

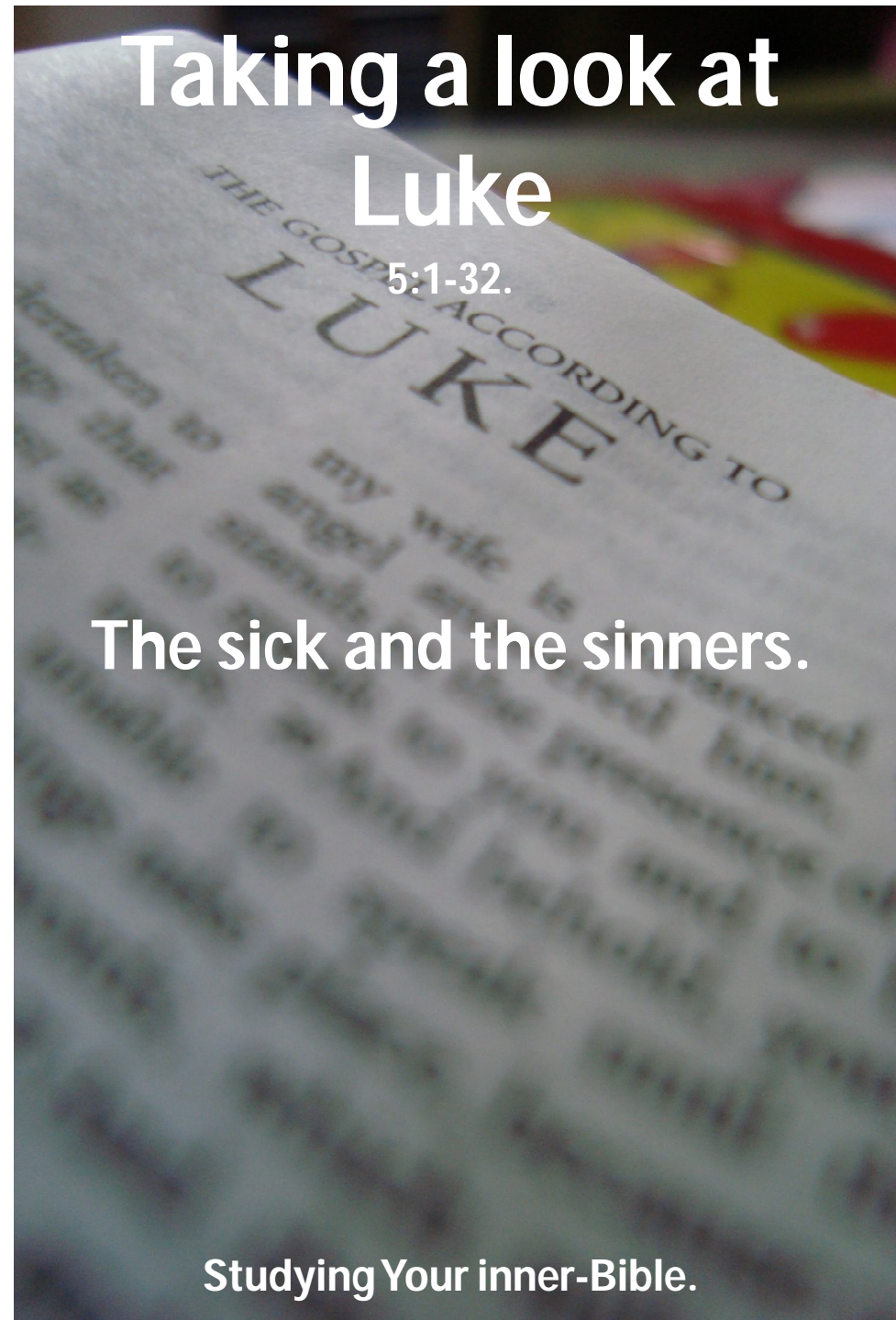
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Luke 5:1-32

1 On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, 2 and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him. 12 While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you will, you can make me clean." 13 And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. 14 And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." 15 But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. 16 But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

17 On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. 18 And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, 19 but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. 20 And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." 21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." 25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. 26 And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today." 27 After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." 28 And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. 29 And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. 30 And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" 31 And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Four stories: one at a time.

There are four main stories in this passage in Luke:

- Jesus and Peter (plus James and John);
- Jesus and the man with leprosy;
- Jesus and the man who was paralysed (and the Pharisees);
- Jesus and Levi.

Questions:

1. What similarities do you see between the stories?

In the first and fourth, Jesus invites and they stay with him; in the second and third, Jesus welcomes, helps and then tells them to go home.

In all four, Jesus does not turn people away.

In all four, he is mainly dealing with individuals.

In all four, he exercises his authority.

2. What is the main theme do you see arising out of these four stories?

There might be variations depending on who is reading the text, but the theme taken in this study is, "Who Jesus accepts and how Jesus accepts".

3. Which verse(s) in this section of Scripture sum up all the stories?

Vv 31-32: And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

In the main part of this study we will be looking at each story one at a time to see how Jesus relates to individuals.

Jesus: not just religious. (vv1-11)

On one occasion, while the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he was standing by the lake of Gennesaret, and he saw two boats by the lake, but the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 Getting into one of the boats, which was Simon's, he asked him to put out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the people from the boat. 4 And when he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch." 5 And Simon answered, "Master, we toiled all night and took nothing! But at your word I will let down the nets." 6 And when they had done this, they enclosed a large number of fish, and their nets were breaking. 7 They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." 9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish that they had taken, 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." 11 And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him.

- **This story is mainly about a change in Peter.**

Questions:

1. What was Peter's attitude toward Jesus in verses 1-5?

He was respectful of Jesus, willingly serving him, even willing to obey him.

2. What was Peter's attitude toward Jesus in verses 8-11?

Peter was astonished (v9), aware of his sinfulness (v8), afraid (v10), and willing to give up everything to follow him (v11).

3. **Verse 9 says that the change in Peter came about because of the miraculous catch of fish. Why would that have changed Peter? (After all, it didn't change the tax collectors or lepers or other people nearby).**

It would seem that Peter was happy to allow Jesus to teach and preach and to operate in the religious realm, and he would respect and respond to that as he needed to. But when Jesus' miracles jumped out of the religious realm and into Peter's life of fishing, Peter realized that Jesus' authority extended over him and all he did. That meant that he could not compartmentalise Jesus any longer; that Jesus' teaching applied to him; that he and his sins were not safely hidden like he thought they were.

But it is more than even that. Peter's mindset was that Jesus would "use" him, but wouldn't want to "be with" him. When the miracle brought Jesus closer, he protested, saying, in essence, "Light and dark don't mix; holiness and sin don't mix; I will soil you, Lord. Go away. You will compromise your goodness by associating with me!"

4. **How did Jesus respond?**

Jesus reassured Peter that he did want to be with him and had things for him to do. Jesus undermined the mindset that says, "God won't want me because I am too [put your own word in there]." He illustrated vv31-32.

5. **How does this apply to the Church/our lives?**

In the Church: We need to remember that the gospel applies to real people's real lives, not just Church meetings. With that in mind, our ministries need to move

out of "the religious realm" and demonstrate the love/power/compassion/reality of God where people live.

In our lives a) Do you compartmentalise Jesus in your life? Do you do things for Jesus, but refuse to let Jesus do things for you? Are there places where you are safe from Jesus?

b) Do you believe that Jesus wants to be with you - sinful, stubborn, ashamed, dirty, lustful, tired, failed and any other unacceptable thing you might be - you? He does.

Applying this to others.

Easier said than done.

We so easily fall into the trap of thinking that people are worth our time and attention depending on who they are, what they've done or what they've got. Even when we accept that Jesus came to heal the sick and call sinners, we still find ourselves shying away from "contamination" from those we think are contaminated.

Think of a person or people that make you cringe, or that you consider unacceptable. We all have someone. Now ask God to show you how sinful and unacceptable you are to him (and he still wants to be with you!), and how loved and sought after those-people-you-have-problems-with are by him...so loved and sought after that the death Jesus died on the cross that bought you is the same death Jesus died to buy them.

Ask for God's Spirit to make that very real to you.

He wants to. (vv12-16)

While he was in one of the cities, there came a man full of leprosy. And when he saw Jesus, he fell on his face and begged him, "Lord, if you commanded will, you can make me clean." And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him. And he charged him to tell no one, but "go and show yourself to the priest, and make an offering for your cleansing, as Moses commanded, for a proof to them." But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him

and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Lepers were people who had contagious skin diseases (it's uncertain whether it necessarily corresponds to what we call leprosy today). According to God's Law, they were to be separated and considered unclean in order to prevent the spread of the disease, and they themselves were to call out and warn people away if they came too close.

Questions:

1. What was the attitude of the man with leprosy toward Jesus?

One of complete faith that Jesus could heal him.

2. What was the one condition in the man's mind that would determine whether he would get healed or not?

Whether it was Jesus' will or not.

3. What was Jesus' response?

To touch the untouchable and heal the man. In doing so, Jesus healed not just the disease, but cleansed him so that he was no longer an outcast.

4. What is the significance of Jesus telling the man to tell no one what he had done?

It shows that when Jesus said, "I will", it was not because Jesus had some bigger plan, but purely because he wanted to heal the man.

Why the plea for secrecy?

This is not the first time Jesus asks people (or demons) to keep his miracles or identity quiet. Why does he do that?

There are a few reasons:

1. As this passage shows, one of the reasons is so that Jesus wouldn't be restricted in his ministry (cf. Mark 1:40-45).
2. Another reason is because people had an expectation of what the Messiah would do, and he knew that they would miss the true message he was trying to communicate and do if they identified him as the Messiah too early on (which is what they tried to do anyway! Cf. John 6:15).
3. One more reason is that if people knew who he was, he would not have been crucified, which was the whole purpose of his life (Luke 9:21-22; cf. 1 Cor 2:8).

5. What was the man's response?

He was more excited about being healed than obeying Jesus (see Mark 1:45 - he was the one who told people).

6. How does this apply to our lives?

The Bible shows us that Jesus doesn't heal everybody physically for a variety of reasons (e.g. Mark 6:5), but what this passage shows is that he is willing to do so and will heal even those who don't come to him with the right motives.

Do you come to Jesus believing that he wants to touch you, quite apart from whether your motives are right?

Are your motives right? Are you more interested in getting from Jesus than in obeying Jesus? Do you want what Jesus gives more than Jesus himself? (If we are honest, most of us struggle with this!)

To heal or to forgive? (vv17-26)

On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal. And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him

before Jesus, but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you." And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today."

1. What was the attitude of the paralysed man toward Jesus?

There's no definite clue, but it would seem that the emphasis on his friends' faith means he himself was unable to exercise faith for healing. Certainly he was unable to approach Jesus on his own.

2. How did the man get to the point where Jesus ministered to him?

Unusually, it was the faith of the man's friends that Jesus responded to. Elsewhere the Bible teaches there is no forgiveness of sins without the faith of the individual, so it would seem that the words of forgiveness spoken by Jesus imparted faith to the paralysed man (cf. Rom 10:17).

3. Why did Jesus say, "Man, your sins are forgiven you", and not, "Rise and walk"?

Again, there is no clear answer. It is possible that it was a set-up in order to reveal the heart of the Pharisees, but my guess is that the man's faith was not mentioned because he had none due to feelings of guilt.

We shy away today from associating sickness and disability with specific sin in a person's life, but the Bible is clear that there are certainly times (not always) when there is a connection (cf. James 5:15). Whether that was the cause of this man's paralysis we don't know, but it may be that he linked his paralysis to his own sin, which is why he did not have faith to be healed.

Therefore, Jesus, seeing this, would have been addressing his deepest need, which then allowed him to have faith that he would be healed.

How the Pharisees were right!

This is the place in Luke where the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law start getting in Jesus' face. Note that they make no negative comments about the healings and exorcisms and no negative comments about Jesus' teaching. It is only when Jesus makes this gob-smacking comment that they begin to question Jesus' credentials:

"Man, your sins are forgiven you."

Now, take pity on these guys. If we were to hear a charismatic teacher who performed undeniable miracles and healed multitudes of people say, "I created you," (or something else that only God could say), wouldn't we be questioning his credentials, too?

And, after all, the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law were right: healing the sick is one thing; the forgiveness of sins is another! No one in the crowd went home filled with awe and glorifying God because the man's sins were forgiven, they went home amazed because he was healed from his paralysis. The Pharisees were the only ones who picked up on the truly amazing thing that Jesus did that day - he forgave a man his sins.

4. How does this apply to our lives?

a) We are able to bring people to the point where Jesus meets them - mainly through prayers of faith. In fact, isn't that what we do when we pray for any non-Christian friend or relative? (Note: Our faith doesn't guarantee their salvation).

b) When it comes to sickness and sin, sin is the deeper issue. While Jesus doesn't always heal physical problems (he didn't look as though he was going to here!) he will forgive sin if we look to him in faith.

Aware of your need? (vv27-32)

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything, he rose and followed him.

And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance."

Tax Collectors were rejected from mainstream society. They were considered traitors, worse than murderers for collaborating with the Roman Empire and stealing money off their own people. They usually lived excessive, lavish and sinful lives.

1. What was Levi's attitude toward Jesus?

It seems unlikely that Levi knew nothing of Jesus. Jesus had been making a name for himself all over Israel, and even Levi would have heard about his miracles and

maybe some of his teaching. Like Peter, he was probably fully aware of Jesus' status as a holy man, but had no hope that he would be accepted by Jesus considering his profession, real sin and reputation.

2. What caused Levi to get up and follow Jesus?

Levi found his rejection spoken to in Jesus' command to follow him. Again, Jesus' acceptance of people has nothing to do with whether someone is good or not/healthy or not; instead, it's to do with whether they are able to acknowledge the truth of where they stand in relation to God. (Again, illustrating vv31-32).

3. Why did Levi make him a great feast and invite all his scumbag friends?

Levi implicitly knew that if Jesus accepted him, then he would accept all the other people who were like him.

4. Why did the Pharisees and their scribes talk to Jesus' disciples and not Jesus?

It may be that they thought Jesus was too far gone and were trying to "save" his disciples from following him. But in talking to Jesus' disciples instead of Jesus, they were illustrating the other side of vv31-32 - those who are well (as far as they are concerned) won't bother talking to Jesus. The righteous don't see the need for the ministry that Jesus gave to people.

5. How does this apply to our lives?

We need to constantly remember that apart from Jesus we are sick and sinful. Only that way will we keep going to Jesus.

We need to extend Jesus' acceptance of us to others.

What does this mean?

1. In light of these four stories, what can we say about who Jesus responds to?

Jesus responds to people who see their need for him, regardless whether their motives are right or not.

2. What can we say about how Jesus draws people?

In every instance, Jesus pinpoints and speaks/acts into the place in a person's life that needs his input the most:

- *Peter needed to see Jesus' authority break into his world of fishing;*
- *The leper needed healing and cleansing;*
- *The paralytic needed forgiveness of sins;*
- *Levi needed acceptance and restoration into God's people.*

People then respond to him out of that need (vv31-32).

3. What does this mean for our lives?

We can approach Jesus no matter what, no matter when, no matter what we've done, no matter where we are, no matter who we are. As long as we want to go to him, we can.

We also need to be ready for him to put his finger on areas in our lives where we have the greatest need, whether we are aware of it or not.

4. How does this inform our relationships with others?

The more we understand that Jesus accepts us, the more we accept others. If we don't accept others, we still don't fully grasp God's grace for us. How do we change? See Applying this to others, under "Jesus is not just religious".

How to use this Bible Study.

Here is a suggested format:

Context: Go over what has happened in the gospel story before the text you are studying.

Overview: Either read the whole passage, or briefly explain what the passage is about.

Focus: Talk about how you are going to approach the passage, what the controlling verse or idea is, and what sort of questions you will be asking of the text.

Study: Go through the questions, using the answers provided as a help. Don't be too loyal to this booklet. It may be that the group sees something more relevant in the text and takes the study in a different direction. In that case, just use this as something to fall back on.

Sing: As seen in the study on Luke 2:1-21, one of the biblical ways to respond to God's word is to sing, so pick one or two songs (or more if you feel so inclined) that are related to the content of the study. (E.g. when looking at the King and the kingdom of God in Luke 4:31-44, perhaps use *Majesty* by Jack Hayford and *This Kingdom* by Geoff Bullock).

Pray: Often the Bible will bring up certain issues for people that require repentance, forgiveness, encouragement. Make time for people to (voluntarily) discuss these issues and to pray for them if they are willing.