

# How to use Explore

## Issue 102

The 91 daily readings in this issue of *Explore* are designed to help you understand and apply the Bible as you read it each day.

## It's serious!

We suggest that you allow 15 minutes each day to work through the Bible passage with the notes. It should be a meal, not a snack! Readings from other parts of the Bible can throw valuable light on the study passage. These cross-references can be skipped if you are already feeling full up, but will expand your grasp of the Bible. *Explore* uses the NIV2011 Bible translation, but you can also use it with the NIV1984 or ESV translations.

Sometimes a prayer box will encourage you to stop and pray through the lessons—but it is always important to allow time to pray for God's Spirit to bring his word to life, and to shape the way we think and live through it.

## We're serious!

All of us who work on *Explore* share a passion for getting the Bible into people's lives. We fiercely hold to the Bible as God's word—to honour and follow, not to explain away.

**1**  
Find a time you can read the Bible each day

**2**  
Find a place where you can be quiet and think

**3**  
Ask God to help you understand

**4**  
Carefully read through the Bible passage for today

**5**  
Study the verses with *Explore*, taking time to think

**6**  
Pray about what you have read

**the goodbook**  
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# Welcome to *Explore*

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Being a Christian isn't a skill you learn, like carpentry or flower arranging. Nor is it a lifestyle choice, like the kind of clothes you wear, or the people you choose to hang out with. It's about having a real relationship with the living God through his Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that this relationship is like a marriage.

It's important to start with this, because many Christians view the practice of daily Bible reading as a Christian duty, or a hard discipline that is just one more thing to get done in our busy, modern lives.

But the Bible is God speaking to us: opening his mind to us on how he thinks, what he wants for us and what his plans are for the world. And most importantly, it tells us what he has done for us in sending his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world. It's the way the Spirit shows Jesus to us, and changes us as we behold his glory.

The Bible is not a manual. It's a love letter. And as with any love letter, we'll want to treasure it, and make time to read and re-read it, so we know we are loved, and discover how we can please the one who loves us. Here are a few suggestions for making your daily time with God more of a joy than a burden:

☛ *Time:* Find a time when you will not be disturbed and when the cobwebs are cleared from your mind. Many people have found that the morning is the best time as it sets you up for the day. If you're not a "morning person", then last thing

at night or a mid-morning break might suit you. Whatever works for you is right for you.

☛ *Place:* Jesus says that we are not to make a great show of our religion (see *Matthew 6:5-6*), but rather, to pray with the door to our room shut. Some people plan to get to work a few minutes earlier and get their Bible out in an office or some other quiet corner.

☛ *Prayer:* Although *Explore* helps with specific prayer ideas from the passage, try to develop your own lists to pray through. Use the flap inside the back cover to help with this. And allow what you read in the Scriptures to shape what you pray for yourself, the world and others.

☛ *Share:* As the saying goes: *expression deepens impression*. So try to cultivate the habit of sharing with others what you have learned. Why not join our Facebook group to share your encouragements, questions and prayer requests? Search for *Explore: For your daily walk with God*.

And remember, *it's quality, not quantity, that counts*: better to think briefly about a single verse than to skim through pages without absorbing anything, because it's about developing your relationship with the living God. The sign that your daily time with God is real is when you start to love him more and serve him more wholeheartedly.

Tim Thornborough  
Editor



# LUKE: Declaring truth

*The day before, Judas buckled under Satan's attack and betrayed Jesus. The night before, Peter wilted under a servant girl's pressure and denied him. Now it's daybreak. How will Jesus, who has more to lose than either of them, fare?*

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## Beaten

### Read Luke 22:63-65

There's tragedy here. The one who has healed the sick (e.g. 5:12-14) and restored the broken (e.g. 5:17-26) is now beaten up.

And there's huge irony too. Days before, Jesus told a parable in which he said that God's prophets are beaten up and "treated shamefully" (20:9-12)—and foretold that as God's Son, he would face the same treatment and then be killed (v 13-15). And here are these guards, beating him up before he is sentenced to death... and challenging him to prophesy!

## Condemned

### Read Luke 22:66 – 23:1

Other sources from the time allow us to picture this scene. There were 71 judges—wealthy residents of Jerusalem as well as Sadducees and Pharisees (22:66)—sitting in a semicircle facing the prisoner. For a Jew, nothing could be more intimidating.

- ❓ *How does Jesus deal with their first question (v 67-68)?*
- ❓ *What does he add?*

### TIME OUT

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### Read Daniel 7:13-14

- ❓ *What was Jesus claiming about himself, by calling himself the Son of Man?*
  - ❓ *What was he saying about who truly had power in that court on that day?*
- 
- ❓ *Why is the Lord's answer to the next question (Luke 22:70) crucial for determining his fate?*

Jesus literally says, "You say that I am", with the sense that he agrees with the identification. If ever it was in his interests to deny being the Son of God, it would be now. But he doesn't. He won't. Jesus stands up for the truth—though it means signing his own death warrant.

## Pray

Thank Jesus for his courage. Thank him for who he is. Pray that, in a world which completely ignores him or pretends to respect him but always refuses to listen to him, you would have great confidence in who he is (v 70) and where he is (v 69).

## Apply

- ❓ *What difference will the truth about Jesus make today to your...*
  - joy?
  - words?



# Innocent

Now the Son of Man, who will reign at the right hand of God (22:69), comes face to face with the representatives of worldly power.

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## The Roman governor

### Read Luke 23:2-7

The Jewish leaders need Pilate to rubber-stamp the death sentence. To convince him, they need to frame Jesus' "crimes" in a way which will alarm Roman ears.

- ❓ *How do their three accusations in verse 2 achieve this?*

This is the best they can do! Yet Jesus has done nothing to prompt the first charge. He taught the opposite of the second (20:21-25). And they have never stopped to consider that their third accusation could be true: that they should be kneeling at Christ's feet, not spitting in his face.

- ❓ *What does Pilate seem most concerned about (23:3)? Why, do you think?*
- ❓ *What is Pilate's verdict (v 4)? Why isn't this the end of the trial (v 5)?*

This presents Pilate with an opportunity. He passes the responsibility to King Herod, who rules Judea under the Romans.

## The local king

### Read Luke 23:8-12

Jesus doesn't perform on demand. He has every right to choose not to answer the questions of the arrogant or sneering.

- ❓ *What does Herod do with Jesus (v 10-11)?*

- ❓ *Look back over the whole passage. When and how could Jesus have said something that would have secured his release?*

## The innocent man

A theme of the account of Jesus' arrest and trial is his complete innocence. If I'm honest about myself, I can see so many shortcomings. Those who love me will spot them too. So someone who was bent on destroying me would not have to look long to find something to hang the dynamite on.

The leadership hates Jesus. But they can't find anything to tease out, dress up, and make public as explosive accusations. There is no slip-up, no mistake, no tiny flaw in the Lord's words or actions. They can only resort to lies. That makes Jesus very different from me. From anyone. He, alone in history, is the innocent human.

## Pray

Praise Jesus for who he is—for his total perfection, his resolute obedience and his complete sinlessness even under the greatest pressure.

Thank God that when he sees you, he sees the perfection of his Son. Ask him to help you today to speak and act in ways which match how he views you.



# They kept shouting

*Who killed Jesus? Answer: everyone.*

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## No basis

### Read Luke 23:13-16

- ❓ *Who, along with Jesus, is in this scene (v 13)?*

Perhaps there is still hope for Jesus. The crowd have consistently been on his side, and were the reason the religious leaders didn't feel able to arrest him in the open (19:47-48; 20:19).

- ❓ *How do Pilate's words underline Jesus' complete innocence?*
- ❓ *What is Pilate's verdict (23:15b-16)?*

## Loud shouts

### Read Luke 23:18-22

- ❓ *How does the crowd turn?*

Perhaps it was the whispers of the leaders. Perhaps it was seeing the man who'd seemed so powerful now beaten and bloodied. Perhaps it was knee-jerk opposition to anything a Roman suggested. Luke doesn't tell us why the crowd turned. The will of the people is a fickle, changeable thing, as politicians often discover. Luke simply recounts that the people looked at their long-awaited Christ, the Lord of life, and screamed out those awful, awful words: "Crucify him!"

- ❓ *What does Pilate want to do (v 20)?*
- ❓ *What does he repeatedly try to do in these verses?*

## Pilate decided

### Read Luke 23:23-25

- ❓ *Why does Pilate do what he knows is wrong?*
- ❓ *When do you find it hardest not to fall in line with what general opinion holds to be true, or good, or right, though it's opposed to God's word?*

The religious leaders have their long-held wish. The crowd receive their latest demand. Now nothing and no one stand between Jesus and the cross.

## Release Barabbas

There's one more man in this scene, who shows the stupidity of the crowd's shout.

- ❓ *What do the crowd want (v 18)?*
- ❓ *What kind of man are they demanding should be released into their society?*

This is what sin is: rejecting the rule of God—releasing the rule of chaos. Turning away from the love of the Creator to embrace destruction. When we choose to exclude Christ from life or society, we are not choosing neutrality but rather the total opposite of love, order and peace.

## Apply

*How do you see the reality of this in your society? What about in your own life?*



# A darker day to come

*To many of us, the details of the crucifixion are familiar. Pray that God's Spirit would enable you to be struck by them afresh, and that over the next few days, your heart would be moved by what Christ did for you on that day.*

## Weep for yourselves

### Read Luke 23:26-31

Verse 26 is an indication of what happens when God's Son is rejected. A society that treats the Creator with contempt will also end up treating his creatures with contempt too.

- ❓ *How do some women respond (v 27)? Is this the right response to what's happening?*
- ❓ *Who does Jesus say they should weep for, and why (v 28-30)?*

#### TIME OUT

**Read Hosea 10:7-10.** Hosea prophesied in around 750BC, when Samaria was the capital of Israel.

- ❓ *What was coming to Israel (v 7, 10)?*

This was a nation under judgment. And in 722 BC, the Assyrians invaded and destroyed Israel. The warning was true.

Just as Samaria had been warned, so too was Jerusalem, Israel's capital in Jesus' time (e.g. Luke 19:41-44). But the leaders and people still killed the Christ. This was a city under judgment for rejecting its Ruler—a judgment that would come with the Roman invasion and destruction of AD 70.

### Read Revelation 6:12-17

- ❓ *What day is this looking to (v 17)?*

- ❓ *Look at the reaction of the most powerful people on earth. How is this linked to the reaction Hosea predicted and Jesus quoted?*

This is a world under judgment for rejecting its Ruler—a judgment that will come with the return of the Lord Jesus on a day in the future.

Luke 23:31 is hard to understand! It could be a comparison between life in AD 33 (green) and AD 70 (dry). But it's possible that "people" (men/they) in fact refers to God (as in 13:6, which also refers to a tree). So Jesus' point then becomes *If God can judge me, his innocent Son (a green tree), in the way he is about to, how much worse will it be when he judges humanity, guilty of rebellion against him (a dry tree).*

## Father, forgive them

### Read Luke 23:32-34

- ❓ *Why is verse 34 an astonishing thing for the Lord to say?*
- ❓ *Why, given what Jesus has just said in verses 28-31, is it something that we desperately need to hear?*

## Pray

*Father, I deserve your judgment. I live in a world which faces your wrath. I am so grateful that the Lord Jesus was judged instead of me, so that I can ask you to forgive me. Thank you.*



# Why he didn't come down

*Jesus has been nailed to a cross to die. And Luke wants to remind us of two things about this bleeding, dying man: who he is and what he's doing.*

## Read Luke 23:33-39

Picture the scene and hear the sounds in your mind. Don't skip over the awful details of each verse.

## Who he is

- ❓ *How many times is the true identity of Jesus mentioned in these seven verses?*
- ❓ *How many people recognise that this is the true identity of Jesus?*
- ❓ *What do the rulers (v 35), the soldiers (v 37) and the dying criminal (v 39) all think Jesus will do if he really is who he claims to be?*
- ❓ *Why is this ironic?*

## What he's doing

- ❓ *Who is Jesus crucified between (v 33)?*

Christ Jesus had predicted this (22:37), pointing back to Isaiah 53:12. God's servant was dying *with* the transgressors... but the Lord Jesus was also dying *for* the transgressors. "He bore the sin of many" (v 12). This loving Ruler doesn't stay on the cross because he *isn't* the Christ—but because he is.

Jesus is all powerful. At any moment he could have prevented his arrest, stopped his trial and come down from his cross. He could have said, *Enough*.

## Pray

The only reason why the Lord did not say *Enough* is because he had decided to save you and me. It's worth dwelling on this truth, and then thanking Jesus for who he is, and what he did, and how he loves us.

### TIME OUT

## Read Psalm 69:18-25

- ❓ *How does verse 21 point to Jesus' death? (Have a look at Luke 23:36.)*
- ❓ *When he experienced these things, how did David, God's chosen king, respond?*
  - Psalm 69:17-18
  - Psalm 69:23-25
- ❓ *How does this compare with the response of Christ to his crucifixion?*
- ❓ *How does this highlight the astonishing love of Jesus?*

## Pray

Re-read Luke 23:33-39, thinking to yourself, "He endured this for *me*".

Thank him for all he went through to bear your sin. Ask him to help you respond to the' mockery, rejection and bullying of others in the same way that he did: by praying for their forgiveness.



# You will be with me

*There are two ways in which to see the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. As a dead end for a once-popular, too-radical teacher, now a footnote of history. Or as a doorway to the kingdom of the all-powerful, ever-ruling King, now the centre point of history.*

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## Footnote

### Read Luke 23:39

- ❓ *What does one of the criminals dying alongside Jesus use some of his last breaths to do?*
- ❓ *Who have we already seen with whom he was agreeing (v 35-37)?*
- ❓ *What does he think Jesus would do, if he were really the Christ?*

## Centre point

### Read Luke 23:40-43

The second criminal could have disagreed with the first but still got on with dying quietly. But, at what must have been some personal cost, he decides to speak out. And he begins to do that by encouraging the first criminal to “fear God”—to recognise that there is an awesome, holy God, whom all three of these men will soon meet.

- ❓ *What does he seem to know:*
  - *about himself (v 40-41)?*
  - *about Jesus (v 41)?*
  - *about who Jesus is and where he is heading (v 42)?*
  - *about what he himself most needs (v 42)?*

It's easy to miss the audacity of his request. He's a criminal, a robber, and quite possibly a murderer or even a terrorist. Surely Jesus—the holy, pure, fair and just King—should look at this man, who has spent

his life rejecting God and hurting others, and say, *No. How dare you even ask. You are heading for exactly what you deserve.*

- ❓ *So why are Jesus' words in verse 43 both precious to us and challenging for our view of other people?*
- ❓ *What does this conversation on the crosses show us about what we need to do to have life in paradise?*

One criminal was fixated on what Jesus should do for him right then—and accused him of being a non-caring non-Christ (v 39). The other was rightly more concerned with what Jesus could do for him in eternity—so he worshipped him (v 42).

I often find myself telling Jesus what he ought to be doing for me today. Maybe you do too. Thankfully, he does not give us what we want now but what we need for eternity. It's worth asking ourselves: *When do I act like the first criminal, and focus on my present instead of my eternity?*

## Pray

Ask Jesus, for the first or the thousandth time, to remember you as you pass through death, and to bring you to his kingdom. Thank him for his words to you: *I tell you the truth, on the day you die, you will be with me in paradise.*





# Heaven through the cross

*We've heard from betrayers and deserters, leaders and governors, the people, the soldiers and the criminals. Now God shows his opinion...*

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## The darkness

**Read Luke 23:44-45a**

❓ *How does Luke indicate to us that this total darkness was unnatural?*

**Read Amos 8:9-14**

This explains the darkness as Jesus died.

- ❓ *What will God do (v 9)?*
- ❓ *What won't there be at this point (v 12)?*
- ❓ *What kind of people will God judge (v 14)?*

In the darkness, those who are guilty of worshipping false gods—of turning their backs on their Creator to worship themselves, their made-up religions, and their own creations—should face awesome, awful judgment. Heaven's silence heralds a day of bitterness. So the shock of the cross is not that judgment has come, but who it falls on—the innocent, sinless Son of God.

## The curtain

**Read Luke 23:45b**

Luke is almost certainly referring to the curtain surrounding the Most Holy Place, a small area in the temple. It was where the perfect God dwelled among his people, and yet where his people could not enter because of their imperfection.

Now it “was torn”—a divine hand had ripped it up. The barrier between God and man had been torn, divided, done away with.

For centuries, God's people had looked towards God's presence in the temple through the smoke of a sacrifice. Now that was all over. God's people would look towards God's presence in heaven through the cross of Christ's sacrifice. His death had removed the curtain, so God's Spirit could dwell with them, and so they could one day go to dwell with God.

## Into his hands

**Read Luke 23:46-49**

❓ *How are Jesus' words a summary of how he had lived his whole life (v 46)?*

## Pray

Praise God that Christ bore your darkness so that God can be present with you now, and so that you can enjoy life in his presence eternally.

## Apply

❓ *What does verse 46 teach us about how to die?*

We don't need to fear death or to fight death. The wonder of the cross is that it enables us to face death as Jesus did: to entrust ourselves to our heavenly Father, whose face we will see on the other side. How does this encourage you today?



# Faithful beyond the end

*“This is your hour—when darkness reigns” (Luke 22:53). Darkness has come, literally and spiritually. Christ is dead. But now we see glimmers of light.*

## The soldier

### Read Luke 23:46-48

- ❓ *What does the centurion overseeing the execution of three criminals realise about the man on the middle cross?*

A thread running through Luke’s narrative of the last day of Christ’s life has been his complete innocence. And a thread running through Luke’s whole Gospel has been the truth that all kinds of people can come into Christ’s kingdom—whatever they’ve done and wherever they’re from (e.g. 7:1-10, 36-50; 23:40-43).

- ❓ *How does v 47 bring these two themes together at the moment of Jesus’ death?*

## The politician

The centurion began to realise the truth and spoke courageously about it. And there was someone else who both knew and acted upon the truth: a politician who appears in the Gospel for the first time at this point.

### Read Luke 23:49-54

- ❓ *Who was Joseph of Arimathea (v 50-51)?*
- ❓ *Given who Joseph was and that Jesus was a condemned criminal, how was Joseph’s action in verse 52 a huge risk to him?*

Rich men bought tombs ready for their own death; so “no one had yet been laid” in the

one where Joseph placed Jesus’ corpse (v 53).

- ❓ *How was Joseph’s action in verse 53 at considerable cost to him?*

## Apply

Verses 50-53 contrast two decisions and two actions. There’s the decision of the Council—to oppose and resist Jesus Christ—and its action—to arrest and execute him (v 51).

Then there’s the decision of Joseph—to wait for and look forward to the coming kingdom of God (v 51). And that decision leads to action—to doing what he can for Jesus, at huge personal risk and at great personal cost, even when there seems to be little good that can come of it.

- ❓ *Have you made the same sort of decision as Joseph?*
- ❓ *How do your actions reflect his? How are you accepting risk and cost to do what you can for your King?*

## Pray

Ask God to enable you to speak out about Jesus like the soldier and to live for Jesus like the politician.

You might like to talk to God about specific times when you find it difficult to live like this. Ask him to remove your excuses and give you strength to serve and joy as you take risks to love your Lord.





# He has risen!

*It's the event that changed history, changed eternity, and changed our lives.*

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## Heaven's explanation

### Read Luke 23:55 – 24:12

- ❓ *What are the women (understandably!) expecting to find (24:1)?*
- ❓ *What do they discover instead (v 2-4)?*
- ❓ *What mistake have they made (v 5)?*

These angels give the women a cold, hard fact—“He is not here”—and heaven’s explanation for that fact—“He has risen” (v 6). The empty tomb stands as a memorial in history to the truth of Christianity, a challenge to all who reject Jesus Christ.

- ❓ *What do the rest of Jesus’ followers make of it (v 11)?*

Over the next few days, we’ll see lots of evidence for the resurrection. Our faith is based on facts. But it is still *faith*—a choice to believe the angel’s words. Everyone believes something about what happened that day. The question is: who do we listen to—heaven or ourselves?

## Remember how he told you

### Re-read Luke 24:6-8

- ❓ *Why should the women have known there wouldn’t be a corpse in the tomb (v 6-7)?*
- ❓ *What does this tell us about what Jesus says?*

## Apply

Because the women “remembered his words” (v 8), they changed their view of reality and went and “told all these things” (v 9) to others.

## He saw

Peter, above everyone else among Jesus’ followers, knew that what Jesus says will and does happen (22:34, 54-62).

- ❓ *How does this cause him to act differently to the others (24:11-12)?*
- ❓ *What does he see, and how does he react?*

“Wondering” also means “astonished” (1:63) or “amazed” (2:18, 7:9). The sense is of understanding something, but also not quite being able to understand it! Peter’s starting to grasp what’s happened.

## Pray

*Thank you, Lord, that what you say will and does happen. Give me greater confidence in your promises today; help me to grasp their wonder more fully; enable me to live by them. Amen.*



# Their eyes were opened

*Two men go for a walk with a lot on their minds. They return with a fire in their hearts. What has made the difference?*

## Recognition

### Read Luke 24:13-35

We know this pair's walking companion is the risen Jesus (v 15). But they don't, and can't, recognise him (v 16)! They walk beside the Lord of life, the conqueror of death, without realising he's anything more than a hiker!

- ❓ *What had they hoped about Jesus (v 21)?*
- ❓ *So why are they now "downcast"? What do they appear to think of what the women said when they returned from the tomb (v 21b-24)?*

At this point, Jesus could simply have said, *Look at me. See who I am. I'm your risen Lord.*

- ❓ *What does he do instead (v 25-27)? Why, do you think?*

Even then, they don't get it!

- ❓ *What has to happen for them to recognise him (v 31)?*

The empty tomb... the angels' message... a Bible overview... are not enough for someone to know that Jesus has risen. For that, we need our eyes and minds to be opened (v 31, see also v 45). We can't see it unless Jesus shows it.

## Pray

Thank the Lord for opening your heart and mind to the truth that changes your view of

reality and eternity. Thank him for giving you eyes to see that he is alive.

## Journey

"The Emmaus road" has become shorthand in some circles for our life's journey: a walk towards understanding, where, as long as you're on the road, it doesn't matter how far along it you are.

That's nothing like what happened on the actual Emmaus road! These men had no idea that Jesus had risen—and therefore no assurance of who he was (v 21)! Their journey was not a gradual dawning but a sudden flash of realisation—a moment when the Lord gave them eyes to see the truth.

We don't want to leave others on the Emmaus road! Real faith isn't seen on the road but in verses 33-35, as these men return to their friends with burning hearts to say, *The Lord has risen. I know him. And he's put a fire in my heart.*

## Pray

Pray for those you know who have heard about Christ but don't know Jesus is risen. Ask him to open their eyes, to fire up their hearts and to turn them from doubt to faith and darkness to light.

Ask him to give you opportunities to say to someone today, "Did you know that Jesus is alive and that changes everything?"



# The relief of peace

*It is beginning to become clear that the message of the angels and the conviction of the women are true. He has risen! But the last time the disciples were with Jesus, they were misunderstanding him, failing him and denying him.*

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## Peace

### Read Luke 24:36

- ❓ *Why would Jesus' words here have been a wonderful relief to them?*

### Read Luke 2:13-14

At Jesus' birth, the angels announced the arrival of peace—peace between men and God. At his resurrection, the announcement is the same—“Peace be with you”.

In between, we have seen several things. The cross, where peace was won at such great cost to God's Son. The garden, where Jesus' friends fought instead of following. The fireplace, where Jesus' friend denied him instead of declaring loyalty. Even the tomb, where many of Jesus' followers were cynical instead of faithful.

These are not people who deserve peace with God or even fully appreciate it. They are simply people to whom God in his kindness has chosen to reveal himself (10:21-24)—people “on whom his favour rests” (2:14). Peace is God's gift to his people, from first to last.

## Pray

Thank God for the offer of peace he brought in his Son, won on the cross, and which he has enabled you to accept and enjoy.

## Hands and feet

### Read Luke 24:37-45

- ❓ *How do the disciples feel when they see Jesus (v 37)?*
- ❓ *Why does Jesus show them his hands and feet (v 38-40)?*
- ❓ *How do they now feel (v 41)?*

They've moved from *It's nonsense* (v 11)—*I can't believe that's true* to *It is true* (v 34), *but surely it's too good to be true!* (v 41).

- ❓ *Why does Jesus eat the fish, do you think (v 41-43)?*

Then, just as on the Emmaus road, Jesus points his friends to the truths of the Scriptures (v 44). And, just as in the house in Emmaus, he enables them to understand God's word (v 45).

Luke, ever the historian, has offered us lots of evidence that Jesus really rose on a particular day in history.

## Apply

### Look back over Luke 24:1-45

- ❓ *What pieces of evidence has he given us?*
- ❓ *How do verses 31 and 44-45 show us the way people grasp the truth of the resurrection?*
- ❓ *How should this shape the way we go about telling people that Jesus is alive?*



# What Jesus does now

*In a sense, Christ's work is finished. And yet, in another sense, his work is only just beginning...*

## What is written?

### Read Luke 24:45-46

- ❓ *What is the central message of the Scriptures (the Old Testament) (v 46)?*
- ❓ *In what sense is Jesus' mission complete by this stage of Luke's Gospel?*

#### TIME OUT

Verse 46 is a gospel outline.

- ❓ *How would you explain the Christian message to a non-believing friend using these three words?*
  - Christ • suffered • risen

## What is preached?

### Read Luke 24:47-48

- ❓ *What will be preached? Who to? Where (v 47)?*
- ❓ *What is the disciples' role in this next stage of the mission?*

"In his name" (v 47) means "by his authority". Christ Jesus has the authority, seen in his resurrection, to demand that people turn around and accept him as King. And he has the authority, won at the cross, to give people a new start with God as they come under his rule. These verses are still all about Jesus. His message is sent through his ambassadors, but it is still the message and work of the King.

- ❓ *How is the job of the disciples a privilege?*

#### TIME OUT

- ❓ *Verse 47 is the right response to the gospel. How would you explain to a non-believing friend what a Christian is, using these phrases?*
  - repentance
  - forgiveness of sins
  - in his name

## What is given?

### Read Luke 24:49

- ❓ *Who will send what?*

Without this "power from on high"—God's Spirit (if you have time, read Acts 2:1-4, 14-24, 38-41)—Christ's followers cannot even begin their task of preaching the gospel throughout the world. It is as Jesus sends his Spirit, promised by his Father, to his people that his work can begin and continue.

## Apply

Jesus gives his people his Spirit, to enable them to preach the message of what he did, and to invite people to find forgiveness in his name, under his rule. It's his work, which he gives his followers the privilege of being part of. It's a work you and I are part of if we are members of his kingdom.

- ❓ *Do you see your part as a privilege?*
- ❓ *How are you doing your bit?*



# The end of Volume 1

The book we call “Luke” is actually the first part of a two-volume work. And Luke begins his second part with the same events that he ends his first one with. In doing so, he highlights the great themes both of “Luke” and of “Acts”.

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## Joy

### Read Luke 24:50-53

To be “blessed” is to live the life we were designed for—life under God’s loving rule, doing his work in his world. Jesus’ final physical actions on earth assure his followers that they have this life (v 50, 51).

- ❓ *Why would this blessing and Jesus’ return to heaven (v 51) prompt the reaction of verses 52-53, do you think?*

As we’ve seen, joy is a great theme of Luke. To know Jesus—who he is, and what he’s done and is doing for us—is to know joy. To be part of his plan to bless his world, whether two millennia ago or in April 2023, is to know joy. The Gospel of Luke shows us that joy is the great emotional characteristic of a follower of Jesus.

## Kingdom

### Read Acts 1:4-11

Same event, different theme.

- ❓ *When do the disciples think Christ’s kingdom will be fully revealed (v 6)? Where?*
- ❓ *When does Jesus say his kingdom will come (v 7)? Where (v 8)?*
- ❓ *Beyond his Son’s ascension (v 9), what is the next event in God’s plan for his world (v 11)?*

As we’ve seen, “kingdom” is another great

theme of Luke. To know Jesus is to come under his rule, living in his kingdom now and looking forward to the full establishment of his kingdom when he returns. And so we invite people into his kingdom, in the power of his Spirit (v 8).

## Apply

I often forget that the Christian life is the blessed life, and instead listen to the lie that real blessing is to be found outside Christ’s kingdom. Then I lose my joy—either by turning living for Jesus into a grudging duty or by disobeying him and living as though I’m not in his kingdom.

- ❓ *Is this your experience too? How and when are you tempted to believe blessing is found somewhere other than in Jesus?*
- ❓ *How has the Gospel of Luke shown and reminded you that true blessing is found in the kingdom?*

### Read Luke 1:1-4

- ❓ *How has the Gospel of Luke enabled you to have great “certainty” in the Christian faith?*
- ❓ *How has it excited you about knowing Jesus and living for him?*

## Pray

Thank God for the blessing and joy to be found in his Son’s kingdom. And thank him for the Gospel of Luke.

