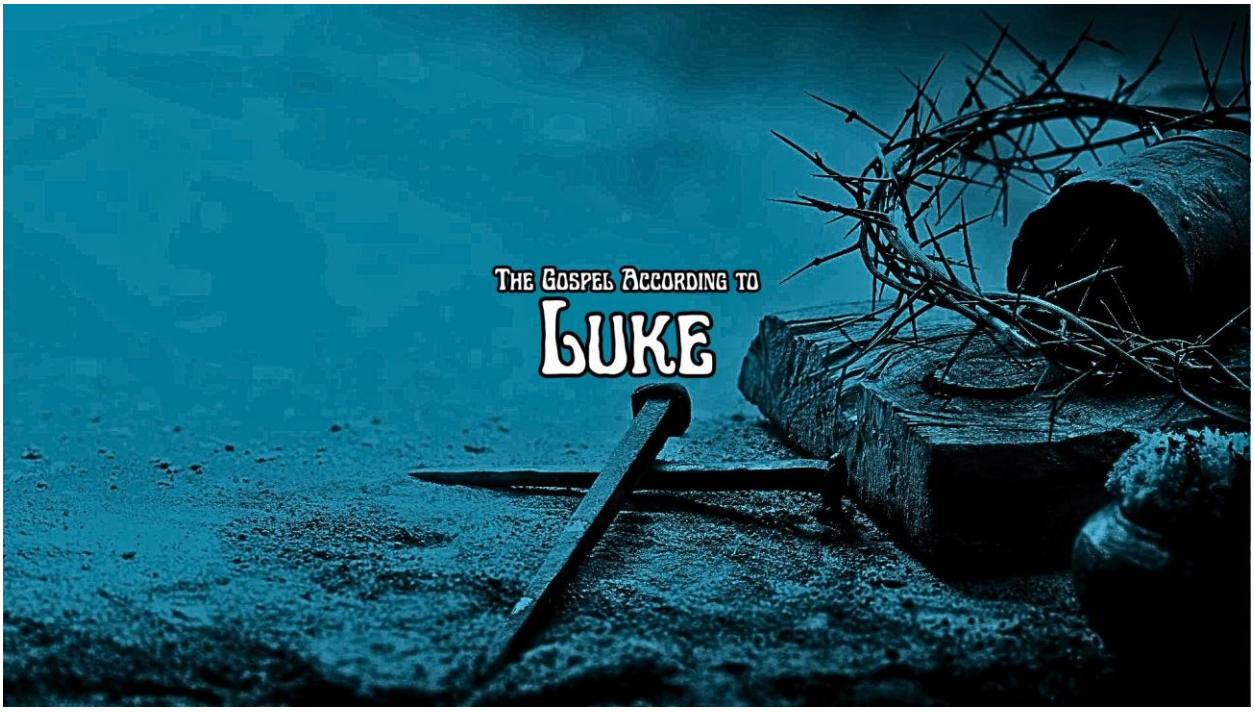
Small Group Guide

Based on Luke 6:37-49



Overview

This week's sermon walked through Jesus's teaching to his disciples on the Sermon on the Plain, covering themes of judgment and grace, the influence of mentors and teachers, hypocrisy and authenticity, bearing good fruit, and building a life on a solid foundation. The central challenge from the sermon is this: if we bear the name Christian, our lives are a witness to the world, and we ought to be someone worth listening to.

Key Takeaways

1. Condemnation belongs to God alone, but discernment is still our responsibility. There is a meaningful difference between condemning a person and discerning right from wrong. Jesus does not call us to turn off our moral judgment. He calls us to recognize that the final verdict on any person's soul is his to render, not ours.

2. You reflect what influences you. Just as students grow to resemble their teachers, we grow to resemble whatever and whoever we allow to shape our thinking, behavior, and

speech. Christ should be our primary influence, and those we allow to speak into our lives matter deeply.

3. Hypocrisy undermines the message. The world is watching. When we call out behavior we ourselves practice, we lose credibility not only with unbelievers but with our own brothers and sisters in Christ. Authentic faith earns a hearing. Hypocrisy closes ears.

4. Good fruit is evidence of genuine faith. As the sermon noted in connection with James 2, a living faith produces visible results. The closer we grow to Christ and the more he influences us, the more our lives ought to reflect his character.

5. A life built on Christ can withstand the storms. When difficulty comes, and it will come, those whose foundation is on Christ have somewhere to stand. Those without that foundation are left at the mercy of circumstances they cannot control.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Take a few minutes to get the conversation started before diving into the deeper material.

- Think about someone who had a significant influence on your faith, positively or negatively. What was it about them that left a mark on you?

Section 1: Judgment, Grace, and Discernment

Referencing Luke 6:37-38

1. The sermon drew a distinction between condemnation and discernment. In your own words, how would you explain that difference to someone who has never thought about it? Where do you think people most often get those two things confused?
2. The sermon made this point: if you judge others by their actions but yourself by your intentions, God will hold you to the standard you applied to others. How does that land with you personally? Is that a standard you feel you are currently living up to?
3. What does it look like practically to extend grace and mercy to someone without excusing or tolerating sinful behavior? Can you think of a real-life situation where you had to navigate that tension?

Section 2: Influence and the Teachers in Our Lives

Referencing Luke 6:39-40

4. Jesus asks, "Can the blind lead the blind?" The sermon expanded this question beyond formal teachers to include media, friendships, family, and habits. What are the biggest influences on your thinking and behavior right now? Are those influences moving you closer to Christ or further away?
5. The sermon described Tony, the pastor who led the speaker to Christ, as someone who was never stale, always on fire, and whose passion never waned decades later. What qualities do you think kept him that way? What does that kind of sustained, authentic faith require?
6. Who in your life right now is a genuinely Christ-like influence? How are you intentionally making space for that influence to shape you?

Section 3: Hypocrisy, Authenticity, and Being Worth Listening To

Referencing Luke 6:41-42

7. The sermon stated: "Your life, the way that you live it, the way that you treat others, the way that you say you reflect Christ, if you bear the name of Christian, is a witness to the world. So, be someone worth listening to." What does being someone worth listening to look like in your everyday life, not just in big moments?
8. The sermon mentioned that one of the most cited reasons for atheism is Christians who honor Jesus with their lips but live no differently than the rest of the world. Have you ever seen that play out? Have you ever been that person? How do you respond to that honestly?
9. Removing the plank from your own eye is not a one-time event. It is an ongoing process of self-examination. What is one area of your life right now where you know there is work to be done before you can speak clearly into someone else's life?

Section 4: Bearing Good Fruit

Referencing Luke 6:43-45

10. The sermon connected this passage to James 2, noting that genuine faith produces visible fruit. What fruit is your life currently producing? Is it fruit you would be comfortable holding up as evidence of your faith?
11. The sermon said, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks." If someone spent a week listening to everything you said, what would they conclude about what is in your heart? Is that a comfortable question or an uncomfortable one?

Section 5: Building on the Rock

Referencing Luke 6:46-49

12. The sermon described what it feels like when life beats you up, when the financial pressure mounts, when loss hits, when you cannot seem to catch your breath. Have you experienced a season like that? What did your foundation look like in that moment? Did it hold?
13. Jesus asks, "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do the things which I say?" That is a direct and searching question. What is one area of your life where you know what Christ calls you to do but have not yet acted on it?
14. The sermon closed by saying we will only be vessels worth listening to when Christ is our greatest influence and we reflect him well. What is one concrete step you can take this week to deepen that relationship and strengthen that foundation?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to work on before your group meets again.

1. Audit your influences. Spend time this week honestly evaluating what is shaping your thinking and behavior. Write down the top five things that get the most of your attention, whether that is people, media, habits, or something else. Prayerfully consider whether those things are moving you toward Christ or away from him.

2. Identify and address a plank. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you one area of hypocrisy or inconsistency in your life. Not to condemn you, but to give you the opportunity to address

it. Take one practical step toward closing the gap between what you say you believe and how you actually live.

3. Pursue a Christ-like mentor. If you do not have someone in your life who is genuinely on fire for God and speaks into your faith, begin praying specifically for that relationship. If you do have someone like that, reach out to them this week and express your gratitude.

4. Examine your fruit. Look at the last 30 days of your life. Your words, your decisions, your treatment of others. What fruit has your life been producing? Write it down honestly and bring it before God in prayer.

5. Strengthen your foundation. Identify one spiritual discipline, whether that is Scripture reading, prayer, fasting, community, or service, that you have been neglecting. Commit to practicing it consistently for the next two weeks and report back to your group.

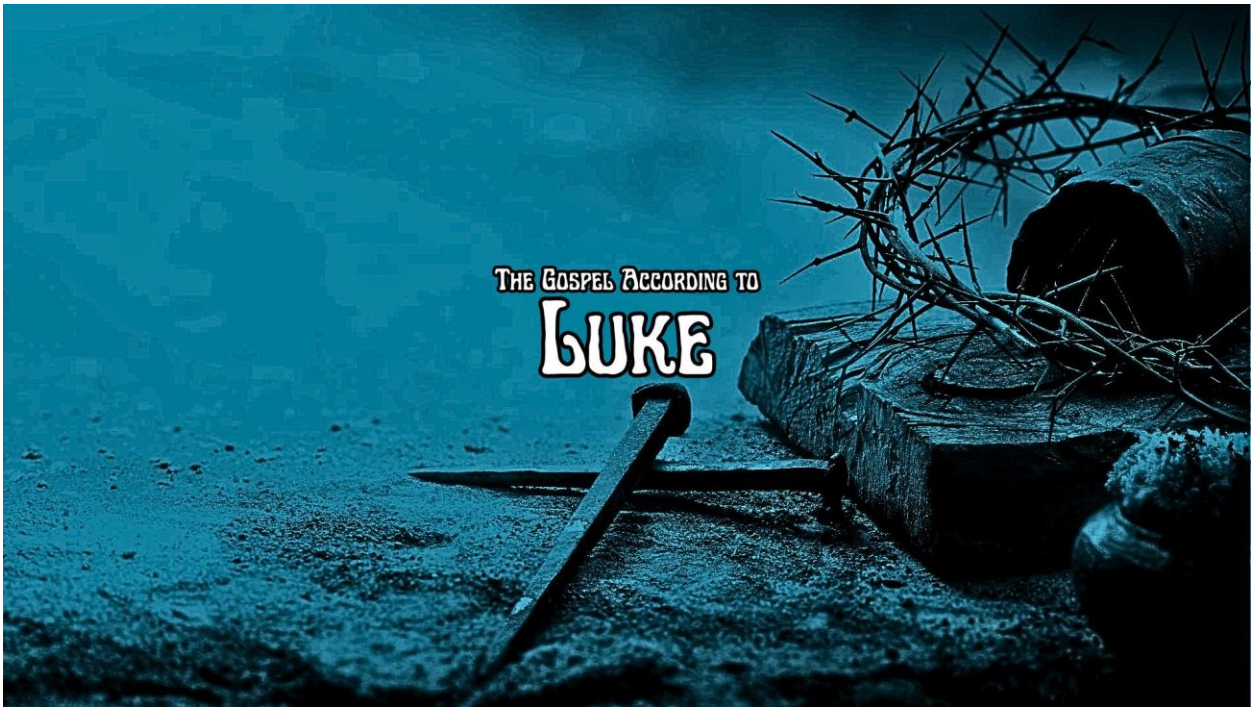
Closing Prayer Focus

As you close your time together, pray specifically for the following:

- That each group member would have the courage to examine their own life honestly before calling others to account
- That Christ would be the clearest and strongest influence in each person's life
- That your group would be known for authentic, fruit-bearing faith that earns a hearing in the world around you
- That each person's foundation would be built on Christ so that when the storms come, they will stand

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

Built on the Rock: Reflecting Christ in a Divided World



Day 1: The Foundation That Holds

Reading: Luke 6:46-49

Devotional: Jesus does not ask whether storms will come. He assumes they will. The question is what your life is built upon. A foundation is invisible until pressure is applied. No one sees the bedrock beneath a house until the flood tests it. The same is true of faith. Your convictions, your patience, your compassion under pressure -- these reveal what your life is actually built on. It is not enough to call Jesus Lord with your lips. The rock is not a feeling or a tradition. It is Christ himself, known personally, followed faithfully, and trusted completely when everything else shakes.

Reflection: What areas of your life are still resting on shifting ground rather than on Christ?

Practical Application: Identify one habit or practice this week that will deepen your foundation -- whether that is daily Scripture reading, prayer, or removing a distraction that pulls you away from Christ.

Day 2: Known by Your Fruit

Reading: Luke 6:43-45

Devotional: A tree does not decide to bear fruit. Fruit is the natural overflow of what the tree is rooted in and nourished by. Jesus makes the same point about the human heart. What comes out of your mouth, your decisions, your reactions under pressure -- these are not accidents. They are evidence of what is growing inside you. If Christ is your greatest influence, his character will begin to show in yours. Patience, mercy, generosity, and truth are not performances. They are fruit. And the world around you is watching, not to catch you failing, but because they are hungry for something real.

Reflection: What fruit has your life been producing lately, and what does that reveal about what is growing in your heart?

Practical Application: Ask someone you trust to speak honestly about what they observe in your character. Receive it with humility and bring it to God in prayer.

Day 3: The Danger of Hypocrisy

Reading: Luke 6:41-42

Devotional: Jesus does not forbid accountability. He demands integrity before it. The plank in your own eye is not a minor flaw -- it is a blinding obstruction that distorts everything you think you see clearly. Hypocrisy does not just damage your own witness. It hardens the hearts of people who were watching to see if the gospel was real. The call here is not to silence, but to honesty. Deal with your own sin first -- not so you can avoid helping others, but so that when you do, you can see clearly and speak with credibility. The world can spot a hypocrite. It is also watching for the real thing.

Reflection: Is there an area where you are holding others to a standard you are not applying to yourself?

Practical Application: Spend time in honest self-examination before God this week. Confess what you find, and ask him to help you live in a way that earns the right to be heard.

Day 4: Grace as a Witness

Reading: Luke 6:37-38

Devotional: Jesus connects the way you treat others to the way you will one day be measured. This is not a threat designed to produce fear. It is a mirror designed to produce awareness. You have received mercy you did not earn. You have been forgiven debts you could not repay. That reality is meant to change how you move through the world. When you encounter someone difficult, frustrating, or even hostile, you are looking at someone Christ died for -- just as he died for you. Condemnation belongs to God alone. What belongs to you is the ministry of reflecting his grace to a world that is desperate for it.

Reflection: Who in your life are you withholding grace from that God has freely given to you?

Practical Application: Choose one person this week toward whom you will deliberately extend patience, forgiveness, or kindness -- not because they earned it, but because Christ modeled it for you.

Day 5: The Influence That Shapes You

Reading: Luke 6:39-40

Devotional: You will reflect what influences you. This is not a warning about weakness -- it is simply how human beings are made. We absorb the voices, habits, and values of those we spend the most time with. Jesus asks his disciples to consider who is leading them and where that leader is headed. If Christ is truly your greatest influence -- if his words, his character, and his presence shape your daily life -- then over time, you will begin to look like him. Not perfectly. Not all at once. But progressively. The goal of the Christian life is not simply to believe the right things. It is to be formed into the image of the one you follow.

Reflection: Who or what is actually shaping your thoughts, speech, and behavior most right now -- and is that influence leading you closer to Christ or further away?

Practical Application: Audit your inputs this week. Evaluate the media, relationships, and habits that are shaping you most. Make one deliberate adjustment that creates more space for Christ to be your primary influence.