

LUKE: carry your cross

LEADERS NOTES

Ken Moser



LUKE: carry your cross + Leader's notes:

Dear Leader,

Welcome to Luke: Carry Your Cross

The goal of this study series is to help your small group understand that following Jesus means that we must die to ourselves so that we may truly live. My hope is that these studies will help the young people in your group live for Jesus, walk the narrow road of faith, and sacrifice everything for him.

These leader's notes are designed to give you a brief yet clear help as you go through the questions.

Please note a couple of important things:

1. You may find that these studies have too much content. I wrote them this way because many of us have had the horrible experience of realizing that the study was moving too quickly and we were soon going to run out of time! With this in mind, I decided that "more may be helpful" and erred on giving too many questions, Bible passages etc. There are usually three Bible passage per study—you may find this to be too much content. If you have time, go over the study beforehand to decide if there is indeed, too much here for your group. You can simply trim the studies by dropping out a sharing question or one of the Bible passages.
2. With a bit of prior preparation, you may be able to stretch some of these studies over two weeks. If you think the topic is valuable, and don't wish to cut out any content, give it a try.
3. Some groups may find it helpful to do the studies in advance. In other words, if your group is comfortable with this, have them do it before they come to the weekly group (kind of like homework!) This will give them time to reflect on the study and be prepared.
4. Remember, it is ok to not know all the answers. Young people are good at asking tough questions. Your job is to help them get to know Jesus better. God doesn't expect you to know everything. Tell them that "that is a great question, I'm not sure I know the answer to this. Can you give me a week to check it out?" You can then find someone who may know the answer and report back to the group.
5. Finally, the answers I have provided are my view on what are the true and appropriate answers for each question. Please realize that you may have slightly different understanding and approach the questions a bit differently. That is ok.

I do hope you enjoy these studies and that they are a real blessing to your group!

Ken Moser

LUKE: carry your cross + LEADER'S NOTES: Love your enemies

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." Luke 6: 27-28

Dear Leader,

This study is designed to show your group that:

1. Followers of Jesus must be characterized by loving their enemies.

This is a long study. It will also (probably) raise a lot of questions and discussion. Be prepared, you may find it difficult to finish in one attempt.

let's get started

When I see someone I really don't like, I ... (Place a ✓ in the appropriate box)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do evil things to them in my mind | <input type="checkbox"/> Get aggressive and taunt them |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk the other way | <input type="checkbox"/> Call my friends together for support |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Me? I love everyone! | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Have you ever had an enemy? Tell us about it.

going deeper

Lets get the facts straight: Read Luke 6: 27-36.

Is there anything that immediately impacts you when you read or hear this?

Turning the other cheek (v. 27-31)

List all the ways we are to respond to our enemies (or when bad things are done to us).

- v. 27 Love enemies / do good to those who hate us
- v. 28 Bless those who curse us / pray for those who mistreat us
- v. 29 Turn the other cheek / give generously
- v. 30 Give and don't ask for it back
- v. 31 Do to others what you want them to do to you!

Now place a number from 1 -10 next to each one, rating how hard it is to do. (1= a piece of cake 10= impossible)

Why is it so hard is it to "turn the other cheek" when wrong is done to you?

Have you ever not retaliated when you could have?

Being different from everyone else (v. 32–36)

Jesus describes unbelievers three ways here (v. 32–34). What three things do they do?

1. They love those who love them
2. They do good to those who do good to them
3. They lend to those who will repay

How are we to be different from them? List all the ways given here (see v. 35).

1. Love our enemies
2. Do good to them
3. Lend to them with no expectation of return

What are the promises given to those who “love their enemies”? (v. 35)

Great reward – we will be children of God

According to v. 36, why are we to be merciful?

Our (heavenly) Father is merciful

When you read this, did anyone in particular come to mind? In other words, is there someone with whom you need to put this teaching into practice? Do you think you can do it? Why / why not?

Jesus says it again: Read Matthew 5: 43–48

What are the extraordinary things that Jesus tells us to do in this part of the Bible?

Love and pray for our enemies. Be perfect.

Why are we to love our enemies? (v. 45 & 48)

That we may be children of our Father in heaven. We must be perfect.

What would happen if you put this teaching into practice...

*In your school?

*At home?

*On the sporting field?

*When you are out socially (like at the shopping mall)?

The Apostle Paul agrees: Read Romans 12: 14–21

How do you feel when you read this? (Circle and explain your answer.)

Oh no, not again I can do it This is just too tough Ok, ok... I get the point I'll try to do it
I have no enemies—I am a friend to all Something else _____

How can you overcome any struggles in living out these commands?

Is it possible for you to not take revenge when someone harms you? (v. 19)

Helping each other

How can we help each other to live out this difficult teaching?

We must model it in front of each other. We must model it at home, school and work. We must pray for each other. Keep encouraging each other.

What do we need to change?

What would you say to someone in this group who confesses, "I just don't think I can love some people I know?"

You can with the help of God's spirit. Pray through this and keep trying. When you make a mistake repent and ask for God's forgiveness.

pray

Pray that we will love those who harm us.

Pray that we will love those we don't like.

Pray for the strength (and grace) to implement this radical teaching from Jesus.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we explore the cost of following Jesus!

LUKE: carry your cross + Leader's notes: FOLLOWING JESUS COSTS EVERYTHING

Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. Luke 9:23

Dear Leader,

This study is designed to show your group that:

1. Jesus wants us to follow him with our whole hearts.
2. Jesus wants us to put him ahead of anything and everything else.
3. Jesus wants us to do this as long as we live.

Again, this is a meaty study and will raise a number of issues and (hopefully) lead to a great deal of fruitful discussion.

let's get started

How do you feel when you are told that you must "put God first in your life"? (Place a ✓ in the appropriate box.)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't mind | <input type="checkbox"/> I plug my ears and make a loud noise |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I fall on the ground and throw a tantrum | <input type="checkbox"/> I've never heard this before |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes I try to do it, sometimes I don't | <input type="checkbox"/> Other? _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I don't know what it means to do this | |

Have you ever had to give up something in order to follow Jesus? If so, what was it?

going deeper

The cost of following Jesus, Part I: Carrying your cross Read Luke 9:23-27

When you read this, what are your first impressions?

In your own words, what do you think these phrases mean? Can you give practical examples of each one?

Deny himself and take up his cross daily

Think of what God wants from each situation (Put God first. Put others first). Go to Youth Group instead of studying. Talk with a friend in need instead of studying. Talk with a friend in need instead of watching tv. Doing what your parents ask instead of gaming on your computer.

Whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it

(If you put Jesus first, you will receive eternal life) Be Christlike at a party instead of doing what you want to do.

What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

Working long hours for a big bank balance instead of going to bible study each week.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him

Denying Jesus in front of your friends.

Why is it tough to put Jesus first all the time?

Our sinful nature. Our enemy the devil. The world we live in is sinful

How can we do a better job?

Keep fighting these enemies. Keep up with our spiritual disciplines (bible reading, prayer, church)

Why do you think Jesus wants us to “lose our life”? Does this mean he wants us literally to die?

He wants our sinful, selfish side to die.

Have you ever met someone who has stopped following Jesus in order to “gain the whole world”? What happened?

Have you ever been ashamed of Jesus? What was the situation? What would you have done differently if you could?

FYI: Carrying your cross = death!

If you lived in the time of Jesus, you knew exactly what it meant to “carry your cross”. If you saw someone with a cross, you knew that they were on their way to die. This was meant to be the ultimate in final humiliation. It told all who were watching that you were to be punished and there was no way out—you were going to your death. When Jesus was going to die, he had to carry his cross so that we might have life (See John 19:17). When Jesus tells us to carry our cross, he is calling us to die to ourselves, in order to find life in him.

The cost of following Jesus, Part II: Following Jesus will cost a lot Read Luke 14: 25–35.

When you read these words from Jesus, does anything immediately impact you?

v. 25–27

What is the point he is making to “the crowds”?

You must put Jesus first – even in front of your relationship with your family.

Do you think he wants you to treat your family with “hatred”? What is he saying?

No, however he wants you to put Him first (In front of them).

v. 28-35

What is the point these two stories are making?

Look at v. 33 again. How does this verse sum up what Jesus is saying in the previous stories?

Make sure you can continue to follow Jesus and put him first for your whole life.

What does it mean to “give up everything”? Does this mean we are to have no possessions?

We must not let our possessions get in the way of following Jesus. If they do, we must deal with them ruthlessly.

What does it mean to be “salty”?

Be someone who lives for Jesus. This is seen by those around us as it is obvious.

Have you ever known someone to “lose their saltiness” when it came to following Jesus?

What was the cause?

What can you do to make sure this doesn't happen to you?

Stay in christian fellowship. Get rid of anything that keeps you from following Jesus with your whole heart.

getting active

Helping each other

How can we help each other live out the radical teaching in these two Bible passages?

Pray with and for each other. Be honest with each other when we see something that is blocking us from following Jesus.

Is there anything that we need to change, in light of today's study?

pray

Pray that we will not let anything get in the way of following Jesus.

Pray for wisdom and strength to know how to deal with things that may try and take us away from the faith.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we see the sacrifices we must make to follow Jesus!

LUKE: carry your cross + Leader's notes: following Jesus = sacrifice (BUT IT'S WORTH IT!)

"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?" Luke 9:25

Dear Leader,

This study is designed to show your group that:

1. Following Jesus may not be the easiest thing in life.
2. Following Jesus also will require a great deal of sacrifice.
3. Following Jesus may even bring suffering and pain.
4. However, following Jesus is what Jesus calls us to do and will be worth it in the end.

Let's get started

Have you ever gone hungry, spent a miserable night out, or thought that you might not have a nice place to sleep? (For example, your family got lost looking for a motel, or you were trying to find a campground late at night?) Tell the group about it:

Would you still follow Jesus if you... (Place a ✓ for yes or a X for no next to each statement.)

___ Had to be poor the rest of your life?

___ Had to die for him?

___ Would never get a girlfriend/boyfriend (or marry) because of your faith?

___ Would have to sell your favorite possession and give the money to the poor?

going deeper

Following Jesus may not be easy: Read Luke 9: 57-62

Is there anything that immediately impacts you from this story?

What point is Jesus making...

to the 1st man? (v. 58) following Jesus may mean hardship. Jesus experience it, so will all his followers.

to the 2nd man? (v. 60) the man is asking if he can stay with his family until his Dad dies. Jesus tells him that he must be more committed to Him than his family.

to the 3rd man? (v. 62) When you decide to follow Jesus, there is no turning back. Don't look to 'the world' – keep your eyes on Jesus.

What is the overall message Jesus is giving to these three men? It costs everything to follow Jesus – comfort, time spent doing things you'd rather do, and worldly pursuits.

Why do you think Jesus is saying it would be difficult for these men to follow him? Because that is the truth. Jesus does not want us to be unaware of the fact that it can cost to follow Him.

Have you ever met people who wanted to follow Jesus but dropped out when they found out what it takes?

How confident are you that you can follow Jesus even when times get tough? (Circle your answer.)

I'll never give up!

I think I can do it

I'll give it my best shot

It may be a struggle, but I'll try

Not sure

What's the question again?

Something else _____

A case study in following Jesus: The rich young ruler. Luke 18: 18–30

Do you think the ruler was genuine in his questioning of Jesus (or was he just trying to justify himself)?

Personally, I believe he was genuinely searching due to the fact that he went away sad.

Why was Jesus not satisfied with all the good things the man had done?

While he may have done these things in his own eyes, his wealth was a roadblock to his relationship with God – Jesus could see this.

What was the young man's real spiritual problem?

He trusted in his material wealth rather than God (he may also have not been generous to his neighbour).

Do you think Jesus wants us all to make the same sacrifice? Why/why not?

Jesus definitely wants to love our neighbours and wants us to rid ourselves of anything that blocks us from loving and serving God with our whole heart.

What was the promise Jesus gave him if he would do what Jesus asked? (v. 22)

Treasure in heaven

Why is it hard for rich people to get to heaven? Does this story mean that no one with money will get in?

(See v. 27.)

It is hard for rich people because we all have the tendency to trust in material wealth and possessions. For most (if not all) people, they can be a trap and keep us from looking to God and serving Him. Rich people can still get to heaven as 'all things are possible with God'. This means that he can still pour grace on them and open up their hearts to follow Him.

What does this story ultimately teach us about following Jesus?

We must be very careful about what keeps us from loving God with our whole heart (and loving our neighbour as well).

The Apostle Paul's experience of following Jesus: Read 2 Cor. 11: 24–29

How do you feel after reading this list?

Which of these things would be the worst experience for you?

Would you be willing to go through the same things Paul went through?

(If you want more on Paul's experiences, read 1 Cor. 4: 11–13.)

Helping each other

How can we prepare ourselves for any sacrifices that may come because we follow Jesus?

We must always examine our hearts and remove things that blocks us. We must also learn to be honest with each other and speak truthfully about areas that we struggle with (things that can keep us from serving and loving God).

Is there anything in our lives that blocks us from following him?

How can we help each other to put into practice what we have learned today?

Keep meeting together to encourage other. Keep helping each other to stay strong against those things that can block us from Jesus.

pray

Pray that we will be willing to make sacrifices and go through hardships because we follow Jesus.

Pray that we will always stay strong as Christians and stay focused on following Jesus.

Pray that we will be willing to get rid of anything that keeps us from following Jesus.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we will look at what Jesus says about worry and stress!

What is the radical response Jesus wants us to make instead of worrying? (v. 32-34)

Don't be afraid. Be generous and don't be too attached to our possessions by giving our money to the poor.

Why?

We will store up a treasure in heaven.

Is he telling us that food and clothing will magically appear if we trust in him?

No, however, he is promising us that God will care for us.

A case study in dealing with anxiety: Mary and Martha. Luke 10: 38-42

(Mary & Martha were good friends of Jesus. Their brother, Lazarus, was the guy Jesus raised from the dead in John 11.)

Why was Martha so upset at Mary? (v. 40)

Because Martha had to do all the work while Mary simply listened to Jesus.

What did Jesus say to her? (v. 41-42)

It is better to listen to Jesus than stress about things that must be done.

What should Martha have done instead?

Sat at Jesus' feet and listened to Him.

Have you ever had so many things to do that you neglected your relationship with Jesus (and his people)? What should you have done instead?

What makes you like Martha ("worried and upset about many things") instead of like Mary (who "has chosen what is better")?

"When you are in a fix, turn to Philippians 4:6!"

Read this verse (and v. 7 as well) and answer these questions:

What is the solution to anxiety; according to this verse?

Prayer

Why do you think this is so?

God is the giver of all things. He can also solve our problems.

Why should thanksgiving accompany our prayers?

Because we must thank God for hearing our prayers and the knowledge that He will answer them in some way ('Yes', 'no' or 'wait' are the possible answers). We must also thank God when he answers us.

What does the Apostle Paul promise will come to us, if we bring our stresses to God? (v. 7)

The peace of God.

Why do you think he promises this?

When you trust in God and have prayer to Him, you will feel His peace instead of stress and anxiety.

Have you ever been stressed out, prayed to God and felt much calmer afterward? If so, share it with the group.

getting active

Helping each other

How can we help each other to put into practice what we have learned today?

Keep reminding each other of these truths. Keep praying with and for each other. Help each other when stressful times come.

Is there anything that we need to do differently?

What must we do when we start to get stressed or anxious?

Read our bibles (listen to Jesus like Mary) and prayer specifically about those things we are worried about.

pray

Spend some time sharing what is causing anxiety for you. Pray as a group for each of these.

Pray that we will seek God's kingdom.

Pray that we will not be too busy to spend time with Jesus.

Pray that when we are anxious we will turn to the Lord in prayer.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we will see the need to repent and follow Jesus.

someone for wisdom and help. Many of us have needed to do that.

LUKE: carry your cross + LEADER'S NOTES: repent and enter THROUGH THE narrow door

"Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to." Luke 13:24

Dear Leader,

This study is designed to show your group that:

1. Following Jesus means walking a narrow road of faith and trust in him.
2. Following Jesus means that we will be in the minority and it will be a harder road to travel.
3. Following Jesus takes effort and training, just like being an athlete.

let's get started

If someone said to you, "It is hard to get to heaven," how would you respond? (Circle your answer)

Tell me something I don't know

Doesn't everyone go to heaven?

Umm, don't know

No problem, I'll do what it takes

I think I can, I think I can

What was the question again?

Something else _____

Do you think most people believe it is easy to get to heaven?

going deeper

Jesus tells us to "enter through the narrow door": Read Luke 13:22-30

Have you ever wondered how many people are going to be in heaven?

How does Jesus answer the question that is asked him (v. 24)? What do you think this means?

Make a strong effort to follow Jesus and to go to heaven. Not everyone who thinks they are going to heaven will actually make it in.

What is the meaning of the story in v. 25-30?

There are many people who want to go to heaven, but only those that follow Jesus will get in.

What is the ultimate fate of those who didn't really know the owner of the house?

They are excluded from heaven and go to hell.

What does this story tell us about getting to heaven?

It is harder than most people think. There is only a narrow door – this door is Jesus.

It is very common for people to say, “There are many ways to heaven.” Or, “It is really easy to get to heaven.” How would you respond to this, in light of this Bible teaching?

This teaching isn't true. Jesus is telling us that it is harder than we think and we must be committed to him

Let's look at this from a different angle: Matthew 7: 13-14

Does anything impact you right away when you read this?

Jesus tells us there are two options. Give a description of each one.

The wide gate, broad road

This road is easy and takes little effort. Many are on it. However, it leads to destruction.

The narrow gate

This road is more difficult. It is narrow and few are on it. This road leads to eternal life. This road = trusting in Jesus & following Him.

Describe what this Bible passage means for us in everyday life.

We must be careful what we believe and what we do. We must also be careful not to believe what 'the crowd' believes.

What do we need to do to make sure we stay on the narrow road?

Meet with other Christians regularly. Keep staying focused on what Jesus teaches and put it into practice.

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27: Run the race in order to win!

What does this passage tell us about following Jesus?

Following Jesus is like being an athlete – it takes training and hard work. However, it will bring a great prize at the end.

What will it mean for you to:

“run in such a way as to get the prize”

“not run aimlessly”

“beat your body and make it a slave”

“not be disqualified for the prize”

getting active

Helping each other

Is there anything in your life that could keep you from “entering through the narrow door”?

This will depend from person to person. Usually it is study pressure, sports, making money, relationships, family pressure etc.

When is it easier to cruise along with the crowd, rather than to walk the narrow road?

In almost every area of life.

How can we help each other to put into practice what we have learned today?

Each of us needs to stay on the narrow road. As we do this, we can help each other to do the same.

What changes do you need to make in your life to ensure you walk the narrow road?

pray

Pray that we will always strive to follow Jesus, no matter the cost.

Pray that we will never grow weary in following Jesus.

Pray for anyone we know who is struggling with his / her faith.

Pray that we will get rid of anything that keeps us from being strong Christians.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we will learn about building our lives on solid rock rather than sand!

LUKE: carry your cross + Leader's notes: DON'T JUST LISTEN TO JESUS, DO WHAT HE SAYS. THE WISE AND FOOLISH BUILDERS

"But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." Luke 6:49

Dear Leader,

This study is designed to show your group that:

1. Jesus wants his followers to not only listen to him but to do what he says.
2. If we listen to Jesus and do what he says, we are building a solid foundation for life.

let's get started

Have you ever listened to someone in authority and then not done what they told you to do?

(A school teacher? Parent? Babysitter? Boss at work? Someone else?)

If someone was to give you a score on "doing what Jesus says," what score would you get?

0 _____ 50 _____ 100
rotten ok bullseye—I'm the best!

How is disobeying Jesus different from disobeying someone like a school teacher or your boss?

going deeper

Do what Jesus says: Read Luke 6: 46–49

Why do you think Jesus is so forceful in what he says (v. 46)?

Jesus hates hypocrites, that is, he does not want his followers to listen to him and then not put His teaching into practice.

What is the clear point of the story in verses 47–49?

Listen to Jesus and do what He says

What did the first builder do that was right?

Dug deep and built a solid foundation

What did the second builder do that was wrong?

Built on the sand.

Can you give practical examples of being a “good builder” (doing what Jesus says) and a “bad builder” (not doing what Jesus says)?

Going to a party and doing unchristian things. Going out romantically with someone who is not a believer and doing unhelpful things. Cheating in sports or on a test.

What kind of “floods” (i.e. hard times and difficulties) will force you to need a secure house?

Relationship breakdowns. Losing a job. Health issues.

Listen to Jesus: read Luke 8: 19–21

Is Jesus being mean towards his family?

No, he is making the point that if we listen to him and put it into practice, we are his family.

What does Jesus want from those who claim to follow him? (v. 21)

Hear Him and do what He says.

Have you ever met someone who claims to follow Jesus but doesn't appear to obey what he says? What should you say to people like that?

You must be very careful – Jesus demands that we listen and do what he says.

But wait, there's more!

If there is time, choose one of these passages and answer the questions below:

Psalm 119: 9–16

Matthew 7: 21–23

James 1: 22–25

What does this tell us about listening to the word of God and doing what it says?

What does this tell us to do / not do?

How does this Bible passage relate to the story Jesus told about building on the rock?

getting active

Helping each other

How can we help each other to listen to Jesus and do what he says?

Keep each other accountable. Gently help each other when we make a mistake. Encourage each other when we do well.

Give some practical examples of “hearing God’s word and putting it into practice” (Luke 8:21).

Praying instead of being anxious over something like an exam. Obeying our parents instead of getting angry. Going to youth group or bible study instead of studying for an exam.

pray

Pray that we will do what God’s word tell us to—even when it is hard.

Pray for anyone we know who claims to follow Jesus but struggles with obeying him.

Thank God that he has given us his word as a firm foundation to build our lives on.

STAY TUNED...

Next week, we will have another great Bible study!