

# LUKE—WEEK 8

## AUTHORITY



F. Michael Slay

*A DEEP Study*

**The Fellowship of Ailbe**

*The Cover Picture is The Sermon on the Mount*  
by Anonymous on display at *Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris*

Jesus sets His disciples up for their coming persecution with the beatitudes and the command to love their enemies. He points out that some people call Him Lord yet don't do what He commands.

A centurion understands what the disciples do not. This teaches the true meaning of the word "Lord."

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We are a spiritual fellowship patterned after the Celtic Revival. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.

Luke 6:20–7:10 — Authority  
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1 Luke 6:20–26 (ESV)

*And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said:*

*“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.*

*“Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied.*

*“Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh.*

*“Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.*

*“But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.*

*“Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry.*

*“Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.*

*“Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.*

The four woes here are puzzling. Surely Jesus can't be condemning people for laughing or for being spoken well of. What is He talking about?

Two things about this passage help make it clear. First off, Jesus is addressing His most loyal followers. *He lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and* gave this message. He isn't pronouncing judgment; He's teaching. Second, the four blessings and the four woes pair off perfectly. Tough times are coming for His listeners. The four pairs pretty much describe their future: poverty, hunger, weeping, and being reviled.

Jesus is both warning them and instructing them.

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Do not seek riches. Do not seek a full belly. Do not avoid sorrow. Do not seek popularity. This is tough teaching for modern Americans. Could we ever rise to the standard of the original disciples?

Let this passage challenge you. Each one of us is incredibly rich by first century standards. I wouldn't want every pleasure Caesar himself had if it meant giving up toothpaste.

But God isn't calling us to give up toothpaste; He's calling us to do everything for His glory. He is calling us to sacrifice though. The blessings of modern life are not the goal.

Today's Christian has a different set of challenges. Modern medicine and other modern tools have removed most of the challenges of the first century. Now we have the temptations of the internet and the viciousness of politics.

Even though the tools have changed, the command has not; love God and love your neighbor.

2 Luke 6:27–36 (ESV)

*“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.*

*“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.*

This is the biggie, the thing that can really make non-believers think, “These guys must be from another planet.” No other Christian behavior is as impressive. No other is as glorifying.

But it’s also the thing that can make non-believers think, “These guys are idiots.” There are harmful ways to obey this command. We must love our enemies wisely. This is not easy; every case must be considered individually. For example, note well that this teaching does not supersede Jesus’ other teaching on love.

*“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” — Matthew 22:37–39 (ESV)*

Jesus did not command us to love our enemies in a way that is harmful to other neighbors. Also, love doesn’t always mean going easy on someone. God doesn’t always go easy on us. The best and most loving answers to our prayers are often things we would never choose. Like any good father, He can go against His child’s desires.

In the same way, some folks might actually need a night in the slammer, and the other neighbors we are commanded to love may need them off the streets. This can lead to some tough calls, but consider this—if it takes more courage to hold someone accountable than to let them off the hook, think twice.

Christian love is not weak.

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We need to pray for God to teach us compassion, especially towards those who don’t deserve it. This is a great prayer because it asks the LORD to change our hearts in a way that almost can’t happen naturally.

Feelings of compassion for people who have wronged us do not normally grow over time. That’s because this goes beyond just forgiving these folks.

Yes, it’s good to let go of baggage, but that’s a lot easier than actually wishing blessings on a wrong-doer.

3 Luke 6:37–42 (ESV)

*“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”*

*He also told them a parable: “Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,’ when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.”*

Remember, Jesus is speaking to His disciples. Everyone listening to this message is a serious Christian—super serious. The striking thing about his passage is what the first paragraph assumes. They fear judgment. They fear condemnation. They need forgiveness. They need gifts.

The first step toward being non-judgmental isn't to work on not judging; it's to fear judgment. Before we can understand how to not condemn, we need to fear condemnation. We must see our need for forgiveness. We must recognize our neediness.

If we just try to be generous, forgiving, not judging, and not condemning, we miss the point. That produces the kind of “holier than thou” Christians that nobody likes. Substituting our efforts for the transforming power of the Holy Spirit gets us stuck in the rut of legalism.

One of the magnificent things about growing in Christ is that our eyes are steadily opened to how much we need Him. I came to faith recognizing dozens of sins. A few years later, I could see hundreds. That was progress, but it sure didn't feel like progress. It felt like I was losing ground.

In reality, I was gaining ground. The key to sin is that it blinds us to our sinfulness. It couldn't survive any other way. If we could see the ugliness of our sin, we would change in an instant.

We can't cure this ourselves; only the Holy Spirit can.

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This sets up the parable in the second paragraph, which is all about the importance of teachers.

This cannot be over-emphasized. Christianity is all about teaching and learning. “Disciple” means student. A church's most critical function is as a learning center. People usually judge a church by the preaching, or the worship music, or the outreach programs. That's because these things are the most visible.

But the teaching, especially the children's education, has more impact. And the key to good teaching is teachers who understand what they're teaching. *Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit?*

Solid teachers graduate solid disciples.

4 Luke 6:43–49 (ESV)

*“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*

*“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great.”*

If I call someone my boss, and he tells me to do something, and I don’t do it, is he really my boss? If we say, “Jesus is Lord,” but we don’t do what he wants us to do, is He really our Lord?

This pretty much sums up many people today who call themselves Christians. They say they are Christians, but they sure don’t act like it. If I didn’t know better, I’d think it was the name of a fraternity or something. How did it get this bad? Do they not understand that “Lord” means “boss”? Do they not see the contradiction?

Maybe the problem is that they never said, “Jesus is Lord,” in the first place. Maybe all they did was claim Jesus as their savior and they didn’t say He’s their Lord. This happens a lot more often than you might think. We sing about Jesus as our Lord, and we teach about Jesus as our Lord, but when we ask someone to give a confession of faith the word “Lord” is left out frighteningly often.

Now, this isn’t about magic words. People can recite a confession that leaves out the word “Lord” but still understand and follow Jesus as Lord. They’re not the problem.

But there *is* a problem. We often sell Christianity as being all about getting into heaven. By not reminding people enough of Jesus’ Lordship, and the job we have to do in this life, we set them up for the flabby, useless style of Christianity that may not be Christianity at all.

*“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” — Matthew 7:21*

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Most evangelism in America is too selfishly focused. We regularly leave out the Lord part because it’s more upbeat to talk about Christianity as just a great way to get into heaven.

Also, we tend to think of evangelism only in terms of the “close the deal” step—when someone accepts Jesus as their savior. (Note: I deliberately said this wrong; it should be, “accepts Jesus as their Lord.”)

Evangelism includes all aspects of discipling—including, for example, charity.

5 Luke 7:1–10 (ESV)

*After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. Now a centurion had a servant who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. When the centurion heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, “He is worthy to have you do this for him, for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue.” And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, “Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and to another, ‘Come,’ and he comes; and to my servant, ‘Do this,’ and he does it.” When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, “I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.” And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.*

What’s so special about the centurion’s faith? Jesus declares it greater than anything He’s seen, *even in Israel*. What does the centurion say that’s so impressive?

While the centurion’s concern for a mere servant is impressive, this is about authority. The centurion’s point is all about authority. He recognizes that Jesus has the authority to heal his servant. That’s huge.

God answers prayer. You and I can ask for anything and God will listen and act—but we don’t know what will happen next. It’s not up to us; we don’t have authority. Prophets sometimes know what’s going to happen next, because God told them. They don’t get to decide. They don’t have authority either.

But Jesus is something else, something much more than a prophet. The centurion knows that Jesus actually has the authority to decide whether his servant gets better or not.

Of course, we can’t know exactly what the centurion does and doesn’t understand. (Who can totally understand incarnation anyway?) But the centurion understands one aspect of “Jesus is Lord” in a way that even His disciples don’t (yet) get.

This is especially powerful coming right after the tongue-lashing Jesus gave His disciples over their casual use of the term Lord.

Lord means authority. Luke wants us to make this connection.

Jesus isn’t just the Lord of an estate; he’s the Lord of space, time, matter, energy, truth, mathematics, justice, you name it. He created them all, and they are His. He can do or change anything He wants.

That’s what makes prayer so amazing. Why would He care what we have to say? We know nothing.

But we are commanded to pray. We have no authority, but we get to come before the One who does.

Start prayer with worship. I often start by praising Him for having any interest in what I have to say.

*Questions for reflection or discussion*

1. We are challenged to rise to the standards of the first Century Christians. Name something they did that is particularly challenging to equal.
2. Recount some tough love situations you've seen or been involved in. What was the right thing to do?
3. How has your vision of sin changed over time?
4. What were you taught is a proper confession of faith?
5. How is "Lord" different from "boss"?