

Witnesses of These Things
Luke 24:44–53

Introduction: As we come to the end of Luke, we have to bid goodbye to the good doctor. Evidently Paul needs him in Ephesus, or is it Rome? Nonetheless, he has put down his pen for the moment and is going to tend to the apostle, journeying with him throughout the Empire. But he's leaving his book with us, to read, to believe and to live in. Will it make the difference he intends in Theophilus, and us? I hope so.

What has happened so far?

The disciples have seen and now believe Jesus is risen from the dead. What does resurrection produce in the life of those who have seen Him? This text answers that question.

- They just don't believe.
- Nor do they go about their normal business.
- They become bold witnesses.
- That changes everything for them and us.

First: The Risen Christ Re-Opens the Scriptures to Them (vv. 44–45)

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled. Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures,

IMP: (I'm referring to Jesus as "Christ" here because he is the "Christ," the anointed, promised Messiah whom the Bible centers on as it tells us the story of God, us, the world and everything).

Here, Jesus reminds them of His Emmaus words and says: "*Everything written about me... must be fulfilled.*" And then, "*He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.*"

John 5:39 - *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me,*

This means the resurrection is not an isolated event. It is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament and part of the grand narrative of what God is doing in the world. It also means the Bible doesn't just detail history. It predicts the future. And all of it comes true. The Bible isn't just a history book. It's the story of all things, for all time.

APP: Take a moment to think about that. God has kept every word he has ever spoken. How does that effect you concerning his promises, his commands and his warnings. Are you taking the Word seriously? Is it having a daily effect in your life?

Stop for a moment and think about this word from Paul –

2 Corinthians 3:14–18 – *For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts [the Jews]. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, [becomes a Christian] the veil is removed.*

Who does that? Who removes that veil, let's me see the Bible as God's Word?

¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.^[1] For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

We do not arrive at a knowledge of God or love for Jesus by ignoring the Bible. We come to see Jesus and live the life he has called us to live, as witnesses to his story, as the Scripture is opened. (It's one reason why, after Luke, we are studying "The Bible-Centered Life" from Psalm 119.

How should we respond?

- Refuse a purely transitional approach to Scripture ("I read it, I get this...")
- Read the Bible looking for Jesus. This turns information into devotion
- Ask God to open your understanding before you read.
- Obey what you read. Understanding results in enlightenment. Disobedience in...

Second: The Risen Christ Defines the Message (vv. 46–47)

And said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

For a second time now since his resurrection, Jesus uses the whole Bible to point to himself and connect the redemptive dots for the disciples, so they understand what comes next.

They are the NT part of God's grand redemptive scheme;

- begun before the foundation of the world,
- acted out in the OT through Israel in the Middle East and now
- bursting in the whole world with the good news of God's salvation for anyone – Jew or Gentile – who repents and trusts Jesus as Savior!

The incarnated Jesus, nor the disciples invented this message. It is revealed because it was fixed before the world was created. (Everything in God's world is on schedule).

- a) Christ's work - suffering and resurrection
- b) Our response - repentance
- c) God's promise – forgiveness

This is the gospel in its most basic form. But no part of those essential elements can be left out.

- The cross without repentance becomes sentiment.
- Repentance without forgiveness becomes despair.
- The resurrection without both becomes meaningless.

Isaiah 53: 5-6 - *But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

Romans 4:25 – He was “*who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.*”

Acts 2:38 - *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

We do not have the freedom to redefine this all-important message. We must faithfully preach it (and the world is no more pluralistic than it has ever been).

- Hold together repentance and forgiveness together as equally important truths
- Do not soften repentance into vague spirituality. It is the first word in the Gospel.
- Do not offer forgiveness without the cross

Acts 4:12 - *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*

Third: The Risen Christ Sends Witnesses – That’s You and Me (v. 48)

You are witnesses of these things

If we claim to be witnesses, we must be witnessing. Whoa! That’s simple and life-changing.

A witness:

- speaks what he or she has seen and heard
- does not create the message
- testifies to reality of what has happened, as it happened.

The disciples, not we, are not philosophers or innovators. They are eyewitnesses.

Acts 1:8 - *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*

1 John 1:1–3 - *...that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you*

2 Corinthians 5:20 - *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.*

IMP: You may not be an eyewitness of the resurrection, but you are a witness to its reality. How can we do this?

- Speak clearly about Christ in everyday conversations
- Share what you know to be true, not what sounds impressive
- See your life as positioned for witness and share God's grace and goodness to you
- In effect, we are all everyday missionaries

Four: The Risen Christ Provides Power for the Mission (v. 49)

*And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you.
But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.*

This is an incredible thought. The power to make our witnessing effective is the same power that resurrected Jesus from the dead. Wow. If that power can raise a physically dead man, it can raise spiritually dead people. That's a glorious thought.

So, God's mission and our witness require power that does not originate in us.

"Clothed with power" points to:

- the Holy Spirit
- divine enablement for witness

The command to wait shows us that urgency does not replace dependence (Wow. That's a thought!)

When Israel returned to the Promised Land to rebuild the Temple, God reminded the people through *Zechariah 4:6 - Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts.*

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

The mission is not sustained by our energy or our strategy alone.

- Pray specifically for a Spirit-empowered witness as you go about your life
- Depend on God before and as you take advantage of divinely appointed moments
- Don't be discouraged. Recognize if and/or where you are operating in your own strength

Fifth: The Ascended Christ Secures Joyful Worship (vv. 50-53)

And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. ⁵¹ While he blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven. ⁵² And they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, ⁵³ and were continually in the temple blessing God.

This, friends, could be a sermon in and of itself.

- He blessed them. (Walk through the OT with that)
- He went to Heaven and is now seated at God's right hand of authority and power
- They worshipped him
- They returned to Jerusalem with GREAT joy
- Their joy overflowed into every moment and in every place – in this case, the very place that crucified Jesus.

It may seem like it, but the ascension does not create distance between us and God. It insures Christ is with us by His Spirit.

The result, according to these verses is:

- worship
- joy
- continual devotion
- mission

Psalm 110:1 & - 5-7 - The LORD [Yahweh/the Father] says to my Lord [Adonai/Jesus]: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.... The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. He will drink from the brook by the way; therefore he will lift up his head."

Ephesians 1:21 – Christ is "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come."

Hebrews 7:25 – Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them.

Friends, the Christian life is not a burden. It is sustained by joy that is rooted in a resurrected, exalted, reigning and returning Christ. What we need to do is live every moment, both the joyful and sad, in that reality. That will change everything for us.

- Let worship become a daily rhythm, not a weekly event. Hallelujah!
- Cultivate joy rooted in who Christ is now and where you are now
- Let praise be the rhythm of your life.

Conclusion: Think about this -

The disciples:

- understand the Scriptures
- receive the message
- become witnesses
- depend on power
- live in joy

This is the path Luke sets before Theophilus and us.

So, what about us? About you? About me?

- We have heard the message of Christ.
- He has called us to bear witness to Him.
- Not in our own strength, but in the power He provides.
- And as we do, our lives will be marked not only by obedience, but by joy in the mission of the risen and ascended King.

Now, let's get out there and do that!



Observation

1. According to verses 44–45, what does Jesus say about the Law, Prophets, and Psalms, and what action does He take for the disciples?
2. What three core elements of the message does Jesus define in verses 46–47?
3. In verse 48, how does Jesus describe the identity of the disciples?
4. What promise does Jesus give in verse 49, and what instruction accompanies it?
5. In verses 50–53, how do the disciples respond after Jesus ascends?
6. What repeated emphasis do you see throughout this passage regarding Scripture, message, mission, and response? (that’s an important question for each CG member)

Interpretation

7. What does it mean that Jesus “opened their minds to understand the Scriptures”? Why is that significant for how we understand the Bible?
8. Why is it important that the resurrection is presented as the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament rather than an isolated event?
9. Why must repentance and forgiveness both remain central to the gospel message? What happens if one is removed or softened?
10. What defines a true “witness” according to verse 48 and the sermon explanation?
11. Why does Jesus command the disciples to wait for power instead of immediately going out? What does that reveal about the nature of sharing the gospel?
12. How does the ascension of Christ lead to joy rather than fear or confusion in the disciples?

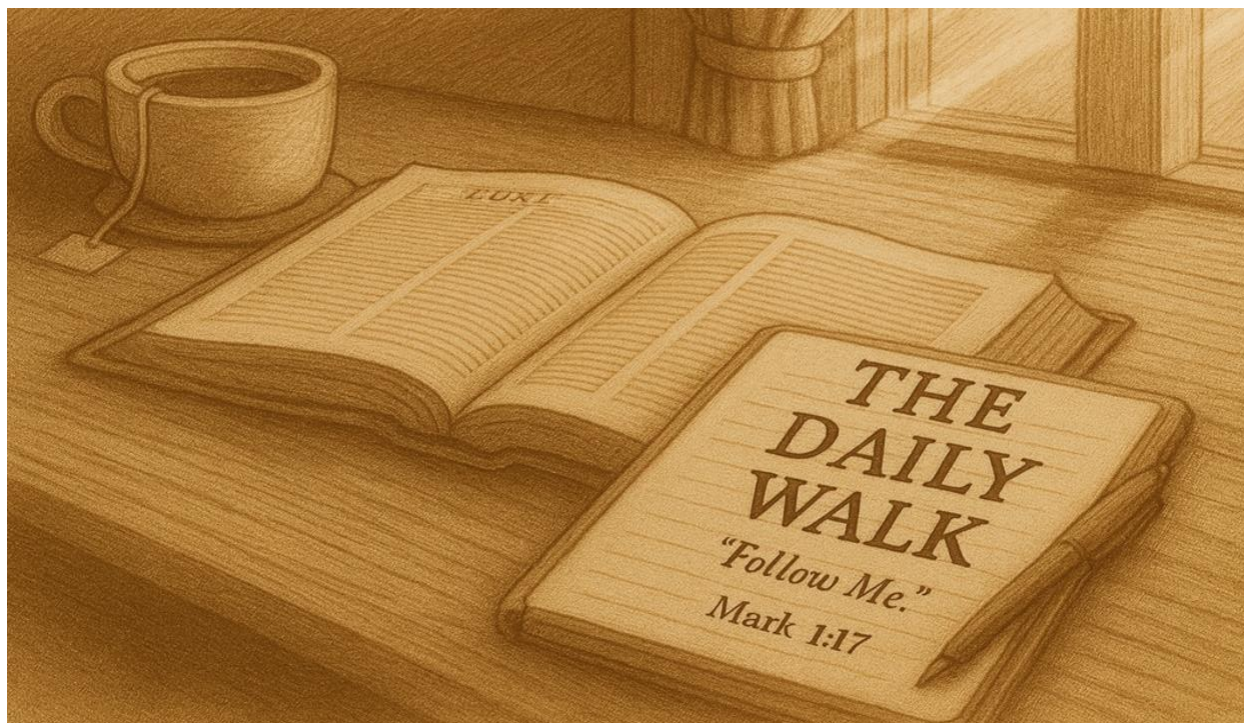
Correlation

13. How does Luke 24:44–45 connect with John 5:39 about the purpose of Scripture?

14. How does Acts 1:8 expand what it means to be a witness?
15. How do Isaiah 53 and Romans 4:25 help explain the suffering and resurrection of Christ?
16. How does Zechariah 4:6 (“not by might... but by my Spirit”) deepen our understanding of verse 49?
17. How does Psalm 110:1 and Hebrews 7:25 help us understand Christ’s current position and work after His ascension?
18. How does 2 Corinthians 3:14–18 explain what must happen for someone to truly understand Scripture?

Application

19. Where in your life are you treating Scripture as information rather than as something that must shape your life? This is a great conversation question.
20. Are you holding together repentance and forgiveness in your understanding and sharing of the gospel, or have you emphasized one over the other?
21. If you claim to be a witness, where is that actually showing up in your everyday life right now? With whom?
22. In what ways are you relying on your own strength instead of the Spirit’s power when it comes to living or sharing your faith?
23. What would it look like this week to take one intentional step toward being a clearer witness to Christ in your daily context?
24. To whom or in what context might you share your faith?
25. Is your life marked more by pressure and obligation, or by the joy described in verses 52–53? What is causing that?
26. What is one concrete way you can cultivate personal daily worship and awareness of the risen, ascended, reigning Christ this week?



Monday

Read: Luke 24:44–45

Think. Have you ever noticed that Jesus does not give His disciples a new message after the resurrection? He brings them back to the OT they already had. Then He does something they could not do for themselves. He opens their minds to understand what it all meant. The same Bible they had heard for years suddenly comes alive because Jesus makes it alive to them. This tells us something essential. Understanding Scripture is not merely the result of effort. It is the gift of God. Christ reveals Himself through the written Word, and without Him, the Bible can be read but not truly seen.

Reflect. You can spend time in the Bible and still miss Christ. That is not a reading problem. It is a seeing problem. Where have you been approaching Scripture as information rather than revelation? Where have you assumed your effort alone would produce understanding?

Apply. Before you read Scripture today, (you probably have already read it for today), pause and ask God to open your mind. Then read slowly, asking one question: where do I see Christ? Let your reading move from information to devotion.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have given your Word, but I confess that I often approach it casually or quickly. I do not always see what is there. Open my mind to understand the Scriptures. By your Spirit, remove the dullness of my heart and give me clarity to see Christ in your Word. I ask this through Jesus, who reveals Himself in the Scriptures and now leads me into truth. Amen.

Tuesday
Read: Luke 24:46–47

Think. What message does the risen Christ give His disciples? It is not complicated, but it is now complete. Christ suffered. Christ rose. Repentance must be proclaimed. Forgiveness is offered. This is the gospel. Nothing can be removed without losing its power. As I mentioned in the sermon, the cross without repentance becomes sentiment. Repentance without forgiveness becomes despair. The resurrection without both becomes meaningless. The gospel is fixed because it is revealed.

Reflect. Where are you tempted to reshape the message of the gospel? Do you soften repentance? Do you assume forgiveness without the cross? The gospel you believe will be the gospel you live and share.

Apply. Write out the gospel in your own words today using those three elements. Then think of one person who needs to hear it and begin praying for an opportunity to share it clearly.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have revealed the gospel clearly, yet I often drift toward a softer version that requires less of me and others. Forgive me for reshaping what you have fixed. By your Spirit, give me clarity and courage to hold together repentance and forgiveness as you have revealed them. Through Jesus, who suffered, rose, making repentance possible and now offering forgiveness, make me faithful to your message. Amen.

Wednesday
Read: Luke 24:48

Think. “You are witnesses of these things.” Jesus does not ask the disciples to become something they are not. That’s a great and important thought. He declares what they are. A witness speaks what he has seen and heard. He does not create the message. He delivers it. Your Christian life is not about innovation. It is about testimony.

Reflect. If you are a witness, are you witnessing? That question is simple, but it exposes a great deal. Where has your faith become private instead of proclaimed?

Apply. Share one truth about Jesus in a natural conversation today. Do not aim to impress someone with your Bible knowledge, just share something personal.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have made me a witness, but I often remain silent. I sometimes fear people more than I fear failing to speak of Jesus.. By your Spirit, give me boldness and clarity to speak what I know to be true. Through Jesus, the most faithful witness, who has saved me and sent me, make me faithful in my witness. Amen.

Thursday
Read: Luke 24:49

Think. Jesus commands the disciples to wait. They must have been intrigued. The mission is urgent, but they must not go without power. This reveals a principle we sometimes resist. Urgency does not replace dependence. The work of God cannot be accomplished by human strength.

Reflect. Where are you operating in your own strength? Where have you replaced dependence with effort?

Apply. Pause before a task or conversation today and consciously depend on the Spirit. Ask for help before acting or speaking.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, I often rely on my own strength and wonder why I feel weak. Forgive me for acting without dependence on you. By your Spirit, clothe me with power for what you have called me to do. Through Jesus, who lived in your Spirit and now empowers me to bear fruit, teach me to depend on you. Amen.

Friday
Read: Luke 24:50–53

Think. The disciples leave the ascension with joy. That is not what you would expect. Christ has departed, yet they still rejoice. Why? Because the ascension is not Jesus's absence. It is his established authority. If it is even possible, this is greater than Jesus' personal presence. Christ is reigning, interceding, and blessing accordingly.

Reflect. What is shaping your emotional life right now? Circumstances or Christ? Joy rooted in Christ is not fragile because it is not dependent on what changes. That's a hard statement but it is true. Look up more than you look around, otherwise your joy will be stolen by the world.

Apply. Spend some time worshipping intentionally today. But wait. Not just in a moment but throughout the day. Let your awareness of Christ's reign shape the way you live today.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, I confess that my joy often rises and falls with circumstances. I forget that Christ is reigning *even now*. By your Spirit, root my joy in who Christ is and what He is doing. Through Jesus, who reigns and intercedes for me, make my life a steady expression of worship. Amen.



Monday

Read: Luke 24:44–45

Think. Have you noticed how Jesus does not give the disciples a new message after the resurrection? He brings them back to the Scriptures they already had, then does something they could not do for themselves. He opens their minds. The same Word they had heard before now becomes clear because Christ makes it clear. That matters for your relationship. Spiritual understanding is not achieved merely through effort or discussion. It is given. And when it is given, it shapes not just what you know, but how you live together under God's Word.

Reflect. Where in your relationship are you reading Scripture together but not truly seeing Christ? Where have you been relying on your shared effort instead of shared dependence on God?

Apply. Set aside time to read a short passage together today. Before you read, ask God to open your understanding. Afterward, answer one question together: what does this show us about Christ, and how should it shape the way we relate to one another?

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have given us your Word, yet we often approach it as though understanding depends on us. We confess that we can read without truly seeing. By your Spirit, open our minds together so that we see Christ clearly and respond to Him faithfully. Through Jesus, who reveals Himself in the Scriptures and unites us in truth, shape our relationship by your Word. Amen

Tuesday
Read: Luke 24:46–47

Think. Jesus defines the message His people are to proclaim. It is not ours to shape. Christ suffered. Christ rose. Repentance and forgiveness are to be proclaimed. This is not only the message you share with others. It is the message that must continually shape your relationship. A couple does not move forward spiritually by assuming the gospel, but by living inside it.

Reflect. Where in your relationship have you separated repentance from forgiveness? Are there places where sin is minimized instead of confessed, or where forgiveness is expected without honest repentance? This is extremely important for your relationship as a couple.

Apply. Take time to ask one another this question: is there anything I need to repent of in how I have treated you? Then respond with honest confession and real forgiveness. Do not rush this. This is how the gospel takes root in your relationship on a regular basis.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have made the gospel clear, yet we confess that we often resist its full work in our relationship. We often avoid repentance or we sometimes withhold forgiveness. By your Spirit, make us honest about our sin and quick to extend grace. Through Jesus, who suffered for our sin and secured our forgiveness, shape our relationship by the truth of the gospel. Amen.

Wednesday
Read: Luke 24:48

Think. “You are witnesses of these things.” Jesus does not give the disciples an option. Instead, he gives them an identity. A witness speaks what is true about what has happened. That applies not only individually, but together. Your relationship is not only for your mutual benefit. It positions your family as a witness to God’s grace.

Reflect. If your relationship is meant to bear witness to Christ, what does it currently say about Him? Where does your shared life reflect the gospel, and where does it obscure it?

Apply. Identify one person or couple in your life who needs to hear the gospel or see it lived out. Pray for them together and look for one intentional way this week to engage them with the truth of Christ.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, you have made us witnesses, yet we often live as though our faith is private, just between us. We forget that our life together is meant to point to Christ. By your Spirit, give us clarity and boldness to speak and live the gospel together as a couple. Through Jesus, who has saved us and sent us, make our relationship a faithful witness to your truth. Amen.

Thursday
Read: Luke 24:49

Think. Jesus tells the disciples to wait for power. That is difficult for us to hear. We want to move quickly, fix things, improve things, act. Both husbands and wives are guilty of this. But Jesus makes it clear that what God calls us to cannot be sustained by what we naturally have. Your relationship cannot thrive on shared effort alone. It requires shared dependence on the Holy Spirit.

Reflect. Where are you relying on your own strength in your marriage relationship? Where are you trying to produce what only God can give? It is exhausting, isn't it?

Apply. Before addressing a challenge or making a decision this week, pause together and pray specifically for the Spirit's help in your relationship. Make your dependence on the Holy Spirit verbal and visible, never assumed.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, we confess that we often rely on our own strength instead of depending on you. We try to manage our relationship rather than entrust it to you. By your Spirit, give us the power we do not have and the humility to depend on you. Through Jesus, who sustains us, teach us to walk in reliance on your power. Amen.

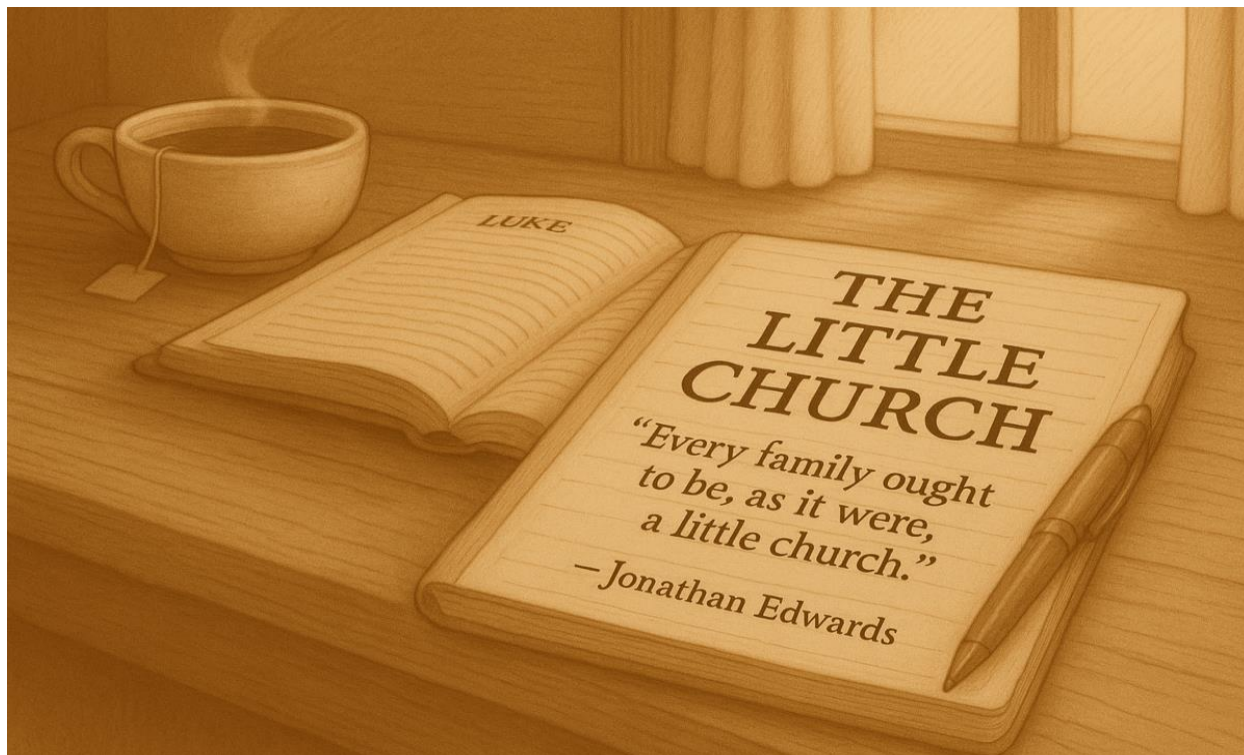
Friday
Read: Luke 24:50–53

Think. The disciples respond to the ascension with joy and worship. That is not because life has gotten easy, but because Christ is now reigning. The ascension does not remove Him from their lives. It establishes His authority over them and the world into which he sends them. A relationship rooted in Christ's reign is not fragile because it is not dependent on circumstances.

Reflect. What is shaping the tone of your relationship right now? Pressure, routine, frustration, or the reality that Christ is reigning and present with you?

Apply. Set aside time to worship together this week. Not out of routine, but intentionally. Speak about who Christ is to each of you and what He is doing in each of your lives. This will help anchor your joy in Jesus.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, we confess that our joy often depends on each other or circumstances instead of Christ. We lose sight of His reign. By your Spirit, root our joy in who Jesus is and what He is doing now. Through Jesus, who reigns and intercedes for us, shape our relationship into one marked by worship and joy. Amen.



Monday

Read: Luke 24:44–45

Think. Did you notice that Jesus helped His friends understand the Bible? They had heard it before, but now they could really see what it meant. Jesus opened their minds. That means we need His help too. We don't just read the Bible. We ask God to help us understand it.

Reflect. Have there been times when we read the Bible but didn't really think about what it means? Why do we need God's help to understand it? (He's the Author).

Apply. Before reading the Bible today, pray together and ask God to help your family understand His Word. Then read a short passage and talk about what it shows you about Jesus.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, thank you for giving us your Word. We need your help to understand it. By your Spirit, help our family see what is true and good. Through Jesus, help us learn and follow you together. Amen.

Tuesday

Read: Luke 24:46–47

Think. Jesus tells His friends the message they are to share. He died, He rose again, and people must repent of sin and turn to Him to be forgiven. That is the gospel. This is the most important message in the world.

Reflect. Why do we need forgiveness? What is repentance? What does it mean to turn to Jesus?

Apply. Talk together about the gospel. Ask each person in your family to explain it in their own words. Help one another understand it clearly.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, thank you for sending Jesus to die and rise again for us. We need your forgiveness. By your Spirit, help us each to understand and believe the gospel. Through Jesus, who saves us, teach us to trust Him and follow Him. Amen.

Wednesday
Read: Luke 24:48

Think. Jesus tells His followers, “You are witnesses.” That means they are to tell others what they know about Him. That is true for us too. If we know Jesus, we are meant to share Him.

Reflect. Who do we know that needs to hear about Jesus? Do we talk about Him in our daily life?

Apply. As a family, choose one person to pray for who needs to know Jesus. Ask God to help you speak to them about Him.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, thank you for making us part of your family. Help us tell others about Jesus. By your Spirit, give us courage to speak about Him. Through Jesus, help us be faithful witnesses. Amen.

Thursday
Read: Luke 24:49

Think. Jesus told His followers to wait for power. They could not do what He asked without God’s help. We cannot live for God in our own strength either. We need the Holy Spirit also.

Reflect. When do we try to do things on our own instead of asking God for help?

Apply. Before starting your day tomorrow, pray together and ask God to help your family live for Him. Make that a daily habit.

Pray. If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, we need your help every day. We cannot follow you on our own. By your Spirit, give us strength to obey you. Through Jesus, help us depend on you in everything we do. Amen.

Friday
Read: Luke 24:50–53

Think. When Jesus went back to heaven, His followers were filled with joy and worship. That might seem surprising, but they knew He was ruling and caring for them from Heaven. That gave them joy.

Reflect. What makes us happy? Do we think about Jesus ruling and being with us?

Apply. Take time as a family to thank Jesus for who He is. Talk about what He is doing for you right now.

Pray If you are unsure how to pray about this, consider saying something like this. Father, thank you that Jesus is alive and reigning. By your Spirit, help us rejoice in Him. Through Jesus, fill our home with joy and worship. Amen.