God will use medicine to heal and will sometimes answer our prayers by saying 'No'.



Imagine you were the man brought by four of his friends to Jesus and lowered through the roof. Describe how you felt throughout this experience.



Why is faith important in healing? How do you help someone who has asked for a miracle and is still sick?



Never the Same Again Chapter 3 pages 33-42.



Pray for young people who are looking for the right church in which to serve God.



Can you be a Christian without belonging to a church?



What are the most important skills that must be developed to be a good member of a church congregation?



Pages 34 and 35 describe 14 different biblical pictures of a church. How many of these are a good description of your corps? Which are the most important?

**Month 5
Week 3**

**'What are the
ground rules?'**

Two more basic disciplines for the new Christian are explored in this week's lesson. The first of these is about joining the fellowship of a worshipping community. A Salvation Army Corps is just such a 'church' and most of you will already belong to a corps. This is not an 'extra' for a Christian but part of his faith. The second discipline is about Christian service. Our actions will often speak even more effectively than our words and loving God with all our hearts will also require us to love our neighbour. This lesson helps us to begin to serve God in practical ways.



Heroes of the Faith Page 81



Pray for Christians in places where they are a small minority in a non-Christian society.



Yamamuro's great ability was to present the gospel in words and ideas that ordinary people could understand. How can we do the same thing for people in our community?



When Yamamuro read William Booth's book he was impressed. What made him feel that The Salvation Army was the place where he should serve God?



Yamamuro's *War Cry* article was the means of rescuing many girls from prostitution. Write an article dealing with a current social problem that requires Christian action.

**Month 5
Week 4**

**'Gunpei
Yamamuro –
Soldier of
Peace'**

Some Christians have to live and work in societies which are mainly of another faith. It takes great courage to serve Jesus in such situations. This week's story is about a Japanese man who converted to the Christian faith and served God in his own land. He became such a powerful influence for good that many of the leaders of his nation honoured his life and work. This is a good story to encourage those who are in a minority as Christians.



Luke 5:33-35; 6:1-5; 7:18-50



Pray that Christ will help us to love him with all our heart and our neighbours as ourselves.



Passing judgment on other people is still a common fault with some religious people. How should we react to people who do not behave as we think they should?

**Month 6
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**‘Questions!
Questions!’**

Hard questions

There are always some people ready to find fault with everything, as Jesus found out. Whatever he did, somebody thought he was wrong. He did what his conscience told him was the best. This week, let us look at some of the difficult questions he was asked.

‘Why don’t your disciples fast?’ (Luke 5:33-35)

Luke says this was asked by ‘some people’. Matthew says they were disciples of John, people baptised by John, but not necessarily sharing in his work. They followed John’s way of life. He had learned to live on meagre, simple food in the desert. This had become a way of life which his followers were expected to adopt. They found it hard to understand why Jesus and his disciples did not publicly fast as a religious duty. But Jesus had fasted for 40 days in the wilderness. He told his disciples that they should not draw attention to fasting but do so secretly (Matthew 6:16).

So Jesus would not make fasting a duty. He said that Christians should be happy because they have the presence of Jesus (‘the bridegroom’) in their lives. It was as if they were at a wedding party. They can attract other people to Jesus by their joy.

‘Why don’t you keep to the letter of the law?’ (Luke 6:1-5)

This question was asked by some Pharisees. Pharisees tried to keep the whole law of Moses, including all the decisions that the scribes had made about it.

There were thousands of these laws and the Pharisees thought them more important than anything else. Some of these laws forbade any work on the Sabbath Day. Picking an ear of corn by the roadside was reaping and rubbing it between your hands was threshing. That was work and the Pharisees caught the disciples of Jesus doing this on the Sabbath. Jesus did not deliberately break these laws. However, he knew that loving God with your whole heart and loving other people summarised all the laws (Luke 10:27). He reminded the Pharisees that King David and his men had broken a similar law when they were hungry. Laws about the Sabbath were made to help people to live well and not to make life harder for them. People are more important than rules.

‘Are you the Messiah or not?’ (Luke 7:18-28)

This was a sincere question asked by some messengers from John the Baptist. He was really puzzled and wanted a true answer. Earlier he had been quite sure that Jesus was the Messiah (John 1:29; 34,36), but there was no sign that Jesus was going to overthrow the Romans and take over power himself, as John and many others expected.

Jesus not only gave a soft answer when someone questioned his power and authority. He went on to praise John to the people around him (verses 24-28). It would have been easy for him to take offence at the question and criticise John.

‘Why do you allow sinful people to have contact with you?’ (Luke 7:36-50)

In their efforts to keep every detail of the law the Pharisees kept clear of anyone whom they had decided was a sinner. They expected other religious leaders to do the same. Jesus was invited to dinner at a Pharisee’s house (verse 36). He was not welcomed very well, and treated rather rudely (verses 44-46). But a woman who was looked on as a sinner came in without being invited and showed her love for Jesus in a most extravagant way (verses 37, 38).

Perhaps because his conscience was troubling him, the Pharisee objected strongly in his mind (verse 39), but Jesus knew his thoughts (verse 40). He told him the parable of the two debtors (verses 41-43), showing that the ‘sinners’ had much more cause to be thankful than those who thought there was nothing in their lives that needed to be forgiven. Jesus had earlier said that it was the sick that needed a doctor, not those who thought they were well (Luke 5:31, 32). The glad response of the sinners, and the fact that he could do them most good were the reasons why Jesus paid so much attention to them.



How did Jesus respond to those people who criticised him for breaking Sabbath rules?



Discuss the statement 'People are more important than rules'. How should we treat people when they break the rules?



Luke 6:20-49; Matthew 5:3-12, 17-48; 6:19-23



Pray that the Holy Spirit will come to our hearts so that the nature of Jesus will become ours. Then our behaviour and our actions will be Christlike.

‘Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.’



‘To understand all is to forgive all.’ Are there some actions which Christians find too hard to forgive?

**Month 6
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**‘Great
Teaching’**

The Sermon that isn’t!

This week’s readings are usually called the Sermon on the Mount, but the word ‘sermon’ does not describe it well, for it is really a collection of short summaries of Jesus’ teaching. These have been brought together by the Gospel writers, or perhaps taken from a collection of sayings previously made. There is so much great teaching here that no one could understand it at one hearing. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-26) and the teaching about the law (Matthew 5:17-48; Luke 6:27-36) are examples of long passages which are complete in themselves. Much of the rest of the Sermon is made up of short sayings which are not connected with each other. The fullest version is in Matthew, chapters 5-7, but in Luke’s Gospel some of the same material is spread over several chapters.

How to be happy (Luke 6:20-26)

In the Beatitudes Jesus first tells the disciples how to be truly happy. According to Luke there are four ways: by being poor (verse 20); by being hungry (verse 21); by weeping (verse 21); by being insulted and ill-treated for the sake of Jesus (verse 22).

These hard statements were intended to shock the disciples into new ways of thinking. They are a dramatic way of showing that our usual ideas of what is good in this life are turned upside down in the Kingdom of God. We should understand these statements as word-pictures which show the truth about spiritual life. Matthew makes this clear by adding ‘spiritually’ to ‘poor’ (Matthew 5:3) and

by replacing 'who are hungry' with 'whose greatest desire is to do what God requires' (Matthew 5:6). Note also that each type of person mentioned is given special blessings by God.

In contrast to these four statements there are four others (verses 24-26) about those who are having a good time in this life, but do not make time to find the riches of the Kingdom of God.

Love your enemies (Luke 6:27-36)

After reversing our usual ideas about our own happiness, Jesus turns upside down our usual ideas about other people. The general principle is stated in verse 31: 'Do for others just what you want them to do for you.' This sounds quite easy in theory, but when Jesus applies it in practical ways we can see how difficult it is:

We should do good to our 'enemies . . . those who hate you' (verse 27) and 'curse you' and 'ill-treat you' (verse 28).

'If anyone hits you on one cheek, let him hit the other one too.' If you give someone an inch, and he takes a mile, let him (verse 29)!

If someone steals something from you, don't try to stop him or get it back (verse 30).

Jesus tells us that when we show this 'extra' goodness we are being truly Christian in our actions.

To live like this is not a sign of weakness but of inner strength. This teaching goes far beyond the demands of the old Jewish law.

Finding fault (Luke 6:37-42)

Jesus now deals with the question of making judgments about other people. In Luke 6:31 he tells us to do to others what we would have them do to us. In other words our judgments of others should be as fair as we would like their judgment of us to be. We would expect others to make allowances for our weaknesses and we should do the same. Now, in verses 37-42 Jesus tells us that we should expect God to judge us in the same way that we judge others. We look to God for forgiveness and reconciliation and this should be the way that we behave to others.

Good all through (Luke 6:43-49)

In these verses Jesus is saying that all good qualities in our lives come out of a good heart. If our hearts are bad we cannot expect to show good outward quality of living. Good fruit comes only from a healthy tree. The truth about our real nature will make itself known eventually.



Why did Jesus say that people who were poor, hungry, sad and insulted were blessed and should be happy?



The teaching of the 'Sermon on the Mount' completely reverses normal human values. How should we put this teaching into practice in our every day lives?



Never the Same Again Chapter 4 pages 45-53



Pray for your friends who are not yet Christians. Ask God to make you an influence to help them to find the Saviour you have found.



Discuss the six checklist questions on pages 47 and 48. How do we choose our friends?



In *Never the Same Again*, which of the 'Heroes of the Faith' mentioned on pages 50-53 is your favourite hero? Why do you make that choice?



Find some more information about one of the 'Heroes of the Faith' mentioned and write a short sketch about his life and work.

**Month 6
Week 3**

**'Can I have a
role model?'**

It is a good idea to have some people that we can look to for guidance and inspiration. We all need heroes to follow. This week's lesson suggests tests that we can use to determine who should be our friends and guides. It also introduces some great saints from Christian history whose lives should inspire us. We hope you find some good friends here.

The leader to arrange locally some practical work in sharing the gospel with other people

**Month 6
Week 4**

**Locally
arranged
practical work**



Luke 11:1-13; Matthew 6:5-15; 7:7-11



When I am tempted to give up praying, because my prayers do not seem to be answered, I will remember these three words, 'How much more . . .'



Do we really pray when we say the Lord's Prayer, or do we just repeat the words?

**Month 7
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Teach us to
pray'**

The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1-4; Matthew 6:5-15)

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus teaches his disciples the Lord's Prayer in response to a request from them after they had seen him praying (verse 1). Luke's short version is probably the oldest. In Matthew's Gospel the Lord's Prayer is given as part of the Sermon on the Mount and does not have this introduction. Matthew, however, has additional phrases and his is the form we normally use in worship. Note also that we usually add an ending not found in either of these Gospels in the modern translations: 'For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory.' This is not in the most ancient manuscripts of the Gospels and was probably added when the Lord's Prayer began to be used in the worship of the Church.

A prayer for everyone

It is interesting that in one sense the Lord's Prayer is not a Christian prayer. Every part of it could be prayed sincerely by Jews (which Jesus and his disciples were, of course). This supports the view that the prayer came from Jesus himself and was not put together later by the Christian Church. Nevertheless, all its phrases have much greater meaning when we pray them in the light of the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom, and in the light of his living and dying for others.

A balanced prayer (Matthew 6:7-8)

The Lord's Prayer is a balanced prayer. It includes: worship of God, requests for God's blessings, and desires for God's Kingdom to come in the world and in the hearts of individual people.

It is not ‘a lot of meaningless words’, like the prayers of hypocrites (people play-acting at praying). It is a prayer summary which puts us in a right relationship with the God who ‘knows what you need before you ask him’.

Temptation?

There is often misunderstanding about ‘Lead us not into temptation’ (AV). The question is asked, ‘Would God lead people into temptation as this verse seems to suggest?’ Modern versions are helpful for they introduce the idea of ‘testing’. But a Jewish view was that, if God allowed something to happen, it was the same as God causing it to happen. So the prayer could mean: ‘Do not let us fall into temptations which are placed in our way by other people or by the devil.’

Forgiveness (Matthew 6:14, 15)

Matthew adds a further explanation about forgiveness. He says that we should offer forgiveness to others if we expect to receive it from God.

Keep on praying (Luke 11:5-13; Matthew 7:7-11)

Next, Luke gives us a parable on the meaning of prayer. This does not mean: ‘If you trouble God with repeated prayers for the same thing, you will eventually get what you want.’ When it is linked with Luke 11:13 its meaning is clear: ‘If a human friend will give us what we want at a most inconvenient time because we keep asking, how much more will a loving God give us what we need when we ask him for “good things” (Matthew 7:11) or for “the Holy Spirit” ’ (Luke 11:13).

Praying with understanding

Another reason for keeping on praying is that sometimes it is only when we repeat our prayers that we understand what we are asking for. We may then realise that what we are asking for is selfish, or that it does not allow what God wants for other people to happen, or that it would not be good for us ourselves. We can then stop asking before God says a definite ‘No’ to us.



Describe the three kinds of prayer which are found in the Lord’s Prayer.



When we keep on praying what happens to us?



Luke 9:7-11, 18-36, 43-62; (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-19)



Although we may not have a vision like Peter, James and John, let us ask that, when we pray, we might know the power of Jesus for ourselves.



What kind of greatness and power should Christians seek for themselves? Do we ever exclude other people from joining our fellowships? How important are family loyalties for Christians?

**Month 7
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'You are God's
Messiah'**

The biggest question

The ninth chapter of Luke is full of questions about who Jesus was and why he acted as he did. These questions were asked both by his enemies and then by his friends. Some of the questions were traps for Jesus but others really wanted to understand him and to follow him.

Who is he? (Luke 9:7-11)

One person who opposed Jesus was Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee. He had already had John the Baptist executed (verse 7), but it seemed to him from the reports he received that John's work was still going on. When he asked who was responsible, some people said John had come back to life, or Elijah, or one of the other prophets of Old Testament times. Herod wanted to see Jesus (verse 9), not because he wanted to hear his message, but in order to kill him, as you can see from Luke 13:31. Perhaps this was because of his guilty conscience, but it may also have been because he was afraid that Jesus would lead a revolution. Herod was responsible to the Romans for keeping order in Galilee.

Who am I? (Luke 9:18-36, 43-45)

This question was asked by Jesus himself. The disciples first told him that the people would give the same answers as Herod had received, that is that Jesus was Elijah come again, or one of the prophets. However, Peter made the wonderful statement of faith, 'You are God's Messiah' (verse 20). This was one of the most important moments in the life of Jesus. It meant that his followers

had begun to understand his mission. Jesus then went on to show that this did not mean he would always be powerful and popular with everybody. In fact it meant that he would suffer (verse 22) and they would also suffer (verses 23-27). Those who would oppose him, even to the extent of killing him, would be 'the elders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the law'. This shows that Jesus knew what was coming. He knew he could not escape the danger if he continued to do what God wanted him to do.

Who he really is! (Luke 9:28-36)

The three closest disciples, Peter, James and John, then had a dramatic lesson on who Jesus truly was. They saw him speaking with the spirits of Moses (who gave the law) and Elijah (the greatest prophet). Jesus summarised the law and was the fulfilment of the prophecies. The disciples saw Jesus changed into a dazzling and glorious person, and heard a voice from a cloud, God's voice, praising Jesus as 'my Son' (verse 35). The disciples therefore discovered that though earthly opposition would, in one sense, destroy Jesus, he would always be the triumphant, glorious Messiah, who would rule his Kingdom and in real and final terms be victorious.

Who may help him? (Luke 9:46-62)

These verses taught some important lessons for would-be followers of Jesus. He would not have disciples who wanted to be great in human terms (verses 46-48), with many privileges and much power. He would not restrict his helpers to the group of close followers (verses 49, 50), but welcomed all who did the kind of work that he did. He would not allow his followers to use the power of God to punish those who offended them (verses 51-56). He could not accept those who thought that family ties were more important than following him. (verses 57-62).



Describe the scene on the mountain of transfiguration as though you were one of the disciples present. How did you feel when you saw and heard what happened?



Why was Peter's declaration, 'You are the Christ' such an important moment in Jesus' ministry?



Never the Same Again Chapter 4 pages 53-61



Make the prayer from Ephesians on page 59 the subject of your prayers this week.



Which of the biblical role models mentioned in pages 53-57 is most helpful to young Christians today?



Why is Stephen a good role model for Christians today?



'Jesus is not one of the group of the world's greats ... Jesus is apart; he is Jesus the Only. He is simply Jesus.' Explain why Jesus cannot be compared to other people and why he is our ultimate role model.

**Month 7
Week 3**

**'Can I have a
role model?'**

The Bible provides us with many people whose example we can follow. This week you are introduced to some of these. The most important example for us is Jesus. His perfect life is the ideal way for us to live. An Army song says:

*To be like Jesus, this hope possesses me
His Spirit helping me, like Him I'll be.*



Heroes of the Faith Page 23



Pray for strength to speak out for Jesus wherever you find yourself.



Is it right to disobey your superior at work if you think he or she is dishonest? What if others depend on your wage?



Railton thought that wearing uniform was 'dressing up' and making a show. Why did he change his mind? Why do we still wear uniform as Salvationists?



Railton always lived a life of poverty and hardship by his own choice. Should Christians today adopt a life of poverty as a witness to our faith?

**Month 7
Week 4**

**'George Scott
Railton –
Ambassador
for Jesus'**

George Scott Railton was one of William Booth's first helpers. He was a young man who loved adventure and was never afraid to speak the truth whatever the consequences. He became a roving ambassador for the Army, going to many places where no Army existed and starting the work. His story is exciting and challenging. We need more people like Railton today. Perhaps you are one of them?



John 3:1-21



Pray for 'secret disciples' that they may have the courage to declare their faith.



Are there people in your community who, just like Nicodemus, would like to know more about Jesus but are afraid to say so publicly? How can we help them to meet Jesus for themselves?

**Month 8
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'A Personal
Conversation'**

A good Pharisee (John 3:1-2)

The religious leaders of the sect called Pharisees often opposed Jesus. However, one person who was a leading member of this group wanted to know Jesus for himself. Nicodemus went to Jesus secretly, at night. Perhaps he was afraid to go at a time when his friends could see him. They had a conversation in which Jesus was able to share his message. Later, Nicodemus spoke for Jesus in the ruling council of which he was a member (John 7:50) and, after the crucifixion, he helped with the burial of Jesus' body (John 19:39). It seems likely that he became a Christian. Not all the Pharisees were opposed to Jesus. Nicodemus was a good Pharisee.

Born again (John 3:3-13)

The conversation started with polite compliments paid by Nicodemus but Jesus did not want to talk about trivial matters. Jesus said that if Nicodemus wanted to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven he would have to experience a second, spiritual, birth. Just as being born gives a new life to a baby, so the Spirit of God gives a radical new life to those who are willing to allow him into their lives. It is hard to explain how this happens but it is like the sudden power of the wind, which we cannot see or control, but whose power we can observe. Even though Nicodemus was a religious leader he found this hard to understand but Jesus assured him of this truth. Sometimes we use the phrase 'born again' to mean a particularly enthusiastic Christian, but ALL Christians need to know this experience of new life for themselves.

God's love for the world (John 3:14-16)

To make this new spiritual power available, God had sent Jesus to show his great love for the world. Jesus would be lifted up so that everyone could see the love of God. He reminded Nicodemus that Moses had once lifted up a model of a snake when snakes in the desert were biting the Israelites. All those who looked at the model snake were saved. In the same way, when Jesus was 'lifted up' on the Cross, all those who looked to him would be saved. Verse 16, which shows God's willingness to give his Son to save the world, is the heart of the mission of Jesus. It is the most important truth for Christians to share. God's nature is a love which is prepared to sacrifice his very best to save the world.

A saviour, not a judge (John 3:17-21)

The purpose of the coming of Jesus was to give everyone the opportunity to experience the new birth that Jesus had spoken about to Nicodemus. Those who believe in Jesus will be changed. They can know forgiveness for their sins and begin a new life. Jesus had not come to condemn past failures – to sit in judgment on their sins – but to give a new power to live. Those who reject the new life that Jesus offers are like people who choose darkness instead of light. They are their own judges. But those who look to Jesus and come towards the light find God's love surrounding them.

Overhearing the conversation

This was a personal conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus. No one wrote it down at the time. It must have been either Nicodemus or Jesus who shared it with John. Over many years John thought about this conversation and added his own interpretation to the words of Jesus and shared it with all the world. We are privileged to overhear Jesus helping this one man to understand the good news of the gospel.



Write a letter to a friend telling them about the new life that has come to you since Jesus became your Saviour.



Compare John 3:3 with 2 Corinthians 5:17 and Revelation 21:5. What do you understand about being made a new person in Christ?



John 4:4-30



Pray that the Holy Spirit will give to us that sparkling quality of abundant life that is like 'living water'.



How did Jesus overcome the woman's failure to understand spiritual truths?
Can we learn from him about how to speak to our friends about spiritual matters?

**Month 8
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Another
Personal
Conversation'**

A very different listener (John 4:4-9)

Nicodemus had deliberately come to Jesus to talk to him, but the woman in this incident was going about her daily work when Jesus spoke to her. She was not a Jewish leader but an ordinary Samaritan woman who went to fetch water alone, perhaps because the other women in the village did not like her way of life. Although he started the conversation by asking for a drink, Jesus wanted to talk to her about important matters of faith and worship. She had the same difficulty in understanding that had affected Nicodemus. The new message of Jesus was for everyone, even though they might find it hard to grasp.

Living Water (John 4:10-13)

The woman had come to collect the still water from the well and this would have quenched Jesus' thirst on a hot day. What he offered to her in exchange was a gift from God which would quench her spiritual thirst. Jesus described this as being like water from a bubbling spring – living water. The woman did not understand that Jesus was speaking about spiritual things but she longed for this 'living water'. Jesus said it could become a spring of water within her, constantly supplying her needs in this world and the next.

Challenging a lifestyle (John 4:16-18)

This wonderful gift of spiritual refreshment that Jesus offered would have to be shared with family and friends. So Jesus invited the woman to fetch her husband. This embarrassed her because she had lived an immoral life and Jesus knew it.

Perhaps this is why she came to the well alone. Jesus did not condemn her in words but she wanted to move the conversation on to safer ground.

True worship (John 4:19-24)

The woman tried to get Jesus involved in the argument between Jews and Samaritans about *where* God should be worshipped. But Jesus was not interested in old arguments. He wanted to teach the new truth that everyone could worship God anywhere providing their attitude and spirit was right. God is not confined to any particular place. He is 'Spirit' and our spirits can relate to him at any time and place if we are honest and truthful with him. Jesus had come to make God real to everyone everywhere.

Jesus, the coming Messiah (John 4:25-26, 28-30)

Once again, the Samaritan woman felt uncomfortable with the powerful words of Jesus. She thought that these new truths would have to wait for the Messiah to come to explain them to her. Jesus showed her that she was actually speaking to the promised Messiah, or Christ. When she went back to her village she invited the people to meet Jesus. 'Perhaps,' she said, 'this is truly the Christ.' Was she hoping that her life would be transformed?

Who told the story?

Once again we do not know who shared the story of this conversation with the author of John's Gospel. It surely must have been Jesus. Why was it recorded for us? There are at least three answers to the question.

First, because Jesus taught a great new truth about the new quality of life that comes when the Holy Spirit brings 'living water' to our thirsty souls. Second, because he presented a new approach to the worship of God. Third, because to this ordinary woman he showed himself to be the Christ who would bring salvation to the whole world. How thankful we are that this conversation was recorded for our benefit.



In your own words, explain one of the great truths that Jesus spoke about to the Samaritan woman.



What did Jesus mean when he said that true worshippers would worship 'in spirit and in truth'? Give an example of an occasion when you have experienced such worship.



Never the Same Again chapter 5 pages 63-70



Use this chorus as a focus for your prayers:
'To be like Jesus! This hope possesses me,
In every thought and deed, this is my aim,
my creed;
To be like Jesus! This hope possesses me,
His Spirit helping me, like him I'll be.'



Why is the Holy Spirit described as a
'courteous and gentle helper'? How does he
react if we reject his help?



What are the practical consequences of accepting the fruit of the Spirit
which is love (see page 65)?



'Love is all the fruit in one,' said W. E. Sangster. How do the descriptions
of love, joy and peace fit together in a Christian's life?

**Month 8
Week 3**

**'How much like
Jesus can I
be?'**

This week's lesson follows on from our thinking of last month about taking Jesus as our chief 'role model'. We look together at the first group of three 'fruit of the Spirit' described by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. These are the qualities that Jesus showed. We need to possess them if we want to be like Him. It is the Holy Spirit who can offer them to us and we must ask him to make them ours.



Heroes of the faith Page 103



Pray for the people who teach the gospel to children, that they may have the wisdom, skill and love they need to introduce young people to Jesus.



Eduardo was the only child convert from the early mission to Peru. Yet he became the means of many people coming to know Christ. Can we measure the success of Christian work by numbers of converts?



‘Whatever his official appointment, he would always be an evangelist.’
How did Eduardo show his passion for evangelism?



Eduardo began his Christian work by selling copies of the Bible. Discuss the effectiveness of this method of sharing the gospel.

**Month 8
Week 4**

**‘Eduardo
Palaci –
Prophet from
Peru’**

This month’s *Hero of the Faith* came from South America. His memory is still held dear by Salvationists in that continent. He loved children and wanted to point them to Jesus. He was a great evangelist and would always use every opportunity to speak about Jesus. Read the story of his conversion and his work as a seller of Bibles to the people. What a wonderful result came from the faithful work of a lone preacher in Peru.



Luke 10:21-42



Let us ask God to give us a true sense of priority when we have to choose what things are most important to us.



Do we ever put our knowledge or our religious responsibilities before our Christian concern for those in need? Do we neglect getting to know Jesus better because we are too busy?

**Month 9
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Too much of a
good thing?'**

Spiritual dangers

This month we shall study the teachings of Jesus which are found in chapters 10-11 of Luke's Gospel. At first sight these passages may seem to have little connection with each other, but they are all about the dangers which the Christian must guard against. This week we shall look at some dangers that can overcome us very easily, because they involve good things which are taken too far. Good things, if overdone, can become bad things.

Too much learning (Luke 10:21-24)

Today everyone values education very highly. To have little knowledge can be dangerous and can be a terrible disadvantage. But, sometimes, clever people think that they know everything and that there is no more to learn. They can ignore spiritual truth because it does not fit into their pattern of study. In this passage Jesus contrasts the rejection he found in the 'learned' people with the simple trust of his disciples. It is joyful because it tells us that the poor, those without opportunity for education, may still learn about Jesus and understand his gospel. This is because they are eager to learn and are willing to be persuaded. Jesus told the disciples how fortunate they were to be living at that time and to be taking part in his ministry, a privilege that the great men of Old Testament times did not have. But this should not make them proud, only thankful.

Too much religion (Luke 10:25-37)

Can we have too much religion? Of course, we can never know too much about God, but it is possible to place too much importance on religious activities, and

even to forget the reason why we take part in them. When we read the parable Jesus told in this passage, we usually think about the ‘good Samaritan’. Samaritans were despised because they did not share the religious traditions of the Jews. But two very religious people, a priest and a temple assistant, walked straight past the injured man. They were unwilling to help him. It wasn’t just fear of the robbers that made them pass by. They were probably going to Jerusalem to take their turn in the Temple duties. Perhaps they were late and felt they couldn’t spare the time. Perhaps they were worried in case the man was dead, because their law said that if they touched a dead body they would not be allowed to carry out their duties in the Temple. These men put their religious duties before their duty to help a ‘neighbour’. They were too concerned about religion to show true compassion.

Too much work and worry (Luke 10:38-42)

Work is another good thing but again ‘too much of a good thing’ may become harmful. Jesus visited two women who were his friends, Mary and Martha. As soon as Jesus arrived, Mary stopped what she was doing and sat down to listen to Jesus’ teaching. Martha, on the other hand, began to be very busy cleaning and cooking so that they might do their duty as hostesses perfectly. She became more and more annoyed because Mary wasn’t doing her fair share, and in the end she spoke angrily to Jesus and Mary about what she was thinking. Jesus told Martha that she was worrying too much about unimportant details. He didn’t need a luxury meal or a spotless house; he was there especially to talk to them about God and his Kingdom. Less important things could be put aside.



Imagine you were the man who was robbed and injured. Tell the story of your injury and your rescue. How do you feel about being helped by a ‘Samaritan’?



The story of Martha and Mary is about the balance between work and prayer. Which part of your Christian responsibility do you find easier to accomplish?



Luke 11:24-32, 37-54; 12:54-56



‘Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.
Break me, melt me, mould me, fill me;
Spirit of the living God,
Fall afresh on me.’



Are we the same outwardly and inwardly? Or
would we be ashamed for people to see what
we really are?

**Month 9
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**‘Not enough of
a good thing?’**

The dangers of ‘too little’

Last week we thought about carrying good ideas too far. More often, spiritual dangers are faced because a person has not enough knowledge of God and not enough goodness in his or her own life. This week we shall look at some of these cases.

Clean and empty (Luke 11:24-26)

The new life that Jesus came to offer is not just getting rid of bad things in our life. It is about opening our life to God and filling our life with goodness. Jesus said that unless we do this we would be like a clean, empty house. If our life is not filled with good things, then it will get dirty again and many evil habits and feelings will return. If we ask him to do so, the Holy Spirit will come and live in us and fill our lives with his grace and power. If not, we could end up in a worse state than when we started. There will not be enough of the good thing that is the power of God to change us. Christian experience needs to be constantly developing so we need frequently to seek the indwelling of the Spirit in our lives.

Noisy but shallow (Luke 11:27, 28)

‘How lucky your mother is to have a fine son like you.’ The woman who said this was trying to flatter Jesus. It was a silly statement because she did not know about the difficulty and shame that Mary had known when Jesus was born and she could not know the pain that Mary would feel when Jesus was crucified. Her words were shallow and simply drew attention to herself. Jesus did not want

empty praise. He wanted his hearers to understand the message of God and to respond. Her words showed that she did not have enough understanding of the gospel to make a change in her life. Listening to and obeying God is more important than saying easy and pleasant words about him. Jesus does not want flatters but followers.

Always looking for signs (Luke 11:29-32; 12:54-56)

There is a very strong desire in people to find a sign that will explain what is happening today and forecast what will happen tomorrow. Such efforts have taken many forms: examining a chicken's entrails; consulting a medium or fortuneteller; studying the stars in the belief that they affect human behaviour (astrology). People were asking Jesus to produce some sign or wonder to prove that he was God's Son. Jesus dismissed all their nonsense and said that the signs could already be seen clearly in the Old Testament Scriptures if they would only look.

Signs that God has given (Luke 12:54-56)

In the same way that Jonah was a sign for the people of Nineveh, who believed and repented, Jesus was himself a sign for his day. Just as the Queen of Sheba travelled many miles to learn from King Solomon, so they should learn from Jesus' own teaching. In verses 54-56 Jesus tells these people that they are good at forecasting the weather because they look for the signs, but they don't bother to look at what is happening in front of their own eyes as far as religion is concerned. They did not have enough faith to believe in Jesus as God's sign.

Outward goodness but inward sin (Luke 11:37-54)

We have already seen that the Pharisees criticised Jesus because he and his followers did not keep all the Jewish customs. The Pharisees' rules were all about outward show while hiding inner problems. Jesus gave some examples of this.

Mealtime rituals

They were very careful to wash their hands and utensils in a particular way before a meal. Then they would take part in a greedy feast. Jesus said that it would be better to give some of the food to the poor (verses 39-41).

Tithing

They took a great deal of time and trouble to set aside a tenth of every tiny herb in the garden as an offering to God. Jesus said it would be better to make sure that poor people received justice and love (verse 42).

Behaviour at worship

They loved to seek respect and honour from the people by taking the main seats in the synagogue. Jesus said this was no good if you were thinking bad thoughts about the same people in your heart (verse 43).

Jesus said that the Pharisees' attitude contaminated those who followed them just as walking on an unmarked grave was thought to contaminate those who did so accidentally.

Play-acting instead of real faith

Jesus also accused the lawyers of hypocrisy, a kind of play-acting. He said that they made the law a burden instead of a blessing, laying down so many rules that ordinary, poor people could not do everything that was expected of them, while the lawyers themselves lived a comfortable, scholarly kind of life (verse 46). He pointed out that the lawyers said that they gave great respect to the prophets of the Old Testament. Yet it was their ancestors who had killed them. At the same time they paid no attention to the messengers of God in their own day (verses 47-51). Jesus complained that these lawyers had the knowledge of the Scriptures which could have been the key to open the door to true religion, but they didn't want to know about it themselves and did not help anybody else to know God's truth either (verses 52-54).



Why did Jesus think that the Pharisees and lawyers were not sincere in their religion?



Jesus condemned the lawyers because their meticulous attention to detailed rules blinded them to greater truths. How can Christians today avoid this danger?



Never the Same Again chapter 5 pages 70-78



Use 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 as the basis for your prayers.



God's patience with us is a picture of the patience we should show towards other people. How can we deal with our own impatience with others?



Look at the list of things which 'have to go out' and things which 'have to come in' on pages 72 and 73. Which of these do you find easy and which are hardest for you?



Why is faithfulness and not success the true mark of the Christian? What evidence from Scripture can you find for this truth?

**Month 9
Week 3**

**'How much like
Jesus can I
be?'**

The remaining descriptions of the fruit of the Spirit are the subject of this lesson. What a difference will be made in our lives if these qualities are really shown in us. The subject of this whole series of lessons is Christian Living. This lesson shows us what this means in practical terms.

The leader to arrange locally some practical work in sharing the gospel with other people

**Month 9
Week 4**

Locally arranged practical work



Luke 12:1-53; 13:1-9



Pray for Christians who face opposition from authorities or their families. Pray that they may be able to stand firm, find the wisdom to counter opposition and have a peaceful heart to accept their situation.



The first epistle of John boldly states that 'perfect love drives out all fear' (1 John 4:18). What makes you feel afraid? How does the love of God help you deal with your fears?

**Month 10
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Don't be
afraid'**

Alert but unafraid

Two themes are repeated in the Bible readings which we shall study this week. There are at least five references to what we should or should not fear and at least four times we are instructed to be on our guard. Fear can be very harmful to us. It may destroy our inner peace and even make us ill in body. Jesus said that there are many things which are not worth being afraid of, either because we cannot alter them whatever we do, or because they are passing things which cannot harm our souls. On the other hand, there are things which we should be concerned about. The most important of these is our relationship with God.

Don't be afraid of publicity (Luke 12:1-3, 8, 9)

There will be no secrets in God's Kingdom. In the end everything will be made known. If we are the kind of people who have nothing to hide, nothing that we need to be ashamed about, nothing that has not been forgiven by God then we have nothing to fear. We need not be afraid that God will reject us. If we declare that we are truly his, he will not let us down or forget us. Jesus said, 'Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world' (Matthew 28:20, AV).

Don't be afraid of the authorities (Luke 12:4-7, 11, 12)

Jesus is saying here that we ought to pay more attention to and obey God rather than human authorities. The worst that any of them can do is to kill us (verses 4-5), while God has our eternal souls in his hands. While we should never seek

to provoke conflict with human authorities, our first obedience will always be to God.

Jesus also gave an encouraging word for anyone who has to speak in their own defence in a trial before the authorities. We do not need to worry about what to say. The Holy Spirit will guide us. Of course, we should always prepare carefully for any presentation of Christian truth. Jesus was not encouraging a lazy or careless approach to preparation. Nevertheless, our effective witness will depend on the Holy Spirit and not on our ability.

Don't worry about possessions (Luke 12:13-34)

Jesus was looked upon as a teacher and people often brought their problems to such men. One man had a dispute with his brother over what their father had left them when he died and wanted Jesus to solve it. Jesus refused, saying he had no right to decide and suggesting that the matter was of little importance in comparison with the spiritual problems he was dealing with. He took the opportunity of warning all his hearers to guard against paying too much attention to possessions. Just as physical life can be taken from us at any time, so possessions may be lost very suddenly. Our life here is more than food and clothes. We need to trust God, who cares for us, to give us what we need. What really matters is our eternal relationship with God.

Don't be afraid of the future (Luke 12:35-48)

These words of comfort are addressed to true followers of Jesus and apply only if we remain alert and prepared for what may happen, especially for the second coming of Jesus. We must be ready to serve the Master whenever he calls. Just as servants are 'kept on their toes' by not knowing what will happen or when it will happen, so Christians are not given advance warning of what God will do and when. We should never act as if the Master is nowhere near to us. God is always near (verses 45, 46). Verse 48 tells us that the more advantages we have received (good family, wealth, education, good job) the more God will expect from us. We are accountable to God for the way we use his gifts.

Don't be afraid of conflict (Luke 12:49-53)

Much of this passage consists of picture language. It is very unlikely that Jesus came to 'set the earth on fire' in a literal sense but he knew that his teaching would 'turn the world upside down'. Similarly, he is not talking of baptism with water (verse 50), but of the experience of death and resurrection.

It may seem strange that the 'Prince of peace' should speak the words of verses 51-53, until we remember that it is impossible to be 'lukewarm' about Jesus and the truths which he taught. You are either for him or against him, and if you are really for him there is always the possibility of conflict with those who oppose

him. Your loyalty to Christ may cause divisions even within your family. Jesus knew that this would sometimes happen even though it would never be what he wanted.

Don't be afraid of death (Luke 13:1-9)

In verses 1-5 Jesus refers to two things that had happened recently and which had shocked everyone. The Roman Governor, Pilate, had killed some people when they were making sacrifices to God; and 18 people had been killed when a building in Siloam had collapsed.

At that time people thought that sickness and accidents were the result of sin and some people, therefore, concluded that the victims must have been very sinful. However, Jesus said that death is not God punishing sinners. The time and means of our death have nothing to do with how we stand with God. What does matter is whether we are ready to face God when we die.

The parable of the unfruitful fig-tree (verses 6-9) shows that God is merciful in giving us so much time to repent and believe the gospel.



Why did Jesus say we should not worry about what we will have to eat or what clothes we have to wear?



Jesus placed loyalty and obedience to himself and his teaching above loyalty to family, tribe and nation. How can Christians resolve this potential conflict of loyalties today?



Luke 8:22-25; 9:12-17; John 2:1-11, 6:1-14, 25-35; (Mark 4:35-41)



Pray for faith in Jesus that does not need miraculous events to sustain it.



Thomas found it hard to believe in the resurrection of Jesus – the greatest miracle of all. Why do we believe in Jesus' power over nature and death?

**Month 10
Week 2**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Nature
miracles'**

God reigns supreme

Miracles are not as common in the New Testament as we might at first think, and this is especially true of miracles in the realm of nature. One way to define a miracle is to say that it is a very unusual happening. God, who created the world, has laid down 'laws' by which it normally continues to work. These laws are planned so that our world will work in the way God intended, and for the general good of all men. For example, we rely on the 'law' of gravity to work every time. If it did not do so life would be impossible. So Jesus did not make a habit of interfering with these laws just to make life easy for himself or for other people. However, because he is the Lord of all nature he had the power to suspend the normal laws.

Calming a storm (Luke 8:22-25)

On this occasion Jesus did calm a storm in order to teach a lesson that is far more important than the details of the miracle itself. It also applies to more people than just the disciples of Jesus; it has something to say to every Christian. Of course, it would be possible to say that the storm just happened to end at the moment Jesus spoke, but this may be harder to believe than that Jesus caused it to die down.

The Sea of Galilee

Storms on the Sea of Galilee begin and end very suddenly. This is because the area is nearly 700 feet below sea level and becomes very hot. The hot air rises

and the cold air rushes in at ground level to take its place. This cold air seems to come from all directions, but especially down the valleys to the west, which act as huge funnels. This can make the sea suddenly become very stormy.

An acted parable

Jesus intended that this incident should teach a lesson. For the disciples and for us it is just as important to ask, 'What does the story teach us?' as to ask, 'What really happened?' This story teaches us that life will have its storms even for those who are in the company of Jesus (verse 23). It also teaches us that sometimes God seems to be asleep when we need him most (verses 23, 24). Notice that in Mark's account (4:38), which is the oldest, the disciples are quoted as saying to Jesus, 'Don't you care that we are about to die!' Finally, Jesus teaches us that panic is a sign of a lack of faith and trust in God (verse 25).

'Next to nothing' becomes 'more than enough' (Luke 9:12-17)

The second nature miracle that we look at is one where Jesus did not just control the forces of nature as he did in the storm at sea. This time he provided more than nature could provide. Food for thousands was provided from one picnic lunch. This is the only miracle recorded in all four Gospels. Two Gospels also contain another similar happening at a later time. This miracle involved a huge crowd and this suggests that it was a well-known happening. There were many eyewitnesses who could confirm what happened.

A real emergency (John 6:1-14)

Finding food for a great crowd of people in an isolated area seemed impossible. It was not surprising that the disciples did not know what to do. But Jesus would not excuse them from their duty to care for people in need. The solution to the problem was to be found in the power of Jesus and the willing gift on one small boy (verse 9). What he provided was the ordinary food of a poor person. But with the power of Jesus it was enough to feed the whole crowd and to have plenty to spare.

What does it mean? (John 6:25-35)

Once again Jesus is teaching the disciples to have faith in him. There is no need to panic.

Jesus had rejected the temptation of the devil to become popular by simply providing food for hungry people, but this was a special situation. Even so, Jesus recognised the danger. He was concerned that the crowds and his disciples should seek the spiritual nourishment that came from God and not just the food that would make them hungry again next day. Jesus is himself the Bread of Heaven that will meet our deepest needs.

Another meaning

It is possible to think of this story in another way. It would be just as much a miracle if selfish people had been made willing to share what they had, and so provide for all, as if the food itself had been multiplied. This would be the miracle of changing selfish people into generous people. The boy who gave his lunch to Jesus was a wonderful example. If all people now would share the food they have, no one in the world would have to starve. We should also take note that it is never right to waste what is left over from what God provides for us.

Water into wine (John 2:1-11)

A third 'nature' miracle occurs in this incident from the early ministry of Jesus. A wedding feast to which Jesus and his disciples were invited produced a moment of embarrassment when the supply of wine ran out. Jesus' mother asked him to help and, with the cooperation of the servants, Jesus provided the feast with more wine, which had been changed from the water used for washing hands. This might seem to be a trivial occasion for Jesus to use his miraculous powers. But John says that this was a 'sign' – a miracle with a meaning – by which Jesus revealed his glory. He would give new quality of life to ordinary events and make them special. The water of our sinful lives would be transformed by the touch of Jesus into new and sparkling beauty. Once again the miracle helped his disciples believe in him.

Miracles

Miracles like this helped people to have more faith. As the faith of Jesus' disciples grew stronger, their need of miracles became less. Jesus said, 'How happy are those who believe without seeing me!' (John 20:29).



Tell the story of the feeding of the 5,000 as if you were the boy with the loaves and fishes.



Why were the disciples afraid in the storm on the Sea of Galilee? Compare their reaction with that of Paul in Acts 27:13-26. What made the difference?



Never the Same Again pages 81-85



Make this instruction from St. Paul the subject of your prayers.

‘Set your hearts on the best spiritual gifts, but I will show you a way which surpasses them all ...

Follow the way of love’ (1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:1, *JBP*)



What does the word ‘charismatic’ really mean?



Why does the author say that every Christian has spiritual gifts?



What are the dangers of thinking more about the ‘gifts of the Spirit’ than about the ‘fruit of the Spirit’?

**Month 10
Week 3**

**‘Will God equip
me to serve
him?’**

This week’s subject is of great interest to many young Christians and is the cause of a great deal of controversy. General Clifton says that it is important that we do not deal with this chapter before we have thought about the fruit of the Spirit described in the last two lessons in this series. The important message is that God will give us what we need to serve him well. The actual gifts are less important than our willingness to use them only for the glory of God and not for our own glory.



Heroes of the Faith Page 57



Pray that God will enable you to overcome shyness and be a bold witness for Jesus.



Kate Lee concentrated her ministry on the most degraded people in her area. Is this still the right way to build the Kingdom?



How did Kate persuade 'Jack' the tough man to come to her meetings? What was the result?



The story of Kate Lee is a story of how God can use an ordinary person in extraordinary ways. What, do you think, was the secret of her effective ministry?

**Month 10
Week 4**

**'Kate Lee - I
can't but I
must!'**

Many of the 'Heroes' we have been introduced too have been naturally outgoing people. This week we are told about a very shy young lady who became a wonderful officer. She overcame her timid nature to become a wonderful leader of Salvation Army corps. This is a good story for those who think they have little to offer and who know what it is to be afraid. God can use all of us if we are willing to allow him to change us.



Luke 15:1-32



Pray for a loving spirit that welcomes those who return to God. Pray that we may react like the compassionate father and not the angry older brother.



Why did the shepherd leave the 99 sheep to look for one? Did he not care for the needs of the 99?

Month 11
Week 1

Bible Study
The Gospels

'Lost and Found'

Three stories on the same theme

Our reading has three stories all of which have a number of elements in common. Someone, or something, is lost; someone searches until what is lost has been found; there is great rejoicing that the lost has been found. The first two stories are brief and the third adds a number of new elements. The message Jesus wanted to bring is made clear in the story of the lost son.

A lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7)

The people who listened to Jesus would be very familiar with the scene of this story. Shepherds were responsible to care for their animals and to lose one from the flock would be serious. The story suggests that the one lost sheep was more important than the 99 who were safe. The shepherd might have to risk his life to rescue the lost sheep (compare with John 10 particularly verse 11). The Jews had often thought of God as a shepherd (for example Isaiah 40:11). So people would understand that Jesus was thinking about caring for outcasts instead of listening to the respectable people who criticised him. He did this even though it was costly to his reputation.

A lost coin (Luke 15:8-10)

This is another familiar scene for Jesus' listeners. Many wives received a dowry that was a headpiece with coins attached. To lose one of these would not only mean a financial loss but also the loss of a sign of her husband's love. It would be difficult to find on the rough floor of her house so she would have to sweep

very carefully to find it. Little wonder that she would rejoice with her friends when it was found. This story reminds us of the great value that God places on each of his children. We are more precious than gold to our heavenly Father.

A lost son (Luke 15:11-19)

One of the differences with this story is that the younger son got lost deliberately. The sheep and the coin were lost accidentally but the son chose to leave his father. This is another scene with which Jesus' listeners would be familiar. Children do sometimes rebel against their parents, causing great anxiety. The far country to which the son went was a place where he could please himself. Outside of his father's control and influence his behaviour was foolish, wasteful and sinful. In the end he became penniless, homeless and friendless. It was then that he 'came to himself'.

A loving father (Luke 15:20-24)

The story is really about the father's attitude to his son. He was just as concerned as the shepherd was about the lost sheep, or the woman about the lost coin. But this father did not go searching for his son. He waited, with deep concern, until his son decided to come home.

He wanted the son to choose to return as he had chosen to go away. Unlike sheep or coins, people have freedom to obey or to disobey God. He does not force us to do his will but waits for us to respond to his unchanging love. Then the father's love was shown in the welcome that the son received when he came home. The feast, the robe and the ring are signs of love, forgiveness and acceptance.

An angry brother (Luke 15:25-32)

In many ways it is easy to understand the elder brother's anger. He felt that his loyalty, hard work and honesty had been taken for granted. Why should his father appear to love his younger brother more than him? He seemed to distance himself from the family when he called his younger brother 'your son' instead of 'my brother'. The father reassured him of the unique place he had in the family and that he needed to share the rejoicing over the return of his brother. In God's family there are no favourite children. We are all brothers and sisters equally loved, even though some may fall into sin.

What do the stories mean?

The main character in each story is the one who cares enough to seek what is lost. The picture is of a compassionate, concerned God who is interested in everyone. The stories all teach us that what is lost may be found. However far

away we are from God we can return and be sure of a loving welcome with real rejoicing. The stories also show that God has a special concern for the lost. He wants his family to be complete.



Imagine you are the younger son feeding the pigs in the far country. Write a letter home to your father describing how you feel and saying that you want to come home.



Many people identify the attitude of the older brother with that of the Pharisees. What evidence from the Gospels can you find that shows the Pharisees acting like the older brother?



Luke 18:18-34



Pray that God will help us to listen to him, to understand his plan for us. Pray that we may be given the grace to obey and not to turn sadly away.



What are the most important things in your life? Would you be prepared to give them up for Jesus if he asked you to?

Month 11
Week 2

Bible Study
The Gospels

'It's a hard life'

A rich, young ruler

This incident made both Jesus and the young man who approached him very sad. It may be that he was insincere in his flattery of Jesus but the young man's reaction to the hard truth that Jesus had to tell him suggests that he really did want to follow. He came with so many advantages, especially compared to the twelve disciples of Jesus. He had wealth. His position as a leader of the Jewish community meant that he was held in great respect. Matthew (19:20) says that he was young with a long life in front of him. Mark (10:21) says that when Jesus saw him he loved him. What privileges he had! What might he have become!

Who is good? (Luke 18:18-19)

The young man called Jesus, 'Good Master'. Jesus reminded him that all goodness comes from God. The young man could not inherit it or earn it like his wealth or his position. If Jesus truly was the 'good teacher' that was almost saying that he was God's Son. Did the young man really mean that? He seemed to be asking Jesus what the minimum requirements were for inheriting eternal life. He was thinking that eternal life could be bought or earned, and that there was a lowest price for it. He did not understand that eternal life, like 'goodness' comes from God and is his gift to us. It cannot be bought or earned however rich or famous we are.

Keeping the rules (Luke 18:20-21)

Jesus reminded the young man of some of the Ten Commandments. The five mentioned were all concerned with our relationships with other people and not

with our relationship to God. The young man was able to say that he had always kept these rules of life. If this was true then he was a very 'good' person in human terms. But even if this were true it would not be enough to guarantee him the eternal life he was seeking. The young man's attitude was like the Pharisee in Luke 18:10. He was satisfied with his own goodness.

'Sell all you have' (Luke 18:22-23)

For this young man the way to life was going to be hard. It would mean selling all his possessions and adopting the wandering life of a follower of Jesus. When Jesus told him this he was taken aback. The rabbis had never made a demand like this. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5: 24) Jesus had warned his hearers, 'You cannot serve God and money'. If the young man loved his money, and all that it could buy, more than he loved Jesus, then he could not inherit eternal life. He wanted to know the minimum he had to do to get into the Kingdom of God. He was not interested in giving his all.

Is wealth wrong? (Luke 18:24-25)

Jesus never said that all wealth is wrong. Money is a convenient way to share and exchange resources. But the danger comes when a desire for more money controls all our life. It becomes a god. St. Paul told Timothy that 'the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil' (1 Timothy 6:10).

Jesus told his disciples how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. The saying about the camel and the needle was probably an exaggerated proverb. It was a dramatic way of saying that 'it is very hard indeed'.

Who can be saved? (Luke 18:26-27)

The people thought it would be impossible for anyone to reach the standards that Jesus announced. His reply is important for us all. What seems impossible to us is more than possible for God. Those who love God with all their hearts, minds and souls find that the gift of God is eternal life. They are members of God's Kingdom as a gift from God himself.

What about my sacrifice? (Luke 18:28-30)

Peter was the next person to put himself in the wrong. In spite of having heard Jesus telling the man not to claim to be good, Peter showed that he, too, was satisfied with himself and thought that Jesus owed him a favour. Jesus did not treat Peter as harshly as he did the ruler, for Peter 'meant well'. Instead Jesus

promised the disciples that they would have spiritual blessings that would make up for all they had given up.

It couldn't be clearer (Luke 18:31-34)

Jesus now told the disciples about the hard way that was just ahead for him. It is unbelievable that the disciples did not know what was going to happen to Jesus. For a long time before his death he told them in very plain words what would happen. In Matthew, Mark and Luke we read his clear warning on three occasions. They are recorded in Luke 9:22, Luke 9:44 and Luke 18:31-33. In all three Gospels the words that he spoke are very similar. But the disciples had no idea what he meant as we see from Luke 9:45 and Luke 18:34. Sometimes people fail to hear what they do not want to hear, or their minds are so full of other ideas that an important message is not understood. This may have been what happened with the disciples. Their plan was very different from God's plan. For another illustration, read the story of Samuel and Eli in 1 Samuel 3:1-10.



Tell the story of your meeting with Jesus as though you were the rich young ruler. How did you feel afterwards?



If wealth was what prevented the rich young ruler from following Jesus, what are the other temptations that prevent young people today from becoming disciples?



Never the Same again pages 85-93



Thank God for the gift or gifts he has given you. Seek to understand them. Pray for humility to use them in love to build up the Church.



Discuss 'Love is the gift above all other gifts, without which all lesser gifts are useless'. (page 91)



Why does God give spiritual gifts to his people? Where do they come from? What is the responsibility of those to whom they are given?



Discuss the importance of 1 Corinthians chapter 13 in the context of the teaching on spiritual gifts in chapters 12 and 14.

**Month 11
Week 3**

**'Will God equip
me to serve
him?'**

Today we examine the lists of spiritual gifts in the New Testament. They give us some idea of the gifts that were in use in the early church. Paul clearly has ideas about the relative importance of these gifts. In 1 Corinthians 13 he shows us that Christian love is the best way of all. This is the fruit of the Spirit that we should all aspire to.



Heroes of the Faith page 69



Pray for Christians in isolated societies that they may remain faithful.



The Salvation Army has seen great growth in Mizoram. What can we learn from this to enable the Army to grow where we are?



How did Kawl Khuma react to the news of the closure of Salvation Army work in his homeland? How was he able to see it recommence?



What lessons can be learned from Kawl Khuma's story about bringing the Christian faith to an animist culture?

**Month 11
Week 4**

**'Kawl Khuma –
The Man from
the Mizo Hills'**

Kawl Khuma is a hero from yet another country and continent. His story is one of overcoming great disappointment. His persistence and faithfulness have made the growth of the Army in his part of India one of the most wonderful developments in the whole world. Today his successors are missionaries in a number of different countries and cultures. It shows that can be achieved if we don't give up when life is hard.



Luke 18:35-43; 19:1-27
(Luke 9:51-55; 13:22; 17:11)



Pray that we may develop and use every gift that God has given us. Pray for courage to grasp every opportunity for change that comes to us from Jesus.



What do you think happened to Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus after Jesus left Jericho? How did the changes Jesus made in them make a difference to their everyday lives?

**Month 12
Week 1**

**Bible Study
The Gospels**

**'Jericho – next
stop
Jerusalem'**

The oldest city in the world

For quite a long time Jesus had been moving steadily from Galilee towards Jerusalem. Luke mentions the journey several times, eg, 9:51-55; 13:22; 17:11. Jesus was probably going south along the Jordan valley to avoid conflicts with the unfriendly people of Samaria. The biggest town in the valley was Jericho, thought by some to be the oldest in the world, with a wall built in 8000 BC. By the time Jesus reached it he was in Judea, and it was at Jericho that he had to turn westwards to reach Jerusalem.

Nearly there!

Jericho, which has a tropical climate, is only five miles from the Dead Sea and 16 miles from Jerusalem. Have you ever made a very long journey lasting for several days? Can you remember your feelings when you arrived at the last town or village on the journey and felt you were very near the end? That excitement must have been felt by Jesus and the disciples. Jesus knew that there was danger and death ahead, and the disciples must have had some idea too. The road to Jerusalem was a very hard one to travel. It climbed 3,300 feet in those 16 miles, and it was a hot, dusty, rocky, desert road where many armed robberies took place.

Rest and work

Perhaps, therefore, Jesus and the disciples had a pause in their journey at Jericho, to rest and prepare to face the unknown future. Jesus kept up his work among the

sick, the poor and the outcasts. Luke records two happenings there, and a story Jesus told on the way to Jerusalem.

The blind beggar (Luke 18:35-38)

Blind men could do little but beg for food or money, and this one chose a busy road in or near Jericho so as to get as much as possible. He would be expecting to do well, because it was probably about a week before the Passover festival, and many pilgrims would be going through on their way to Jerusalem. The gospel of Mark tells us that the beggar's name was Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46). He did much better than he ever expected. When he heard the noise of a large crowd going by he asked who it was and was told that it was Jesus of Nazareth. He must have heard of the healing powers of Jesus because he shouted out for Jesus to have mercy on him.

I won't keep quiet (Luke 18:39-43)

The crowd told Bartimaeus to be quiet but he shouted even louder and Jesus told him to come. He had called Jesus 'Son of David', one of the titles of the Messiah. When Jesus asked him what he wanted he replied that he wanted his sight restored. Jesus told him that it was his faith that had healed him and he immediately found his sight restored and followed Jesus, praising God for the miracle.

No more begging

Bartimaeus made an important and difficult choice when he asked Jesus for a miracle. With his sight restored he would no longer be able to beg as a blind man. He would have to give up his place on the road where many pilgrims would have given him money. Now there would be no excuse for him not working. When Jesus asked him what he really wanted, Bartimaeus had a decision to make. His life would be changed and it would not necessarily be made easier. This is the pattern for all the changes that are made by the power of Christ in human lives. The changes will not necessarily make life easier but if we cooperate with Jesus, then our lives will be transformed.

The little man up a tree (Luke 19:1-4)

This is another story about radical change. This man was changed from a cheat into an honest man. Jesus was walking along the tree-lined streets of Jericho, which was known as 'the city of palm trees'. He stopped and looked up into one particular tree and saw a small man looking down at him. The crowd was so thick that such a small man could see what was happening only by climbing a tree. His name was Zacchaeus. He was a taxman, a chief taxman (verse 2). No doubt he wanted to see without being seen himself, but somehow Jesus knew he

was there. Jesus told him that he wanted to rest in his house before going on with his journey.

An honoured guest (Luke 19:5-7)

Zacchaeus couldn't have been more pleased. Few people spoke to him because he worked for the Romans, and probably his only friends were other tax collectors. The crowd was not quite so pleased, for he was probably the most unpopular man in the city.

A changed man (Luke 19:8-10)

Then Zacchaeus responded to Jesus even more. Without being asked, he said he would give up half his wealth. Contrast this with the reluctance of the rich and respectable Jewish leader (Luke 18:22, 23) who was unwilling to give up his riches on earth. In addition, Zacchaeus said that he would pay back those from whom he had taken too much money. He would do this in the way that both Roman and Jewish law said he should, by giving back four times as much (see Exodus 22:1). No doubt the crowd would be happy about that. So another outcast was changed because he met Jesus.

Paying back and being forgiven

Although we do not know what Jesus said to Zacchaeus it is clear that Christ's powerful influence made such an impression on a greedy, cheating man that he was willing to pay back generously those whom he had cheated. One of the conditions for forgiveness is to put right, as far as possible, what has been wrong. When Jesus said that salvation had come to this house it was a recognition of the honesty of Zacchaeus's response. He was a true son of Abraham, following in the footsteps of the great man, even though he had been excluded from Jewish society. He was just the kind of person that Jesus came to seek and save.

The parable of the gold coins (Luke 19:11-27)

This parable is very like the parable of the three servants, found in Matthew 25:14-30. Luke says that Jesus told the story somewhere between Jericho and Jerusalem (verse 11). It was about a man who called his 10 servants and gave each a gold coin. They were to use it in some kind of business while he was away and make a profit for him. On his return he found that one servant had made a 1,000 per cent profit; one a 500 per cent profit and one had not done anything, out of fear that he might lose what the master had given him.

It isn't fair

The servant who had done nothing with his coin had it taken away from him. Some protested that this was not fair. But verse 26 does not mean that those who

start life with great advantages will be given more. The three servants had all started off with the same amount, but the first had made more effort and used all his skill in working for his master. That is what Jesus was praising and rewarding. The point of the story is that abilities and advantages that are not used will decline.

We have to be aware that everything that we have is a gift from God and should be developed and used for his glory.

A warning?

It may be that the parable was also a warning to the Jews who had been entrusted by God with the true religion and with the coming of the Messiah. They had done nothing about it, but just kept it to themselves and, within a week, would be crucifying the Messiah. Their privileges as God's chosen people would also be given to the Gentiles.



What, do you think, was the reaction of the people of Jericho to the healing of Bartimaeus and the conversion of Zacchaeus?



What were the implications of the parable of the gold coins for the Jews of Jericho? What are the implications for Christians today?



Luke 19:28-48; John 12:1-11.



All cities can be places of great hope and great wickedness. Pray for the cities of your land that God may come to the people there.



How should we behave in the 'house of God' where we worship? Are we in danger of behaving in the same way as the Jews in the Temple?

Month 12
Week 2

Bible Study
The Gospels

'Jerusalem at last'

Resting at Bethany (John 12:1-11)

From Jericho Jesus climbed the steep road to Jerusalem, arriving at Bethany on the day before the Sabbath. He stayed at the house of his friends, Mary, Martha and Lazarus. In the evening they shared a meal and Mary showed her great love for Jesus by pouring expensive perfume over his feet. She seemed to sense that the next days would be a crisis for Jesus and he commended her for this demonstration of affection. Judas Iscariot grumbled about the waste of money. He was obviously already out of step with the rest of the disciple group.

Entering Jerusalem itself (Luke 19:28-40)

After resting on the Sabbath (Saturday) Jesus left Bethany for the short journey to the city of Jerusalem. Because it was the week of the Passover there were great crowds of pilgrims making their way to the holy city. Jesus sent two of his disciples ahead of him with instructions and a password. They were to look for a young, untrained donkey standing outside a house. They were to bring it to Jesus and, if anyone asked them they were to say, 'The master needs it.' It seems that Jesus had made this arrangement earlier for the donkey to be ready. Jesus chose to ride on a donkey, which would be what ordinary people used rather than a horse, the mount of a conqueror. This would be the sign of a king coming in peace and was foretold by one of the prophets (Zechariah 9:9).

'God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord'

The journey into Jerusalem was exciting. They were surrounded by pilgrims from Galilee. Many of them had seen the miracles that Jesus had performed and

heard his wonderful teaching. They greeted Jesus like a hero, spreading the branches of palm trees as a carpet for the donkey to walk on. (That is why we call this day 'Palm Sunday'.) They shouted out a welcome 'Hosanna' and sang the words from Psalm 118, 'May God bless the one who comes in the name of the Lord,' This was greeting Jesus as the Messiah coming to his triumph in Jerusalem.

The stones will start shouting

Jesus did not stop the crowds shouting. The Pharisees were worried and angry. They did not want Jesus to come in triumph to the city. But Jesus told them in picture language that if he told the people to be quiet the stones would come to life and start shouting. Perhaps this was the closest Jesus had come to claiming to be the Messiah.

Jesus in tears (Luke 19:41-44)

When Jerusalem came in sight, Jesus broke down in tears. In the middle of all the happy shouts of the crowds he thought about what had happened in the city, what might have happened and what was going to happen. The name, Jerusalem, means 'foundation of peace', and for many centuries it had been the centre of Jewish worship, but Jesus remembered that the city had been destroyed by invading armies, the beautiful Temple torn down and the people taken captive. Now, in Jesus' time, it was controlled by Roman officials, and its people had failed to respond to God as they should have done. Jesus loved Jerusalem but he was intensely saddened by what had become of it. Looking ahead he foresaw that before long the city would again be destroyed (it happened in AD 70 under the Roman general Titus) and its people scattered all over the world.

If only the people had listened and responded to the messengers and prophets that God had sent.

Cleansing the Temple (Luke 19:45, 46)

One sign of the corruption of the city was to be found in the Temple itself. The outer part of the Temple could be used by non-Jews for worship. In this place traders had set up stalls to sell lambs and doves that were to be used for sacrifices. They charged very high prices for these animals. There were money-changers there, too, because Temple taxes could only be paid in special Temple money. They were dishonest in the rates that they charged. This part of the Temple was also used as a short cut from one part of the city to another. As a result, in the only place where Gentiles could worship there was a great deal of noise and much dishonesty. Jesus was furious with the dishonest traders. He drove them out, turning their tables over and driving the animals out of the

Temple. He wanted to teach and help people to worship there. His strong action was a sign of his desire to see Jerusalem become the holy city that God intended it to be.

Popular teaching and growing plots

Jesus spent the early days of this week in the Temple teaching the people. Among the crowds of visitors from Galilee and for some of the local people his teaching was inspiring. They crowded around to listen to him. The Jewish leaders, both from the Sadducees (the ruling priests) and the Pharisees, wanted to silence him but could not do so because of the popular support he enjoyed. They were looking for some way to stop Jesus.



Tell the story of how two disciples found a donkey for Jesus to ride on. How did the pilgrims feel about Jesus riding into Jerusalem? How did the religious leaders feel?



'Jesus both loved and hated Jerusalem.' Explain why he had such divided feelings about the city. What evidence is there for this?



Never the Same Again pages 95-107



Pray for wisdom and guidance from God to understand the gifts that he wants to give to you.



Which of the gifts mentioned in this chapter are most useful in building and encouraging the Church today?



How can we tell whether a speaker is bringing a message from God or not?



Consider and comment on the final paragraph on the subject of tongues and their interpretation on page 102.

**Month 12
Week 3**

**'What are the
gifts of the
Spirit?'**

This final lesson on the Gifts of the Spirit shows us what a variety of people can be used by the Lord to grow his church. It says to us that whoever we are and whatever natural abilities we may have we can be part of the great work of Jesus in bringing the world back to the love of God. So none of us need despair or think we can do nothing for Jesus. He will give us what we need and we can be useful in serving him.

The leader to arrange locally some practical work in sharing the gospel with other people

**Month 12
Week 4**

**Locally
arranged
practical work**