

## Bible Studies from the Gospel of Luke

**Note:** In the fourth column are the rankings of the questions. The easiest ones are marked with one \*, fairly easy ones with \*\* and somewhat difficult ones with \*\*\*.

1.	A virgin gets pregnant	1:26-38	***
2.	Shepherds in the field	2:8-20	**
3.	Anna and Simeon	2:25-38	**
4.	Jesus as a teenager	2:40-52	**
5.	The message of John the Baptist	3:7-20	***
6.	The first day of Jesus' ministry	4:31-37	***
7.	The great catch of fish	5:1-11	**
8.	Who is really happy?	6:20-26	**
9.	Love your enemy!	6:27-38	**
10.	The foundation of your life	6:46-49	**
11.	The widow of Nain	7:11-17	*
12.	The woman who had much forgiven	7:36-50	*
13.	The parable of the sower	8:4-15	**
14.	I will follow you	9:57-62	**
15.	Name in heaven	10:17-20	***
16.	The good Samaritan	10:25-37	**
17.	The only thing needed	10:38-42	**
18.	The fish and the snake	11:5-13	**
19.	The rich fool	12:13-21	**
20.	One faithful, the other not	12:35-48	***
21.	The barren fig tree	13:6-9	***
22.	The woman with a hunchback	13:10-17	**
23.	The narrow door	13:22-30	***
24.	The great banquet	14:12-24	**
25.	The lost sheep	15:1-7	**
26.	The lost son	15:11-24	*
27.	Another lost son	15:25-32	**
28.	The rich man and Lazarus	16:19-31	**
29.	Ten healed, one saved	17:11-19	*
30.	A persistent widow	18:1-8	**
31.	Who is righteous?	18:9-14	**

32.	The tax collector in a tree	19:1-10	*
33.	The last parable	20:9-19	***
34.	The widow's offering	21:1-4	**
35.	Peter disowns his master	22:31-33, 54-62	*
36.	The gates of paradise are opened	23:32-43	*
37.	On the road to Emmaus	24:13-35	**
38.	To all nations	24:44-53	***

## 1. A VIRGIN GIVES BIRTH (Luke 1:26-38)

**BACKGROUND:** When these things happened, Mary was a young girl, probably under 20 years of age. She was engaged to be married to Joseph, a carpenter. Sexual relationships before marriage were strictly forbidden by the Old Testament.

1. What kind of character did Mary have - what conclusions do you draw from this text?
  - What was Mary's relationship with God like?
  - Imagine Mary's everyday life in the small village of Nazareth - what might have been its joys and sorrows?
2. Why did God choose this young girl to be the mother of his son?
  - Think of various reasons why Mary reacted the way she did to the greeting of the angel (verse 29)?
3. What was the reason God sent Gabriel to Mary?
  - Read verses 32-33. What did Mary learn about the child she would eventually bear? Say it in your own words.
4. Mary was a virgin. How could she already believe in a virgin birth when she didn't have any available proof? (In other words, before any signs of pregnancy were revealed in her body.)
  - Why do so many people in our day find it extremely difficult to believe in a virgin birth?
5. In the gospel of Matthew we see that Joseph also had first great difficulties in believing in a virgin birth. If Mary had known what kinds of agonies were awaiting her as the mother of Jesus, do you think she would have accepted the calling?
6. Gabriel said twice that Mary had received mercy from God (verses 28,30). The word "mercy" means the forgiveness of sins. What did Mary need this forgiveness for?
7. Perhaps you have felt sometimes that your problems are far too difficult even for God to solve. Read verse 37 and apply it to your problems. What does this verse mean in your present situation?
8. Thirty some years later, Mary stood by the cross of her son. What did she think then about the promise of God in verses 32-33?
9. If God offered to you a life full of mercy, but at the same time a life full of suffering such as Mary's life, how would you answer him?

## 2. SHEPHERDS IN THE FIELDS (Luke 2:8-20)

**BACKGROUND:** At the time of Jesus, shepherds were looked down on, because they were not able to keep the Sabbath. For example, they were not accepted as witnesses to courts. In the Old Testament, angels had appeared only to such great men of God as Abraham, Ezekiel and Daniel.

1. Think of the everyday life of these shepherds on the mountains of Judea. What were their joys, what were their sorrows?
  - What do you think the relationship was between the shepherds and God, whose commandments they couldn't keep?
2. Jerusalem was very close to Bethlehem, with many religious people living there. Why didn't the angel appear to any of those people instead of to the shepherds?
3. It says in verse 9 that the shepherds were greatly afraid. What were they afraid of?
  - What do you fear most today? (You can answer in your heart.)
4. What made the shepherds glad when they heard the words of the angel (vs. 10-12)?
  - Imagine of the angel saying vs.10-11 to you personally. Do you think you would become glad? Why, why not?
5. What did the shepherds think when hearing that the long-awaited Saviour was sleeping in a manger? (A Manger is place for the animals to eat hay.)
  - How would you feel if you were told: "The Saviour of the world is sleeping in a wash-basin?"
6. What reason did the angels have to rejoice in God's having been born in the midst of dirt, cold, enemies and bacteria (vs. 13-14)?
  - Why did the Saviour have to be born in such circumstances?
7. Why did God want to show his Son to someone as soon as he was born?
8. How did the shepherds find the right stable in the middle of the night?
  - On what grounds could the shepherds believe that the baby sleeping in the manger was Christ the Lord?
9. What was in the words of the shepherds that gave comfort to Mary and Joseph who had had a hard night?
  - Why didn't God send the angels to Mary and Joseph - why did he send the shepherds instead?
10. The shepherds told many people what they had seen and heard on Christmas night. Why didn't all the others go to worship the baby Jesus?
11. It took more than 30 years before Jesus became famous - most of the shepherds had died

by then. How did the life of the shepherds change after they had seen the newborn Saviour? What remained the same?

- What did the shepherds realize about their own relationship with God through these events?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The angels were singing about peace and joy on Christmas night. Peace and joy had, however, a price that Jesus had to pay. He started paying it in the manger and finished paying for it on the cross.

### 3. ANNA AND SIMEON (Luke 2:25-38)

**BACKGROUND:** The fact that Joseph and Mary offered only a pair of pigeons in the temple shows that they were poor. Compare [Lev.12:7-8](#). Many people were waiting for the Messiah at that time, but most of them thought he would show his power and authority to everyone.

1. Imagine what Anna went through when her husband died after seven years of marriage (vs.36).
  - Why didn't Anna want to remarry, as it was customary in those days - think of various reasons.
  - What was the meaning of life for Anna during her 50-60 years as a widow (vs.36-37)?
2. What do you think Anna prayed for in the temple day and night year after year?
  - What does verse 38 show of Anna's faith? (What did she need redemption for?)
3. Now imagine the life Simeon had led until the day he met Jesus - what were his joys and sorrows (vs.25-26)?
  - What did the promise of God mean to Simeon (vs.26)?
4. What does it mean for an elderly person to have something to hope for in the future?
  - What does "waiting" have in common with "faith"?
  - What was the difference between the Messiah Simeon was waiting for and the Messiah most of the people were waiting for? (See Note and verse 25.)
5. How could Simeon see the Lord's Christ in a child of a poor family?
  - Why didn't all the other visitors to the temple see what Anna and Simeon saw?
6. Look at the text carefully and try to find indications of what kind of salvation these two old people expected the Messiah to bring (vs.25,31,32,38)?
  - What do you want most of all from Jesus?
7. What does it take for a man to say that he is ready to die (vs.29)?
  - Apply the words of Simeon to your own life. Can you say as he does in verses 29-30?
8. What new information did the words of Simeon reveal to Mary about her child (vs.30-35)?
  - How did the sword pierce the heart of Mary? (The answer comes outside of this text.)
9. Anna and Simeon never met Jesus again. In what ways did this encounter with baby Jesus change their lives? What stayed the same?
10. What calling did these two old people have until their deaths?
  - In our day, many people are interested in the gift of prophecy. Why was Anna called a prophetess? See vs.36.

**GLAD TIDINGS:** If you have seen Jesus through the Word of God you can say as Simeon: "Now, Lord, you have kept your promise, and you may let your servant go in peace. With my own eyes I have seen your salvation."

#### 4. JESUS AS A TEENAGER (Luke 2:40-52)

**BACKGROUND:** Jewish boys come of age when they are 13 years old. Jesus eventually had four brothers and some sisters (Matt. 13:55-56). His father was a carpenter and he also learned his father's trade. The temple was the only place where the Jewish people were allowed to make sacrifices for their sins. God had promised that his presence would always dwell there.

1. Mary had to take care of a growing family. What do you think the journey to the Feast of Passover meant to her every year?
  - What kind of preparations did Mary have to do in order to make this two-week-long journey?
  
1. Imagine the everyday life of the boy Jesus as the eldest son of a growing family.
  - What did it mean to the boy Jesus that he could travel, perhaps for the first time, to Jerusalem with his parents?
  
1. Why didn't Jesus tell his parents beforehand that he wasn't going to return home in their company?
  - Of all the places, why did Jesus want to go to the temple?
  
1. What do verses 46-47 show us about Jesus?
  - What was the foremost interest of this 12-year-old boy?
  
1. Why was Jesus surprised that his parents did not know where he was?
  
2. Why was it so important for Jesus to meet his Heavenly Father in the temple instead of right where he was?
  
3. What does vs.48 show us of Mary?
  - How should Mary have reacted when she lost sight of her son?
  
1. How did the parents of Jesus feel when they heard their son's answer in vs.49?
  - What did Jesus want to teach his parents through this incident?
  
1. According to this text, when do we have the right to go against our parents?
  - According to this text, what is the will of God in regards to a teen-ager?
  - According to this text, how should we treat our teen-agers?
  
1. What was the relationship of Jesus with his parents and other people during the 18 years between this incident and the start of his public ministry (vs.51-52)?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The reason why Jesus loved the temple is written in John 2:19-21. The leader may read this passage.

## 5. THE MESSAGE OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (Luke 3:7-20)

**BACKGROUND:** John had had old parents who now were dead. He had no siblings nor was he married. The place where John was living was a lonely desert.

1. What kind of person might John have become if he had always been surrounded by friends?
  - Think about the times you have felt lonely. What were the positive things that loneliness brought into your life?
  
1. John called his hearers "brood of vipers" (vs.7). Why did he nevertheless become even more popular than Jesus did?
  
2. Look at the words of John in verses 7-14. How should we apply these verses to our own society?
  - In this speech, what stings your conscience?
  - How would the world be if everybody lived as John tells us to live?
  
1. Compare the message of John with the messages you usually hear in Christian meetings. What is different?
  - If somebody in your congregation or Christian group preached as John did, what do you think the reaction would be?
  
1. Verses 4-6 tell us that John's task was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah in the hearts of the people. In what way does a strict message like John's prepare the way for the coming of Jesus in our hearts?
  - What would have happened if John had preached like this: "God understands your weaknesses and accepts you as you are!"
  
1. What was John's relationship to the coming Messiah (vs.15-17)?
  - Why didn't John make use of his popularity for his own benefit?
  
1. John rebuked king Herod for the sins he had committed in his private life (vs.19-20). Why did he want to meddle in the sexual relationships of the king?
  - In what situation should we rebuke other people for their sexual sins?
  
1. John was only 30 years old when he was executed in prison. What was the meaning of his short life?
  - What may have been the greatest happiness in the life of this prophet?
  
1. Jesus was also among those who heard the message from John the Baptist. He was a tree, which only bore good fruit. Then why was he "cut down and thrown into the fire" (vs.9)?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The message of John consisted largely of commandments and warnings that brought consciousness of sins home to the hearers. However, in another gospel John declares how the Messiah will deal with our sins: "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29).

## 6. THE FIRST DAY OF JESUS' MINISTRY (Luke 4:31-37)

**BACKGROUND:** The man who had an evil spirit in him was what we call "possessed". Being possessed is different from having a mental disease. It simply means that an evil spirit is dwelling in your heart in the same way as the Holy Spirit is dwelling in the heart of a believer. An evil spirit usually goes into a man through idol worship, witchcraft, fortune telling, cultic healings, certain types of rock music etc. A possessed person goes every now and then into "a fit", cries in an inhuman voice and has often extraordinary strength.

1. Do you believe in the existence of Satan and evil spirits?
  - If you have heard stories about spirit possession and the like, please share them shortly with us now.
  - Why are many people afraid of darkness, ghosts, spirits and idols?
  
1. Imagine the everyday life of this possessed man - think especially about his family life and other relationships.
  - This was the first Sabbath Jesus spent in Capernaum, which means that the people hadn't come into the synagogue to meet him. Why do you suppose the possessed man came there even knowing that he might have one of those "fits" any time?
  
1. Why did evil spirits often cry and rage when coming near Jesus?
  - Say in your own words what the evil spirit knew about Jesus (vs.34).
  - Was the spirit right in what he said about Jesus or not?
  
1. Why didn't Jesus address the man but the spirit?
  - Why didn't Jesus answer the question the evil spirit asked him (vs.34-35)?
  
1. Why did Jesus help the possessed even though the man never asked him to do so?
  - Perhaps you have heard stories about someone's driving out evil spirits of a person. What is different about the way Jesus drove out the spirit?
  
1. What was it about Jesus the people were most surprised at (vs.32, 36)?
  - How are the words of Jesus different from the words of other people?
  - For what problem or for which person do you at the moment need the powerful word of Jesus? (You can answer in your heart.)
  
1. According to this text, what should you say to someone who is afraid of darkness, spirits, ghosts, idols or the power of Satan?
  - To what degree do you think the Christian church of our day is helping those who are bound by the spirit world?
  
1. Why did Jesus start his ministry with an act like this?
  
2. What is the difference between a person falling into sin and a person becoming possessed by an evil spirit?
  
3. (The answer to these last three questions will come outside of this text.)
  - How did Jesus get the authority to give orders to evil spirits?

- How would Jesus eventually destroy Satan and his spirits (vs.34)?
- Although he had the authority to destroy evil spirits, why did Jesus himself become destroyed by them on the cross?

## 7. THE GREAT CATCH OF FISH (Luke 5:1-11)

**BACKGROUND:** Peter had a mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39), which means that he also had a wife and children. Peter was a fisherman - if he didn't get fish he wouldn't have a livelihood. On Lake of Gennesaret they fished at night (not in broad daylight) and in shallow rather than deep water.

1. If any of you have ever worked on a night shift, please tell us how you usually felt the following morning?
  - Imagine what Peter was thinking while washing his nets after a night of unsuccessful labour (vs.2)?
  
1. Why did Jesus want to be in a boat while teaching the people (vs.3)?
  - Why do you think Jesus chose Peter's boat for his platform?
  
1. Peter had just washed the nets. Moreover, he was an expert in fishing, Jesus was not. What made him follow the orders of Jesus in spite of risking the loss of face in front of other fishermen (vs.4-5)?
  - What do you think: did Peter believe he would get fish or not?
  
1. If Jesus asked you to do something that you thought was impossible, how would you answer him?
  
2. A few years ago, a fishing boat dating back to the time of Jesus was discovered in the mud of Lake of Gennesaret. It was about eight meters long and more than two meters wide. How many fish weighing one kilo each would two such boats contain (vs.7)?
  - What happened to all these fish?
  
1. What surprises you about the reaction of Peter to this miracle?
  - Which sins might Peter have had in mind when saying the words in verse 8?
  
1. What did Peter learn about the person of Jesus through this miracle? (See also how he addresses Jesus in vs. 5 and 8.)
  - What made Peter feel afraid?
  
1. Why did Jesus speak as he did in vs. 10 only after Peter's confession?
  - What does a fisherman have in common with a person who proclaims the gospel?
  
1. What guarantee did Peter have that his family wouldn't starve after he left them and followed Jesus?
  - Do you have any assurance that your family won't suffer if you decide to follow Jesus wherever he tells you to go?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Simon was not mistaken when he thought that a sinful man couldn't come near to the holy God. He knew what the OT said: the sinner who draws near God will die. That is why Jesus had to experience the fate Simon was afraid of - he was forsaken by God when facing his death.

## 8. WHO IS REALLY HAPPY? (Luke 6:20-26)

**BACKGROUND:** The word "blessed" means "extremely happy" in the original Greek. "The rich" of this text are those who have got everything they ever wanted in this life: money, love and health. "The poor" refer to people who never had these things or lost them along the way. (Please, don't take the word "poor" to mean "the poor in spirit", Jesus does not refer to them here.)

1. What is real happiness for a person according to this text?
  - What is real unhappiness according to this text?
  
1. What, according to Jesus, is the positive side of being poor? (For the meaning of the word "poor", look at the note above.)
  - What is negative about being rich? (Look at the note above.)
  - Which of these two groups do you belong to? (You can answer in your heart.)
  
1. Many people in this world are hungry because they don't have food. How can Jesus call some of them happy?
  - Many people in our society are craving for love and appreciation. How can Jesus call some of them happy?
  
1. Think about a situation in the past, which really made you cry. How would you have felt if Jesus had come to you then and said: "Happy are you who are weeping now"?
  - Imagine a person who never cries. Why is it difficult to call him or her happy?
  
1. On what grounds could Jesus claim that his crying disciples were happy?
  - Are the crying disciples happy while crying or afterwards when they can laugh?
  
1. What is wrong with riches, satisfaction, laughter and being well spoken of?
  - When will the time come when the rich, fulfilled, laughing people must cry?
  
1. Why are they hated who speak the truth, and why are they spoken well of, who are false prophets (vs.22,26)?
  - Do you think there actually are people who rejoice and leap for joy while persecuted and criticized (vs.23)? If there are, why can they react in such manner?
  
1. What do the poor, unfulfilled, crying and criticized people have that the rich etc. don't have?
  
2. Why does Jesus call only his disciples happy and not all the suffering people on earth (vs.20)?
  
3. Let's apply these verses to the life of Jesus. Discuss the following: Was Jesus happy while he was hanging on the cross. Why? Why not?
  - Why didn't God offer Jesus consolation while he suffered?

## 9. LOVE YOUR ENEMY! (Luke 6:27-38)

**BACKGROUND:** While reading this text, think about last week - to what extent did you follow these commandments in your everyday life.

Verses 27-30

1. Most of us will probably agree that everybody should live as Jesus teaches here. Why is it so difficult to live like that?
  - Would it be easier to follow the teaching of Jesus if he had simply said: "Be kind to your enemies!"
  
1. Imagine that you would start to follow these rules inside your family, school or job. How do you think your home/ school/ job would change?
  - Do you think your relationship with somebody you don't like would improve if you prayed for him/ her (vs.28)?
  
1. Jesus kept all these rules to the letter. Why did he still have many enemies?
  
2. What harm does hatred do to the one who hates?

Verses 31-38

5. What is the basic difference between "the children of the Most High" and "the sinners" as they are described in these verses?
  - In what respects do you resemble the children of the Most High and in what respects do you resemble the sinners?
  
6. How are they mistaken who always complain of others not taking them into consideration (vs.36-38)?
  - Who are those people who need unconditional love most of all?
  
7. Verse 35 describes also the love of Jesus toward us even if we were his enemies. Read the verse and answer the question: Is it difficult or easy for a human being to believe in such an unconditional love?
  
8. A great reward is promised to those who keep these commandments (vs.35). Jesus did it, but instead of getting a reward he was crucified. Why?
  
9. How can we learn to love our enemies?
  - How can they become children of the Most High who haven't succeeded in loving their enemies?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** In the actual meaning of the word, only Jesus was the Son of the Most High God. He loved his enemies and prayed for them to the bitter end. He didn't, however, take the reward for himself, but gives it to those who ask forgiveness for not having been able to fulfill these commandments.

## 10. THE FOUNDATION OF YOUR LIFE (Luke 6:45-49)

1. Whom is Jesus portraying in vs.45?
2. What are the similarities between a house and a human life? Find as many as you can.
  - Why do many people consider only the facade of a house/ a life as important, not the foundation?
3. What different things can people make to the foundation of their lives?
  - What is the reason many people build their lives without "digging down deep" first?
4. What does Jesus mean by "a flood" or "a torrent" that strikes a human life?
  - How will you handle the situation if your life is hit by "a flood" that you are now fearing?
5. According to this parable, "a flood" hits the lives of Christians and non-Christians alike. Why are the Christians not spared?
6. Think of a time when a catastrophe struck your life. What did you cling to at that time?
  - How did the words of Jesus help you in the time of affliction? Please share your experiences.
7. What will happen to a person whose house collapses? (What kind of life will he lead after the catastrophe?)
8. What could be the reason for someone hearing the words of Jesus but not putting them into practice?
  - What makes someone want to put the words of Jesus into practice?
  - To which of these two groups do you belong? (You can answer in your heart.)
9. To put the words of Jesus into practice means among other things to do what we were told last time: to love your enemy. Can you say that these words have become the foundation of your life?
10. The word "rock" has one more meaning in the Bible. Paul says in [1.Cor.10:4](#): "That rock was Christ." What is the difference if you build your life on the commandments of Jesus (the law) or if you build it on Jesus himself (the gospel)?
11. Jesus himself kept all the commandments. Then, why did "a flood" destroy his life?

## 11. THE WIDOW OF NAIN (Luke 7:11-17)

**BACKGROUND:** People call Jesus a great prophet because they remember how both Elijah and Elisha of the Old Testament raised a widow's son from the dead (vs.16).

1. Think of various reasons why so many people wanted to attend this funeral (vs.12).
2. Think about this widow's life. She had only one child at a time when everyone wanted as many children as possible. What do you think were the highlights in the life of this small family while the father was still living?
  - What had probably been worst for this woman when her husband died?
3. What economical and psychological problems may arise when a mother is raising her only son alone?
4. What was this mother possibly thinking about God while walking behind the coffin of her son?
5. At the time of the young man's death Jesus was in Capernaum, a town about 40 kilometers from Nain (Luke 7:1). The funeral was held not later than the following day. Why did Jesus want to reach this funeral in time, even though it meant he had to walk hurriedly such a long distance?
  - Why did Jesus want to help this widow who had never asked him for help?
6. In what situations have you felt that God's help couldn't possibly reach you in time?
  - How can we become convinced that the help of Jesus never comes too late?
7. Why did Jesus say to the crying mother: "Don't cry!"
  - Jesus says today to you, too: "Don't cry!" What does he mean by that?
8. How did Jesus raise the young man from the dead?
9. What does Luke mean when he says: "Jesus gave the boy back to his mother" (vs.15)?
  - How do you think this incident changed the relationship between the mother and her son?
10. The Heavenly Father, too, had to see his only Son being carried to his grave. Do you think his pain was greater or less than that of the widow?
  - In verse 16 it says: "God has come to help his people." Why didn't he help his own Son when he was dying?

## 12. THE WOMAN WHO GOT MUCH FORGIVEN (Luke 7:36-50)

**BACKGROUND:** In this culture, a woman was not supposed to show her hair in public. Verses 44-46 describe how honored guests were usually welcomed to a home.

1. What did the Pharisee Simon think about Jesus whom he had invited to his house (verses 36,39,44-46)?
  - Why do you think Simon invited Jesus in the first place?
2. Everybody knew the woman because she was the prostitute of the town (verse 37). Try to imagine the life of this woman when she was growing up - what had perhaps made her a prostitute? Think of various possibilities.
  - What kind of experiences did this woman have about being loved?
3. An alabaster jar full of perfume was quite expensive. Think of various reasons why this woman had saved the money and bought the jar?
4. Why did the woman want to meet Jesus so badly? She must have known that she would not get any warm welcome in the house of the Pharisee!
  - What made the woman believe that Jesus would not turn her down?
5. Why did this woman want to touch Jesus?
  - What happens if we are touched by somebody or something we detest?
  - What happened when the woman touched Jesus?
6. What made the woman cry so much that the feet of Jesus became wet?
7. What do you think came first in the case of this woman: her faith in Jesus or her love for him? Give your reasons from the text.
  - If you at one time have felt that that you love Jesus with all your heart what was the occasion?
8. In verses 41-42 Jesus tells a little parable about a moneylender. (Five hundred denarii amounts to the salary of 12 years. Fifty denarii amounts to the salary of 12 months.) Sin is here likened to debt. What did Jesus want to teach to Simon through this story?
  - What were the sins of Simon to which Jesus refers in his parable?
9. What happened to the sin-debt the woman owed to God?
  - What happened to the sin-debt Simon owed to God?
  - Why didn't Simon love Jesus?
10. Jesus, who is fully aware of all your sins, says to you now the words that are written in verses 48 and 50. What do you answer to him?

### 13. THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER (Luke 8:4-15)

**BACKGROUND:** The parable of the sower was the first parable of Jesus, a kind of an agenda for his three years of public ministry.

1. Why did Jesus compare the Word of God with a seed? Find as many similarities as possible.
  - What did Jesus want to say about his coming ministry through this parable?
  
1. In what concrete ways does the Devil take the Word of God away from our hearts (verses 5,12)?
  - How can we prevent the thing described in verse 12 from happening to us?
  
1. Look at verses 6 and 13. What kind of testing can cause a person to fall away from the Christian faith?
  - What were these people in vs.13 rejoicing about in the first place?
  - What does Jesus mean by a Christian who doesn't have any "roots"?
  
1. How can "life's worries, riches and pleasures" choke the Word of God in our lives (vs. 7,14)?
  - Why do riches seem to be a bigger problem for a Christian than poverty is?
  - What do we have to do if we realize that worries, riches and pleasures are little by little separating us from the Word of God?
  
1. How does bad soil become good soil (vs. 8,15)?
  - What are the conditions on which a human life can bear fruit?
  
1. Which of these four soils fits best into the state of your heart at this moment? (You can answer in your heart.)
  
2. What does Jesus mean by a hundred-fold crop (vs. 8)?
  - Why do many Christians in our day expect "the crop" in their lives to grow overnight?
  
1. What does this parable teach us about evangelism?
  - What does this text teach about "power evangelism"? (If you don't know the term, you can skip the question.)
  
1. In the Bible, Jesus is equal to the Word of God (The leader may read [John 1:1](#)). What are the similarities between Jesus and the seed?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Jesus said the following during his last night on this earth: "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless the kernel of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds... He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die" ([John 12:23-33](#)). Accordingly, the seed in this

parable is nothing else but the word of the cross.

## 14. I WILL FOLLOW YOU (Luke 9:57-62)

1. There are three people in this text who are calculating the cost of following Jesus. In which situations have you done the same?
2. Why didn't Jesus simply say to the first man: "Welcome to my company!" (vs.57-58)?
  - What did Jesus want to say to this man with his answer in vs. 58?
1. How would you react if the only thing Jesus promised you was the life portrayed in verse 58?
  - Why did Jesus have to lead a life portrayed in verse 58 although he was the Son of God?
1. What were the priorities of the second man (vs. 59-60)?
  - Compare the priorities of the second man with those of your own.
  - Which priorities would you like your children to choose in such a situation?
1. How can the death of a family member bind us so much that we think we are not able to follow Jesus?
2. What was the real reason why the third man wanted to visit his home once more (vs. 61-62)?
  - Why didn't Jesus want to allow him this little consolation?
1. How do you think the lives of these three men would turn out if they chose to stay behind? What if they chose to proclaim the kingdom of God?
2. In many cultures, including that of Jesus' day, showing respect to one's parents is the most important thing for a son to do. Why does Jesus here go against his own culture?
  - Jesus also taught the importance of honoring one's father and mother. How can we reconcile this text with that commandment?
1. Do you think young people in our churches are warned about the hardships of following Jesus in the way Jesus warned these three?
2. What do you have to do if you realize that you are unfit to serve in the kingdom of God?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** While speaking these words Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. He didn't look back after having put his hand to the plow, but walked resolutely towards his suffering and death. He was fit for the kingdom of God - perhaps the only one who ever was. And he was fit for it, not for his own sake, but for ours.

## 15. NAME IN HEAVEN (Luke 10:17-20)

**BACKGROUND:** For background information, read vs.1 and 9. This text is speaking about the crucial moment in the revival of Galilee - which course would it take? As for question 9.1 look at Gen.3:15.

1. What do you think would happen if the people in our churches had the same power as these 70 had?
  - Why did these 70 report only one aspect of their ministry to Jesus?
1. Why do people usually enjoy having power and authority?
  - When his disciples rejoiced about their success, why didn't Jesus rejoice with them?
1. What is the difference between the joy about one's ministry and the joy about one's name being written in heaven?
  - Why is it easier to rejoice about things on earth than about things in heaven?
1. What does the disciple preach whose joy is in his power to drive out demons?
  - What does the disciple preach whose joy is in his name having been written in heaven?
1. What should happen in order that we might learn to rejoice about our names having been written in heaven?
2. When and how can our names be written in heaven?
3. When and where have you heard such things happen which are described in verse 19?
  - In what situation could you muster the courage to trample on snakes and scorpions?
1. Why cannot anything or anybody harm the disciples of Jesus (vs.19)?
  - What do you fear will harm you or your loved ones?
  - According to this text, what are the things we don't need to fear?
  - What are the things that we should fear?
1. Even though many of Jesus' disciples died as martyrs, in what sense is it true that they overcame all the power of the enemy?
  - Why was the old serpent (the Devil) allowed to strike the heel of Jesus on the cross?
1. What does this text say to us concerning our ministry?
  - What does this text say about "power evangelism"? (If you don't know the term, you can skip the question.)

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The Bible tells us the fate of those whose names are not written in the book of life in heaven: "If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev.20:15). Because Jesus didn't want it to happen to us he prayed as Moses did: "Please, forgive their sin - but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written" (Ex.32:32).

## 16. THE GOOD SAMARITAN (Luke 10:25-37)

**BACKGROUND:** The Jews at the time of Jesus despised the Samaritans for being of mixed blood and half pagans. The Samaritans had their own temple on Mt. Gerizim, 50 km north of Jerusalem. They only used Genesis-Deuteronomy (the five books of Moses) as their Bible. The wounded man in this parable is most probably a Jew. The priest and the Levite were probably going to the temple to perform their religious duties there. If they touched blood, they would be unclean for the rest of the day, and not allowed to enter to temple.

1. Imagine what kind of thoughts crossed the mind of the wounded man while he was lying on the roadside hour after hour.
  - Imagine the feelings of the wife and children when the father failed to come home after his journey.
1. Why didn't these two religious people, the priest and the Levite, try to help the dying man? Think of as many reasons as possible.
  - How did the expert of the law probably evaluate the behavior of the priest and the Levite in the parable (vs. 25-27)?
1. How did the priest and the Levite interpret the commandment of love, which they very well knew from their Bibles? (Look at vs. 27.)
  - Is it possible, in your opinion, to love God with all one's heart, soul and strength, and at the same time treat a suffering human being in the way these two religious people did? Give your reasons.
1. The Samaritan had many reasons NOT to help the wounded. Think of as many of them as you can.
  - What would be the minimal amount of help a decent person would give in that situation?
  - What "extra help" did the Samaritan give to the wounded?
1. Two silver coins corresponded to two days' wages, which would keep a man up to two months in an inn. How much would that sum be in our currency?
  - Why did the Samaritan want to pay such a sum of money to help a stranger, who wasn't even his own countryman?
  - For whom would you be willing to do everything this Samaritan did for a stranger?
1. Do you think the Samaritan also kept the first part of the commandment of love (vs. 27)? Give your reasons.
2. Who is your neighbor whom you perhaps have been ignoring in the same way as the priest and the Levite ignored the wounded man (vs. 37)?
  - What concrete steps should you take to help this neighbor?
1. What are the similarities between Jesus and the Good Samaritan?
  - What more did Jesus do for his enemies than the Samaritan?
  - What has Jesus done for us who have often felt ourselves wounded in heart and soul?

1. Discuss some concrete example like why the majority of European Christians didn't do anything to help the persecuted Jews during the Second World War. Find an example from the history of your own country/church: slavery, buraku-mondai etc.)

## 17. THE ONLY THING NEEDED (Luke 10:38-42)

**BACKGROUND:** The position of women was not the same in Jesus' time as it is now. Among other things, women could not study the Bible along with men.

1. What do you expect most from a visit to a good friend?
  - Jesus and his disciples had been out all day. What do you think they expected from their stay in the home of these sisters?
  
1. Think about the reactions of Martha and Mary to the visit of Jesus. Which is easier for you to understand and why?
  
2. We can see Martha's actual problem in verse 40. What was it?
  - What made Martha irritated over Jesus, not only over her sister?
  - In what situation did you want to say to Jesus: "Lord, don't you care...?"
  
1. What did Mary think about the evening meal?
  - Why would Jesus have rather had Martha also listen to his teaching?
  
1. Some Christians are more eager to serve Jesus than to hear his voice. Why?
  - What does it show about a relationship between two people if one of them is not interested in hearing what the other wants to say?
  
1. What did Jesus mean by "the one thing that is needed" (vs. 42)?
  - Do you agree that hearing the words of Jesus is the only thing you need in life and death?
  
1. Why would Jesus want you to hear his word regularly?
  - What will happen to us if we hear Jesus' words only occasionally?
  - Where and how can we hear the words of Jesus in our day?
  
1. When we choose to do something, it means that we choose to leave something else undone. What concrete things do you have to leave undone in order to have time to read the Bible and go to Christian meetings?
  
2. Whom do you think Jesus loved better, Martha or Mary?
  - Which of these verses do you think Jesus is saying to you personally today: verse 41 or 42?
  
1. The only thing needed in life and death is to hear the words of God. Why couldn't Jesus hear them when he was hanging on the cross?

## 18. A FISH OR A SNAKE? (Luke 11:5-13)

1. Jesus wants to teach something about prayer through the little parable in this text. What similarities do you find between your situation and that of the man in the parable?
  - In what situation have you been as demanding in your prayers as the man in the parable?
  
1. The friend inside the house seems to be unwilling to do as asked. Why does Jesus liken God to a "friend" like that?
  
2. What made the first man insist until he got what he wanted?
  - Where can we get patience to go on praying until God will answer us?
  
1. When teaching about prayer, Jesus uses three different verbs: to ask, to seek and to knock (vs. 9-10). What aspects of our prayer-life do these verbs describe?
  - At this moment what is the thing you most eagerly are asking, seeking and knocking to get? (You can answer in your heart.)
  
1. What does it teach us about prayer when Jesus likens it to a child asking something from his father?
  - In what respect is our Heavenly Father similar to our earthly one?
  
1. What does a loving father do if his child asks for something which he knows is not good for him?
  - How do we know whether we are asking something that is good for our loved ones, and us?
  
1. Have you ever experienced that the thing you first thought was "a snake" proved afterwards to be "a fish" (or the other way round)? Tell us about it.
  
2. What is more important to you: that God will answer your prayers now or that he will answer them in the new earth and heaven? Give your reasons.
  
3. "Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear" (Is.59:1-2). Think about these verses while answering the following question: Why didn't God hear the voice of his Son when he was praying on the cross?

## 19. THE RICH FOOL (Luke 12:13-21)

1. Why do you think quarrels about inheritance are so common even in the best of families?
  - What is the difference between the man in verse 13 and other people in the gospels who asked Jesus for help?
  
1. What was the real problem of the man in verse 13?
  - What would have happened if Jesus had done as this man asked him to do?
  
1. Now look at the parable in verses 16-20. Think about the life this rich man had lived. Was it a happy life or not? Give your reasons.
  - Would you wish your children a life where the only problem they had was the one described in verse 17?
  
1. Why did God give sun and rain to the fields of a man who never even once thanked him for it?
  - What was the religion (the god) of this rich man?
  
1. What do we learn about the human relationships of this rich man?
  - What was the greatest mistake of this man?
  
1. Apply this parable to rich and poor countries. Which sin of ours does Jesus pinpoint through his parable?
  - How should you use the money and possessions you have?
  
1. Why didn't the rich man realize he had to die before it was too late?
  - In which situations do you think about your death and coming judgment?
  
1. What does vs. 21 mean? (How could the rich man have stored up riches in heaven? What does it mean to be rich toward God?)
  
2. Compare the rich fool with Jesus - what are the differences?
  - Why did God demand life from Jesus, as he demanded it from the rich man (vs. 20)?
  - Who benefited from what Jesus had earned while on earth (vs. 20b)?

## 20. ONE FAITHFUL, THE OTHER NOT (Luke 12:35-48)

**BACKGROUND:** The word "servant" can also mean "slave".

### Verses 35-40

1. What should a servant do in order to stay awake for the best part of the night?
  - What may happen if the servant falls asleep before his master has come home?
1. Do you think it is easy to wait for the second coming of Jesus? Why or why not?
  - Why is the coming of Jesus likened to a thief breaking into a house?
1. What is the thing Jesus wants to warn us against through these verses (35-40)?
  - How could you, in practice, open your door for Jesus today?

### Verses 41-46

1. Compare the two managers in these verses, the good and the bad. What are the differences?
  - What makes these managers act in such different ways?
1. Compare the relationship of these two managers with their master? How does it differ from one to another?
  - How does our attitude toward the coming of Jesus influence our service in the kingdom of God?
1. What are the things Jesus has entrusted to the "managers" of his church until he comes back?
  - Which task has Jesus entrusted to you personally?
1. Where do we find these "managers" of the church who beat their fellow servants, eat and get drunk?
  - What kind of punishment will await these "managers"?

### Verses 47-48

1. Whose fault is it that there are people in Christian churches who don't know the will of their Lord?
  - By what yardstick are the servants of God judged at the end?

### The summary:

1. When and where does Jesus dress himself to serve and come to wait for us (37b)?
2. Why did Jesus have to experience the fate of the unfaithful servant: he was assigned the place of the unbelievers and, so to speak, cut to pieces (46b)?

## 21. THE BARREN FIG TREE (Luke 13:6-9)

**BACKGROUND:** This parable originally referred to Israel. For three years Jesus had been active among this nation without finding much fruit in it. The parable, however, speaks about us as well. You are the fig tree, God is your owner, and Jesus is the man who takes care of the tree. For background information, look also at [Matt.21:18-19](#).

1. The soil in the vineyard is usually the best soil possible. What did Jesus want to say about Israel by placing the fig tree of his parable among the vines?
  - What harm did the barren fig tree cause to the vines surrounding it?
  
1. What might the fruit be that God has expected to get from your life for the last three years? (You can answer in your heart.)
  - What are the reasons, which hinder you from bearing fruit for the kingdom of God?
  
1. What are the feelings of the gardener toward his barren fig tree?
  - Why does Jesus love even those Christians who don't bear any fruit?
  
1. Imagine Jesus standing before his Father and praying for some extra time for you. What makes him do that?
  
2. The gardener promises to dig around the tree and fertilize it. What has Jesus done in your life during the past three years in order to enable you to bear fruit for his Heavenly Father?
  - How do the disappointments and sorrows in our lives contribute to our bearing fruit?
  
1. According to this parable, what will happen to a Christian who eventually will bear no fruit?
  
2. Now turn to [Matt.21:18-19](#). (The leader may read the passage.) This event took place during the last week of the life of Jesus. Think of various reasons why Jesus suddenly wanted to curse a barren fig tree?
  - What do these two verses have to do with the death of Jesus?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** After having cursed the barren fig tree Jesus took its place - the place of Israel and the place of you and me. "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree" ([Gal.3:13](#)).

## 22. A WOMAN WITH A HUNCHBACK (Luke 13:10-17)

**BACKGROUND:** The synagogue was a place where people gathered on Saturdays to hear God's word. Women didn't have any say in religious matters at that time; they were sitting or standing on the balcony or in the back row. We don't know what was wrong with the back of this woman, but perhaps it was similar to being hunchbacked.

1. Imagine the everyday life of this woman during the 18 years of her disability.
  - How do you think other people treated this woman with a hunchback (vs. 14)?
  
1. If you had become disabled in your teens, what do you think would have been the most difficult thing for you?
  - If you had been disabled when still young, what would you have thought about God who allowed it to happen?
  
1. When Jesus dealt with demon possession he always addressed the demon directly. He does not do it here, which indicates that this woman was not possessed. What does Jesus mean when he says that it was Satan that bound her (vs. 16)?
  - What kind of things can bind us people so that we can't live full lives?
  
1. The woman didn't come to the synagogue to get healed. What did she come for?
  - What did it mean to this woman to hear God's word once a week?
  
1. Why didn't this woman ask Jesus for help? Think of various reasons.
  - How do you think she felt when Jesus called her to come forward in front of all the people?
  - What made her do what Jesus asked her to do?
  
1. According to this text, what helps people who are in one way or another bound by Satan? (Keep to the text!)
  
2. What does Jesus mean by calling this woman "a daughter of Abraham"? Think of various possibilities. (As for "Abraham", see note in study #28.)
  
3. How does the attitude of Jesus towards this woman differ from that of the synagogue ruler?
  - The ruler of the synagogue thought he believed in God. What was lacking in his faith?
  - What was binding the ruler of the synagogue?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Satan would eventually bind Jesus himself - with nails to the cross. That is why he now can free from Satan's power all who want to become free.

### 23. THE NARROW DOOR (Luke 13:22-30)

1. Why do you think someone would want to know the answer to the question in vs.23?
  - Why didn't Jesus answer this question simply yes or no?
  
1. In what ways is the door to heaven narrow?
  - For what kind of people is the door to the kingdom of God especially narrow?
  
1. In what different ways do people make an effort to enter the narrow door (vs. 24)?
  
2. In this connection, Jesus tells a little parable about the feast in the kingdom of God (vs. 25-27). What is Jesus trying to say to his hearers through this parable?
  
3. Why didn't the people in the parable go through the narrow door while there still was time?
  - How does this parable relate to the question in vs.23?
  
1. What does Jesus mean by saying that he doesn't know the people who ate and drunk with him, and even heard his teaching?
  - How can we be sure that Jesus will know us in the last day?
  
1. All the patriarchs listed in verse 28 had their weaknesses and sins. What enabled them to enter the narrow door to the kingdom of God? (Discuss on the basis of what you remember about the patriarchs - don't start to look these things up.)
  - Who are the other people who will come to the feast of the kingdom of God (vs. 29)?
  
1. (The leader should read [John 10:9](#).) How does the teaching of Jesus concerning the door to heaven differ in these two places?
  - Why is one door narrow and another door open to anyone?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** It is as impossible for a sinner to be saved through the gate of the law as it is for a camel to go through the eye of the needle ([Matt. 19:24](#)). Only Jesus could go through the door of the law. The gate of the gospel, however, is open for everyone, because it is the gate where sins are forgiven.

## 24. THE GREAT BANQUET (Luke 14:12-24)

**BACKGROUND:** The guests, who got the first invitation, were originally Jews. Now we can apply verses 16-20 to all those who have been called by God through baptism and the Word of God.

1. Recall the time when you last gave a party. What would you have said if somebody had told you to act according to verses 12-14?
  - Why does Jesus ask us to invite the poor and the sick to our parties?
  
1. Look at verses 18-20. What was the real reason why these three men refused to come to the banquet?
  - Why do we often consider our possessions (18), our work (vs. 19), and our love-life (vs. 20) more important than the kingdom of God?
  - Which of these three excuses hits the mark in your life? (You can answer in your heart.)
  
1. How highly did the invited men regard the master of the banquet?
  - One possible interpretation is, that the invited refused the invitation because they knew they wouldn't be able to repay it in the near future (vs. 12b). If this is true, what does it reveal about those who refused to come?
  - What was the biggest mistake of those who refused to come?
  
1. The banquet in this parable refers to heaven. Why aren't most people interested in getting there?
  
2. What were the biggest differences between those first invited and those who eventually got into the banquet?
  - Why did the latter group accept the invitation, even though those invited first didn't?
  
1. Who in our time are "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" - those who gladly accept the invitation to heaven (vs. 21)?
  - Why didn't these people worry about repaying the invitation?
  
1. Whom does the verse 23 refer to?
  - What does this verse teach us about evangelism (proclaiming the gospel)?
  
1. To which of these two groups do you belong? (You can answer in your heart.)
  - What has God done in your life in order to move you from the group, which refuses the invitation to the group, which accepts it?
  
1. "Come, for everything is now ready!" (vs. 17) What did Jesus have to pay in order to be able to offer this banquet?
  - Jesus says to you these words: "Come, for everything is now ready!" What is your answer?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Jesus had to become "poor, crippled, blind and lame" in order to pay for the banquet in heaven. That is why the invitation is now free for everyone who wants to come.

## 25. THE LOST SHEEP (Luke 15:1-7)

1. Think of possible reasons why publicans and other sinners had wandered beyond the reach of God's voice (verse 1).
  - Why do we sometimes want to wander beyond the reach of God's voice?
  
1. What can a lost sheep do to help itself to be found - and what can it not do?
  - What can a sinner do so that Jesus would find him - and what can he not do?
  - What consolation is contained in this parable concerning the people you are worried about?
  
1. Jesus compares the finding of a sheep to repentance (verse 7). What, therefore, is repentance according to this parable? (Keep to the text!)
  
2. Where do you think we find these "respectable persons who don't need to repent" (verse 7)?
  - There is a verse in Isaiah that the Pharisees had read many times: "All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved..." (Is.53:6). Once more: who are these 99?
  
1. Of which sins should the Pharisees have repented (verse 2)?
  - Why didn't the Pharisees realize that they were lost?
  - To which of these groups do you feel you belong: the lost or the found?
  
1. In the parables of Jesus, the celebrations usually refer to eternal life in heaven. Why was the celebration only for the sheep that was lost and did not include the other 99 sheep (verse 6)?
  
2. What does it mean in practice that nobody can get to heaven on his or her own two feet (verse 5)?
  
3. Where can we nowadays meet the Jesus who welcomes sinners and even eats with them (verse 2)?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** John the Baptist compared Jesus to a sheep. He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John.1:29). Jesus as the Lamb was not saved from the wilderness - on the contrary, he was killed there. He was not carried home, but he was given all our sins to carry.

## 26. THE LOST SON (Luke 15:11-24)

**BACKGROUND:** A house in the Middle East doesn't normally stand on a hill by itself, but by a densely populated village road. The only place that provides a long view is the roof of the house. Also, keep in mind that respectable men don't run in the Middle East.

1. Why wasn't the younger son satisfied with his life at home even though he had a good home and a good father?
  - If you had been in the father's place, how would you have answered your son's request?
  
1. Why doesn't God try to stop a person who wants to leave him?
  
2. What is your opinion about the life the younger son led while abroad - was it a happy life or not?
  - Why do so many people in our day want to lead a life like that - traveling abroad with much money and without any care for tomorrow?
  
1. A pig is an unclean animal for Jews. How do you think the young man felt in the situation described in verses 14-16?
  - What options did the young man have in this situation?
  - What options do you have in your present situation when it comes to your relationship with God?
  
1. Verses 18-19 contain the young man's confession of sin. What were his sins against heaven? Why did he confess these sins first?
  - What were his sins against his father?
  
1. In what situation do we tend to think like the prodigal son: "I am no longer worthy to be called a child of God" (vs. 19)?
  - When is a person worthy to be called a child of God?
  
1. Why didn't the son say to his father all that he had planned to say (verses 18-19 and 21)?
  
2. What had the father been doing all these years (verse 20)?
  - When do you think the father forgave his son?
  - When did the son start to believe in the love of his father?
  
1. Where is Jesus himself in this parable?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The parable of the prodigal son teaches us something about Jesus by the means of contrast. Jesus, too, left his home and his Father, but for totally different reasons: to fulfill the will of his Father. And yet, when he was coming back home at the end of his life, he didn't get the same hearty welcome as the prodigal son did. In fact, the opposite happened: the door was, so to speak, slammed in his face. Why?

## 27. ANOTHER LOST SON (Luke 15:25-32)

1. Why didn't the older son leave his home like the younger one did?
  - What did this man long for more than anything else?
  - Why was there so little happiness in the life of the older son?
  
1. Why did the older brother consider himself a slave rather than an inheritor (verses 12b, 29, 31)?
  - Why didn't the older brother trust in his father's word?
  
1. In what situation have you felt as though you have toiled for God's kingdom without getting "even a goat" for recompense (vs. 29)?
  
2. The older son humiliated his father in front of the whole village by refusing to come to the feast. What do you think were the reasons he didn't love his father?
  - Discuss on the basis of this parable: If we don't love God, what can be the possible reason?
  
1. The elder son was mistaken when thinking he had fulfilled all of his father's commandments (vs. 29). What was actually the will of this father regarding his son?
  - In what ways may even devoted believers go against the will of God without being aware of it?
  
1. In the parables of Jesus, celebrations often refer to heaven. Who, according to this parable, gets to heaven and who doesn't?
  
2. Why did Jesus seem to interrupt this parable in the middle (vs. 32)?
  
3. Imagine the situation that happened the next morning when the brothers went to work in the fields - how did their feelings differ?
  
4. Where is Jesus himself in this parable?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Jesus had rights to an inheritance just as the older brother did, but he gave up his rights. "He took the form of a slave... and walked the path all the way to death - his death on the cross" (Phil.2:6-8). In that way Jesus redeemed even the people like the older brother, who are bound in their slavery. Jesus will make them free - if only they accept their free inheritance.

## 28. THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS (Luke 16:19-31)

**BACKGROUND:** Abraham was both a patriarch for the Jews and the father of faith for Christians. He was a very rich man. The name "Lazarus" means "the man whom God helps" or simply "God helps". It is the only time Jesus ever gave a name to a character in his parables. "Moses and the Prophets" is the abbreviation for "the Old Testament", the Bible of Jesus' time.

1. What were the good things the rich man could enjoy during his lifetime? Think of as many as possible.
  - Can you think of any good thing in the life of Lazarus while he was on this earth?
  
1. Why didn't the rich man help poor Lazarus even though he saw him every time he went out?
  - If somebody treated your child as the rich man treated Lazarus, what do you think would be the proper punishment?
  - Who is the Lazarus you should help today? (Remember that some people are hungry for other things than food.)
  
1. Why would anyone give a name like "God helps" to his child? Think of various reasons?
  - What might be the reason why Jesus wanted to give this name to the poor man in his parable?
  - Did God help Lazarus?
  
1. It is highly probable that Lazarus prayed God to give him health and daily bread. How could he go on believing in God who didn't answer his prayers the way he wanted to?
  - If Lazarus hadn't believed in God, how would his life have been different?
  
1. When Lazarus died, he was probably thrown to the grave of the poor without any funeral. "The rich man was buried", says the text (verse 22). What kinds of speeches were probably held at his funeral?
  
2. Why was the rich man thrown into hell?
  - Why was Lazarus allowed into heaven?
  
1. The rich man and Abraham discuss in verses 27-31 how people come to know God and are saved. What did the rich man think about this?
  - According to Abraham, why doesn't a miracle bring about faith?
  
1. Why doesn't anyone get saved without the Bible (verses 29-31)?
  
2. In what respects is the life and death of Lazarus similar to that of Jesus? (Consider of their suffering, their faith etc.)
  - What did Jesus predict about his own resurrection (verse 31)?
  
1. What does Jesus teach about "prosperity gospel" through this parable? (If you don't know the term, you can skip the question.)

## 29. TEN HEALED, ONE SAVED (Luke 17:11-19)

**BACKGROUND:** At the time of Jesus, the lepers had to live isolated from other people. If someone thought he was healed, he had to show himself to the priests (Lev.13 and Lev.14). The whole Old Testament only mentions about two or three such miracles. The leader may wish to look up what the encyclopedia says about leprosy. As for the Samaritans, the Jews despised them for being foreigners and half pagans.

1. Think about the day when these 10 men realized they had been afflicted with leprosy. What kind of thoughts do you think crossed their minds regarding the future of themselves and their family?
  - (What similarities do you find between leprosy at the time of Jesus and getting AIDS now?)
1. What do you think were the highlights in the lives of these sick and isolated people?
2. What did these lepers expect Jesus to do for them - look at their prayer in verse 13?
3. The border between Samaria and Galilee is about 50-60 kilometers from the cities where priests used to dwell. Think of various reasons why Jesus didn't heal these men right away, but sent them far away instead?
  - What made these men start this difficult journey, even though they hadn't been healed yet?
  - Would you call these ten men believers or non-believers at the moment they set out on their journey?
1. The Jewish priests didn't want to have anything to do with Samaritans. Why did the one Samaritan set out for this journey together with the Jews?
2. Think of as many reasons as possible why the nine Jews didn't come back to Jesus to thank him?
  - Why did the Samaritan come back to Jesus to thank him?
1. Why was Jesus disappointed about the nine not returning to him?
  - Do you think you have ever disappointed Jesus by similar behavior as these nine men showed?
1. "Your faith has healed you" could be also translated as "Your faith has saved you". Why did Jesus want to say these words to the Samaritan?
2. What is the difference between the faith that seeks healing and the faith that seeks Jesus himself?
  - Why doesn't "healing faith" necessarily save those who have it?
1. What did the years of isolation and shame mean to the nine Jews, when they thought about them afterwards?
  - What did the years of illness mean to the Samaritan?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Jesus had to experience on the cross the same kind of isolation and shame as the lepers did: "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering... Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Is.53:3-4). That was the price Jesus had to pay for this miracle.

### 30. A PERSISTENT WIDOW (Luke 18:1-8)

**BACKGROUND:** The women in the time of Jesus neither could sue anybody nor be witnesses at court. Their male relatives had to handle such legal matters for them. This widow obviously didn't get any such help. Perhaps her male relatives even tried to take away the inheritance from her children.

1. Recall a time when you cried out for help from God day and night. Why is it easy to give up praying in such times (verses 1 and 7)?
2. Imagine the life of this widow. Which hardships did she have to face while raising and nurturing her children all alone?
3. What makes some people similar to the judge in this parable: that they neither fear God nor care about men (vs. 2)?
  - Why did Jesus compare God with an unjust judge?
  - Have you ever felt as if God were an unjust judge? If you have, when?
1. The widow was convinced that the unjust judge would eventually help her. Why?
  - How could we become convinced of God's eventually helping our loved ones and us?
1. What happened in the heart of the widow while she was crying for help time after time?
  - What happens in our hearts while we are praying a long time in spite of God's silence?
1. What do the words of Jesus in verses 7-8 mean?
2. Jesus stood once before a judge. What were the similarities and the differences between these two situations - his and the widow's? (Don't look it up, discuss it from of your memory.)
  - How did the prayer of Jesus differ from the prayer of this woman (vs.3)?
  - Why was the verdict of Jesus different from that of the widow?
  - Was God's verdict about Jesus just or unjust?
1. What does verse 8b have to do with the parable?

## 31. WHO IS RIGHTEOUS? (Luke 18:9-14)

**BACKGROUND:** The parable of the Pharisee and the publican in the temple is Jesus' primary teaching on the doctrine of justification. This doctrine answers the question: How can we become right with God and get into heaven? Notice that at the time of Jesus the word Pharisee did not bring to people's minds a self-righteous hypocrite, but a person who truly believed and feared God. The Pharisees were also on the side of the poor, and therefore they were popular among the people. The publicans, on the other hand, were traitors to the fatherland, and exploited the poor.

1. What indicates that both of these men believed in God?
  - For the Jews, the temple was the place of atonement and the place where they could meet God. Discuss: for what reason did the Pharisee of our text go to the temple?
  - For what reason did this publican enter the temple?
  
1. What was the Pharisee thankful for - see his prayer.
  - Why didn't the Pharisee refer in his prayer to anything God had done for him?
  - What was the Pharisee's doctrine of justification? (See Note above.)
  
1. When, if ever, did you pray like the publican in this parable? (You can answer in your heart.)
  - The Greek verb in the publican's prayer conveys the following meaning: "God, be merciful to me because of the sacrifice offered to you in this temple." What was the publican's doctrine of justification?
  
1. In what ways might we resemble the Pharisee in this parable?
  - What were the sins of the Pharisee toward God and toward his neighbor?
  - Why wasn't the Pharisee aware of even one of his own sins?
  
1. The Pharisee's faith was much stronger than that of the publican. Why is it that false faith is often stronger than true faith?
  
2. Who knew which one of these two was righteous when they left the temple? (Keep to the text!)
  - Why didn't Jesus end his parable by saying: "And after that the publican compensated those from whom he had cheated money, and changed into a respectable person"?
  
1. The publican had probably ruined the lives of many people. What happened to the punishment he should have received from God because of his sins?
  
2. What is the role of the one being justified in justification?
  - What is God's part in justification?
  - What is the role of sacrifice in justification?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The sacrifice offered in the temple was the prototype of Jesus' death. In fact, the publican asked for forgiveness on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice. His sins were imputed (attributed) to Jesus, while the righteousness of Jesus was imputed (attributed) to him.

## 32. A TAX COLLECTOR IN A TREE (Luke 19:1-10)

**BACKGROUND:** In Jesus' day, tax collectors were notorious for their dishonesty. They collected an excess of taxes from the people and kept more of it for themselves than was their rightful share. Usually we think of Jesus as being on the side of the oppressed and poor, but here we see him on the side of the oppressor. In Jewish culture, going to someone's house for dinner was a sign of friendship.

1. What would daily life be like for Zacchaeus, the chief of tax collectors in Jericho? What were some of the good and bad points?
2. How could Zacchaeus have justified his business practice and lifestyle to himself?
  - Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted so much money?
1. Why do you think Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus - give as many reasons as you can?
  - Do you think that the chief tax collector would have wanted to be seen in a tree? Give your reasons.
1. Recall a time when somebody took your money unfairly. If you had been one of Zacchaeus' victims, how would you have felt about Jesus' behavior in verse 5?
2. What is surprising about Jesus' first encounter with Zacchaeus - remember that this was his first and last visit to Jericho?
3. When do you think Zacchaeus began to believe in Jesus (vs. 5-8)? Discuss several possibilities.
4. What do you think Zacchaeus would have done if Jesus had said, "Come down immediately and give half of your possessions to the poor. Then I will come to your house"?
  - How would you react if Jesus said to you: "First, make restitution for your sins and then I will be your friend"?
1. Imagine what it would be like to give away more than half of your possessions in one single day. What would make you do such a thing?
  - What did Zacchaeus receive in place of the money he lost?
1. What is the biggest difference between Zacchaeus and the citizens of Jericho? (Look at vs.7.)
  - Why did Jesus want to visit the worst man in town?
1. Jesus says to you today: "I must stay in your house today." He wants to go home with you and stay at your house. What do you answer him?
2. Who was seeking whom in this text: was Zacchaeus seeking Jesus or was Jesus seeking Zacchaeus (vs. 3,9,10)?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** On his way to Jerusalem to be crucified, Jesus made a detour through Jericho. Perhaps it was just for Zacchaeus. When Jesus forgave the sins of Zacchaeus, he knew that he

had to carry God's punishment for them. The forgiveness of sins was free for Zacchaeus and it is free for us - but it cost Jesus his life.

### 33. THE LAST PARABLE (Luke 20:9-19)

**BACKGROUND:** The vineyard referred first to the Jews, especially to their leaders, but now it can also refer to the Christian church during the end times.

1. What kind of man did the tenants consider the owner of the vineyard to be?
  - What was the mistake of the tenants concerning their master?
  - What kind of relationship between God and man does Jesus want to portray through this parable?
  
1. Why didn't the master interfere when the first servant got home empty-handed (vs. 10)?
  - Why do you think the treatment of the servants got worse and worse every time (vs. 10-12)?
  - Why doesn't God prevent his servants from being mistreated and persecuted?
  
1. What is the fruit God wants to have from us?
  - What is the fruit God wants to have from our church?
  - Why is it sometimes difficult to give the fruit of our labour to God?
  
1. What was the motive of the master when sending his beloved son to the vineyard?
  - For what reasons would you send your child to a similar place at the risk of his life?
  - Why is this world so important to God that he sent his only Son here?
  
1. What made the tenants so bold as to kill the son of their master?
  - What made people so bold as to kill the Son of God?
  - In what way are we all responsible for the death of Jesus?
  
1. What will happen to those who are responsible for the death of Jesus (vs. 16)?
  - How can you apply verse 16 to the Christian church during the end times?
  
1. After finishing the parable of the tenants Jesus used another well-known image to predict his death: the capstone of a building. What do verses 17-18 mean?
  - What makes a church or an individual Christian throw away the capstone of their faith?
  
1. What did Jesus want to say through his last parable to the leaders of the Jews?
  - What does Jesus want to say to the leaders of the Christian church through this parable?
  - What does Jesus want to say to you personally through this parable?

### 34. THE WIDOW'S OFFERING (Luke 21:1-4)

**BACKGROUND:** There are many promises for widows and orphans in the Old Testament, for example [Psalms 10:14,17,18](#) and [Psalms 68:5](#). Presumably the widow of our text had heard these promises. Offerings were used for the building of the temple, which was completed AD 63 and destroyed AD 70 - about forty years after these events.

1. Why do people give offerings in all religions?
  - Mark in his version of this story lets us know that the treasury was in a very visible place ([Mark 12:41](#)). What influence does it have on the giver if other people will eventually know how much he has given?
  - What would this particular widow have thought had she known that Jesus was watching her carefully?
  
1. Jewish society of those days had neither a social security system, nor did it allow women to work outside home. Imagine that you had lost your husband and were trying to take care of your children in that situation. What would be the most difficult thing for you to handle?
  - If you were in a situation described above, for whom or for what cause could you give away your last penny?
  
1. What makes a person give to God "all he has to live on" (vs. 4b)? Think of various possibilities.
  
2. If God had forced the widow to give away the last of her money, what would she have thought about such a God?
  - How does the faith of these two people differ from each other: the one who offers to God while thankful for what he has got and the other who offers to God in order to get something from him?
  
1. What was the faith of this widow like?
  - How had this widow become convinced that God would take care of her children?
  - Is it difficult for you to believe that God will take care of you and your children economically also?
  
1. What had this widow received from God?
  - What have you got from God (compared to this widow)?
  
1. Do you think that the children of this widow went to bed hungry that night? Give your reasons.
  - Which do you think is more harmful for your children/ grandchildren: that they must suffer privation or that they get everything they wish to have?
  
1. What would God like to have you offer him or a suffering neighbor today? You can answer in your heart if you like.
  
2. What did this widow leave to her children as an inheritance?
  - Compare the inheritance that the rich of this text left to their children and that the widow left.

- What would you most like to leave to your children when you die?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Our sins are likened to an astronomical sum of money in the Bible - ten thousand talents. Each one of us who cannot pay the debt is thrown into jail (i.e. hell). When Jesus wanted to buy us free from this enormous debt he had to give away "all he had to live on" - and his own precious blood at that.

### 35. PETER DISOWNS HIS MASTER (Luke 22:31-33 and 54-62)

**BACKGROUND:** The leader should read [Matt.10:32-33](#) in order that everyone will understand what a grave sin it is to deny knowing Jesus before men.

1. If someone you love very much predicted that you would disassociate yourself with him/her on the same day, what would your reaction be?
  - Why couldn't Peter believe the prediction of Jesus in verse 34?
  
1. Why did Peter, unlike most of the other disciples, follow Jesus all the way to the courtyard of the high priest?
  
2. What was Peter afraid of when he disowned Jesus three times?
  - What would you have done if you had been in the place of Peter?
  - In what situation do you feel tempted to deny your Christian faith?
  
1. In vs.61 Jesus' farewell to Peter is described. What do you think Jesus wanted to say to his fallen disciple through his last look?
  - What made a grown man cry bitterly (vs. 62)?
  
1. What did Peter think at this point about the conversation he had had with Jesus earlier on the day (vs. 31-34)?
  - What do you think it meant to Peter to know that Jesus had prayed for him and was praying for him?
  
1. Earlier on, Peter had fiercely opposed the idea of Jesus being killed. What did he learn through this incident about why Jesus had to die?
  
2. How did this incident make Peter capable of strengthening his brothers?
  - How does our falling into sin make us capable of strengthening our brothers and sisters?
  
1. Jesus is looking at you at this moment in the same way he looked at Peter after his fall. What do his eyes say to you?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Peter disowned his Lord and Master, but was forgiven. Instead, Jesus had to experience being disowned by his Father while carrying the punishment of our cowardice to the cross.

## 36. THE GATES OF PARADISE ARE OPENED (Luke 23:32-43)

**BACKGROUND:** At the time of Jesus, people were crucified only for the gravest of crimes. We can therefore suppose that these two robbers had killed people for money or committed other grave crimes.

1. What might have made these two men start stealing and fighting etc? Think of various reasons.
  - These two men had mothers and probably wives as well. Imagine the everyday life of these women.
  - Why didn't the robbers stop before coming to this point?
  - Why don't we always stop the behavior we know is harmful to ourselves and to others?
  
1. The two robbers saw the crucifixion of Jesus closer than anybody else. What in Jesus' words and actions made an impression on one of them (vs. 34-38)?
  - These two had been living in the world of hatred and revenge. What did they think of Jesus' prayer in vs.34?
  
1. What made one of the robbers conscious of his sins?
  - What is it that makes us admit our sins instead of defending them?
  
1. What made one of the robbers believe that Jesus was a king (vs. 37,38,42)?
  - What kind of a king was Jesus at that moment, compared to other kings?
  
1. Why did the other robber believe that Jesus was neither Christ nor a king?
  - Why does consciousness of sin always precede true faith?
  
1. In vs.42 we find a short prayer: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Why didn't this robber ask Jesus to let him into that kingdom?
  - Why is it a consolation to know that someone dear to us remembers us when we are suffering?
  - Why does the robber want Jesus to remember him, a murderer, when he will be suffering his punishment in hell?
  - In what situation could you imagine yourself praying this prayer?
  
1. When was the robber saved?
  - What happened to the sins of this man?
  
1. Life as a Christian was very short for this robber, just about six hours. Do you think he was happy or unhappy during his last hours?
  - Do you think this man hated somebody at the moment of his death?
  - Humanly speaking the robber had ruined his life. And yet, how has his life proved significant?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** The gates of Paradise had been closed to sinners since the day of Adam and Eve. Now the gate was opened to a murderer. At the same time it was closed to Jesus, who had to step inside the gates of hell.

### 37. ON THE ROAD TO EMMAUS (Luke 24:13-35)

**BACKGROUND:** Emmaus was a village about 11 kilometers from Jerusalem. It takes at least two hours to walk this distance. Mary, the wife of Clopas, is mentioned as one of the women standing near the cross when Jesus died (John 19:25). She might have been the wife of Cleopas of this text.

1. If you have ever lost a person you loved, you know what kind of thoughts, feelings and regrets one is sitting with after the funeral. Tell about them.
  - Jesus had died two days earlier in a very cruel way. What do you think had been most difficult for Cleopas and his friend during these days?
1. Why did Jesus first allow these two mourning men speak out their sorrow (vs. 15-17)?
  - What would have happened if Jesus had started his explanation of the Bible right away?
  - Jesus knows all our sorrows already - why does he want to hear them from our own mouths?
1. How did the faith of these two men change after the death of Jesus (vs. 19-21)?
  - Why didn't these two believe what the women and others told them about the resurrection (vs. 22-24)?
1. What is the difference between the interpretation Jesus gives about his own death and the interpretation Cleopas and his friend give about it (vs. 19-21 and 25-27)?
2. Why didn't Cleopas understand from Moses and the Prophets (i.e. the Bible) that it was necessary for Christ to suffer and die?
3. Why did Jesus act as if he were going farther (vs. 28)?
4. Why didn't the two men realize who Jesus was until he was breaking the bread?
5. What made these two men walk the 11 kilometers back to Jerusalem in the darkness?
6. In our day, many people who call themselves Christians don't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. What kind of God do these people believe in?
  - Why can't a person be a Christian, who doesn't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** Jesus broke the bread in the house of Cleopas with his hands marked by scars. The two men might have recognized Jesus by these scars. We can meet the risen Christ in the same way every time we take part in the Lord's Supper.

### 38. TO ALL NATIONS (Luke 24:44-53)

1. According to Jesus, what is the message his disciples should preach and where should they preach it?
  - Why would Jesus give such a task to 11 uneducated men?
  
1. Which things opened the minds of the disciples to understand the Old Testament?
  - What must happen in order for us to understand the Old Testament?
  
1. Jesus calls his disciples as witnesses (vs. 48). What do they have to witness about?
  - What should we witness about and to whom?
  
1. The word "witness" could also be translated as "martyr". What made the disciples ready even to die for the sake of the gospel?
  
2. Jesus promises his followers power from on high. Why is this power indispensable for the witnesses of Jesus?
  - Do you think you have already received power from on high and if you have, how?
  
1. Paul, the greatest missionary ever, describes this power from on high like this: (The leader should read [Romans 1:16](#) and [2.Cor.12:9-10](#).) Discuss: how does the power of God differ from the usual meaning of the word "power"?
  
2. According to this text, what are the terms of becoming a missionary?
  
3. Why didn't Jesus stay on this earth in bodily form?
  - How did the ascension happen?
  - What made the disciples happy even though their Lord had been taken away from them?
  
1. Discuss: was it as easy for the disciples to communicate with Jesus after his ascension, as it was while he was still on earth?
  - How often are you conscious that Jesus is near you as your invisible friend?

**GLAD TIDINGS:** As to what Jesus is now doing in heaven, see [Hebrews 7:25](#).

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