

HEARING THE WORD



NIGEL BARGE

Luke 7¹ – 8²¹

Work Book

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Nigel Barge, August 2014

Scripture Quotations taken from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION

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Resources

The New Bible Dictionary 3rd edition, published by Inter Varsity Press
The New Bible Commentary 21st century edition. A commentary on every Bible book, IVP

www.blueletterbible.org

Hearing the Word: A Tool for Bible reading



LOOK – What does it *say*?

- 1) The Text
 - a) What questions does it raise - *Who, What, When, Where, Why, How?*
 - b) What surprises you?
- 2) The Context?
 - a) the surrounding text
 - b) the Book of the Bible
 - c) the whole Bible
 - d) the place in the Bible Story



LEARN – What does it *mean*?

- 1) What type of writing is it?
- 2) Answer the questions
- 3) Summarise the passage



LISTEN – What is the *message*?

- 1) Which is the main point?
- 2) Which is the key verse?



LIVE – How should we *respond*?

- 1) What does it show about God, (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) :
 - a) His nature and character?
 - b) His grace*
 - c) Jesus / his salvation**
- 2) What should I do?

* God's undeserved generosity is evident throughout the Bible, and it is perfectly expressed in Jesus.

** The Bible, from 'the fall' onwards, describes God's plan of salvation through his Son. Thus, *all* the Scriptures speak in some way of Jesus (Luke 24:27).

Reading Narrative

In seeking to hear the Word of God throughout the Bible, we need to take into account the *type of literature* in which each part is written. Exodus is mainly narrative (story), the most common type. To approach narrative correctly we need to keep in mind the following principles.

1 In General: It is *God's story*

The whole Bible recounts the story of God's dealings with humankind. After creation and the fall in Genesis, the rest describes how God works out his unfolding plan of salvation for humanity in Jesus. The OT prepares for the arrival, life, death and resurrection of Jesus. The NT recounts these and looks forwards to his return at the end of time. It is *all* about Jesus. Therefore:

- a) Every part relates to Him (Luke 24:27; John 5:39).

So as we read, we should be asking – ‘what does this show about Jesus; what is He doing?’

- b) Everything is relevant.

In a film every scene plays some part in the overall story. Often we are shown things in the early stages that make no sense until later. The Bible is the same. So as we read Bible narrative – knowing how it ends – we should be asking ‘what relevance has *this* part of the story to the *main* story?’

2 In particular: ‘Follow the camera angle’

A film director focuses the viewer’s attention on particular shots to tell ‘his story’. In the same way each narrator in the Bible is selective about what to tell us. They leave out much general detail, only giving us what is relevant to what they are trying to convey.

As we read we should therefore be asking the question, ‘Why is he telling me this and in this particular way?’

3 Warts and all

Human beings often get things wrong. The Bible narrative faithfully records errors, even by people who are elsewhere commended. For instance, Moses murdered a man, King David committed adultery, and Peter, who was praised for realising Jesus was the Christ, was minutes later roundly scolded when he tried to stop Jesus being the Christ through suffering! (Exodus 2:12; 2 Samuel 11; Matthew 16:16-23)

So we can’t treat every thought or action in a narrative as something to copy, just because ‘it’s in the Bible’. We must ask the Holy Spirit to use the rest of Scripture to discern good examples to follow, and bad ones to avoid.

Background to Luke's Gospel

The Author

Luke was a doctor and friend of the apostle Paul, who calls him 'the beloved physician' and 'fellow worker' (Colossians 4:14; Philemon 1:24). He began to travel with Paul at Troas (Acts 16:10). He was close to Paul near the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:11).

He may have come from Antioch in Syria, or Troas, or Philippi in Macedonia. He was a Gentile (i.e. not a Jew). Indeed he is the only non-Jewish writer in the New Testament.

He had carried out careful research (see Luke 1:3, 2:51). He also wrote the story of the early church in the 5th book of the New Testament, whose full title is: 'The Acts of the Apostles'. It takes us up to Paul's imprisonment in Rome but not his trial, suggesting Luke finished writing it before that event

The Date of writing

Luke wrote his gospel before he wrote Acts (see Acts 1:1), probably before 63AD.

The structure

A	The introduction	(1: 1 - 4)
B	The birth of Jesus	(1:5 - 2:52)
C	The start of Jesus' ministry	(3:1 - 4:13)
D	Jesus in Galilee	(4:14 - 9:50)
E	From Galilee to Jerusalem	(9:51 - 19:44)
F	Jesus in Jerusalem	(19:45 – 21:38)
G	The death of Jesus	(22:1 – 23:56)
H	The resurrection of Jesus	(24:1 - 5)

Its purpose

Matthew and Mark probably wrote their gospels before Luke. Unlike them Luke had not himself witnessed Jesus' birth, life, death and resurrection, but he had personal contact with many eyewitnesses who had. He addresses both his Gospel and Acts to someone called Theophilus. This may have been a real individual: could he have been an official in Roman government?... Someone who wanted details of Christianity before Paul's trial in Rome?... Someone who paid Luke's expenses while writing? Actually, the name means, 'friend of God', so it might refer to anyone, in any time or place, who *wanted to know the Gospel and be a friend of God*.

The Themes

Five themes keep re-occurring in Luke's Gospel:

1 Salvation

a) a historical event

Jesus Christ's coming to earth as a man is the centre point of history. Luke points out the exact time and situation of Jesus' birth. (Luke 2). Jesus sets his face towards Jerusalem (9:51) where he completes his work, commits his Spirit to the Father, and dies (23:46). On the third day he rises from death. Forty days later, having promised to return, he ascends to heaven (Acts 1:9-11). Meantime, the Good News of this salvation is offered to all by the power of the Spirit (Acts 2:38,39).

b) for all mankind

From the announcement by the angels of 'good news ... for all people' (2:10) to the genealogy of Jesus stretching back to Adam (3:38), it is clear the non-Jews are included too. This does not deny the importance of Israel. Luke begins and ends his Gospel with people in Jerusalem and shows it to be the ultimate destination of Jesus' earthly ministry (1:8; 2:22, 36; 9:51-53; 13:22; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28).

2 The 'outsiders'

Luke shows that people seen as 'weak' are equally welcome in the Kingdom of God, by recording Jesus' interaction with them. This includes:

a) Women

Women are central to the story. At the beginning, the angelic announcement of His birth was to Mary (1:26-38) and at end, the truth of His resurrection was given first to the women at the tomb (24:1-11). He ministered to women in various settings (7:11; 7:37; 13:11; 21:1-4) and it was women who helped finance Him and His apostles (8:2-3).

b) Children

The accounts of Jesus' birth show the importance and value of a child from the womb (1:41!). At various times he intervenes to heal the child of a distraught parent (7:12; 8:42; 9:38)

c) The poor

Jesus himself was from Nazareth (4:16) – a poor, insignificant town (John 1:46). His birth was to an unmarried girl and witnessed by the 'outcasts' of society, the shepherds (2:8-20). The offering at His birth was that of the poor (2:24; Leviticus 12:8) and the message he preached was for the poor (4:18; 7:22). He died with common criminals (23:32,41).

d) Gentiles

Luke, himself a Gentile, is writing to another Gentile, Theophilus (1:3). He records the faith of a Gentile Roman Centurion: of him, Jesus says he had 'not found such great faith in Israel' (7:9). Possibly out of deference to his non-Jewish readership, Luke seldom quotes the Old Testament.

3 The Holy Spirit

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is explicit throughout the Gospel, in:

- a) the birth of John the Baptist (1:15,41,57)
- b) the conception of Jesus (1:35)
- c) Simeon's prophecy about Jesus (2:25-27)
- d) John's promise that Jesus would 'baptise with the Holy Spirit' (3:16)
- e) the baptism of Jesus (3:22)
- f) the temptations of Jesus (4:1)
- g) the power of Jesus' ministry (4:18)
- h) the joy of the Spirit (10:21)
- i) the promise of the Spirit for His followers (11:13; 12:10-12; 24:49), fulfilled at Pentecost, as Luke records in Acts 2.

4 The humanity of Jesus

There is no clearer way of demonstrating Jesus' humanity than noting his recourse to prayer. Through this he shows:

- a) his own dependence on the Father through prayer (3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 10:21; 11:1; 22:39-46; 23:34, 46).
- b) his identification with his disciples, as He similarly instructs them in prayer through
 - i) parables - the friend at midnight (11:5-13) the unjust judge (18:1-8); the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:10-14)
 - ii) teaching on prayer (6:28; 11:2; 22:40, 46)

5 The deity of Jesus

Luke presents Jesus as God in an *oblique* way. This fact was not acknowledged at that time. This is the key theme of the first 5 chapters:

1:17 John prepares for the Lord	4:41 the Son of God
1:32 called Son of the Most High	5:8 the Holy presence
1:43 Mary mother of 'my Lord'	5:13 able to cleanse an individual
2:11 Saviour who is Christ the Lord	5:20 a forgiver of sin
2:49 in 'His Father's house'	5:32 (righteous one) calling sinners to repentance
3:22 God says 'you are my Son';	5:34 the bridegroom
4:34 The Holy one of God	

The faith of the Centurion

Background information

Capernaum, a village on the NW shores of the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 4:13), was three miles West of where the river Jordan fed into the Lake from the north. It was near a political border, so that a customs post (Mark 2:14) and military detachment were necessary (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10).

The area (*Tell Hum*) has been very extensively excavated and gives a vivid picture of what life was like in the 1st century AD. The ruins of a 5th century church stand round the ruins of what may have been Peter's house. To protect it, a visitor centre has been built on stilts above the site, in effect a huge roof.

Word List

1	<i>Capernaum</i>	village on NW shore of Sea of Galilee a place with a strong Roman presence and garrison
	<i>Servant</i>	(gk <i>doulos</i> – a slave) – a ‘living tool’ over which the owner had the right of life or death.
2	<i>centurion</i>	Roman army captain (original meaning ‘in charge of 100 soldiers’ but over time the number varied). (gk <i>entimos</i>) honoured, esteemed (not monetary)
3	<i>elders</i>	local Jewish religious leaders
5	<i>love our nation</i>	Romans were generally anti-Semitic – Jews a ‘filthy race’. Judaism a ‘barbarous superstition’. Jews ‘hated mankind’. Annually ‘sacrificed a stranger to their God’. (W Barclay)
6	<i>under my roof</i>	Jews were forbidden to enter gentile houses (Acts 10:26)
7	‘Servant’	(gk <i>pais</i> – a child)

Bible connections

See also Matthew 8:5-131

3	‘deserves (greek <i>agios</i> = <i>Holy</i>)	consecrated Luke 2:23
6	‘deserves’ (greek <i>axious</i> = <i>equal value</i>)	in keeping with Luke 3:8
7	<i>the effect of God’s word</i>	<i>see</i> Psalm 107:20; John 1:1-3
9	<i>those who don’t see and yet believe</i> <i>faith out-with Israel</i>	<i>see</i> John 20:29 Luke 4:25-27; 10:33-37; 17:16; 24:45-47

LOOK

1) The Text

What questions does the passage raise?

What surprises or confuses you?

2) The Context

What other parts of the Bible – surrounding passage, individual book, whole Bible, or Bible story – might help you understand this passage?

LEARN

1) How do you answer the questions the passage raises?

2) How do you resolve issues that surprised or confused you?

3) Give an overall ‘picture’ of the passage in a few sentences.

LISTEN

- 1) What is the lesson or the main point?

- 2) Which verse best sums up the message of the passage? v.

LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?

 - b) His grace?

 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Jesus raises a widow's son

Background information

In Nain, Jesus meets a funeral procession. The body, wrapped in a shroud, would have been lying on a bier being carried. The mother would have been walking ahead of it. When Jesus touched the bier he became ritually unclean, according to the ceremonial laws; but where human need was concerned, he never worried about ceremonial trifles.

Word List

11 <i>Nain</i>	probably the modern Nein, 6 miles SE of Nazareth and a day's journey from Capernaum It is situated on north side of Hill of Moreh. {A couple of miles away, on the south side was Shunem where Elisha raised another boy (2 Kings 4:32-37)}
13 <i>the Lord</i>	This is the first time Luke himself uses this term for Jesus.
14 <i>coffin</i>	better translated 'bier', perhaps a long, wicker-work basket

Bible connections

Other raising-from-the-dead events in Scripture: *see* 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:32-37; Matthew 9:18-24; Mark 5:21-24; John 11:1-44

16 *God has come to help his people.* *see also* Ruth 1:6; 1 Samuel 2:21

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Jesus and John the Baptist

Background information

At this point, John the Baptist was in prison (Luke 3:20 Matthew 11:2). Presumably he was expecting Jesus to do something dramatic. When nothing seemed to be happening, he sent men to Jesus to find out why – and possibly to provoke some action? Jesus gave them a surprising answer.

Word List

22 <i>leprosy</i>	the Greek word covers various skin diseases
24 <i>prophet</i>	a person who spoke God's word
24 <i>fine clothes</i>	lit 'soft' clothes (c.f. Matthew 3:4 – camel hair!)

Bible connections

See also Matthew 11:2-19

18 <i>John was Jesus' cousin – aware of the His promise.</i>	Luke 1:35-66
19 <i>One coming 'will baptise with the Holy Spirit.....'</i>	Luke 3:16ff
22 <i>fulfilment of prophecy</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 61:1-2; Luke 4:18
24 <i>John's desert ministry</i>	<i>see</i> Luke 3:1-20; Matthew 3:1-12; Mark 1:4-7; John 1:15-28
27 <i>John's ministry foretold</i>	<i>see</i> Malachi 3:1
28 <i>tax collectors believing</i>	<i>see</i> Luke 3:12; Matthew 21:32; Mark 1:5
33 <i>eating locust and wild honey</i>	Mark 1:3

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Jesus anointed by a sinful woman

Background information and Word List

In the Middle East, houses of well-to-do people were built round an open courtyard. Weather permitting, meals were eaten there, at tables in three sides of a square, with diners round the outside. It was the custom that when a Rabbi (Jewish teacher) was present at a meal, all kinds of people were free to come in and listen to the pearls of wisdom which fell from his mouth.

When a guest entered such a house three things were done: the host gave them a kiss of peace, a servant poured cold water over dusty feet, and a drop of oil or perfume was placed on the guest's head.

Matthew (26:6-13), Mark (14:3-9) and John (12:1-8) also record a woman anointing Jesus. There are good reasons for thinking those three refer to one, common incident but Luke to another: eg Luke's story occurs early in Jesus' ministry while the others refer to the last week of his life; besides, the dialogue is about money for the poor etc, not forgiveness as in Luke.

36	<i>Pharisees</i>	Jewish leaders who interpreted the law very rigourously; their emphasis was ethical rather than theological; known as the 'separated ones'.
	<i>reclined</i>	The tables were low, so diners reclined on cushions, leaning on left hand or elbow with feet stretched out behind.
37	<i>alabaster jar</i>	Gk <i>alabastros</i> means a globular container for perfumes; it had no handle; the long neck was broken off when the contents were needed.
	<i>perfume</i>	ie perfumed oil, rare and expensive
38	<i>her hair</i>	Jewish ladies did not unbind their hair in public.
41	<i>denarii</i>	one denarius was a day's pay for a labourer.
46	<i>oil</i>	olive oil, plentiful and cheap
50	<i>go in peace</i>	The Greek is literally 'go <i>into</i> peace'.

Bible connections

44	<i>water for guest's feet</i>	<i>c.f.</i> Genesis 18:4; Judges 19:21
	<i>kiss of welcome</i>	<i>c.f.</i> Genesis 29:13; 45:15
	<i>anointing guest's head</i>	<i>c.f.</i> Psalm 23:5; 141:5
47	<i>saving faith</i>	<i>see</i> Ephesians 2:8-9

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The parable of the sower

Background information

Jesus is on a preaching tour, speaking in the open air, perhaps because of increasing hostility on the part of the synagogue leaders. Some women are accompanying him and his twelve disciples. Rabbis refused to teach women and generally assigned them a very inferior place but Jesus freely admitted them into fellowship and depended on their service.

The Palestinian farmer sowed first and ploughed afterwards (as he still does) and then the nature of the soil was seen as the ground sprouted.

Word List

2	<i>Magdalene</i>	someone who came from Magdala (meaning ‘The Tower’), a village near Capernaum.
	<i>seven demons</i>	Seven is the divine Jewish number meaning ‘complete’.
	<i>susanna</i>	means ‘lily’
3	<i>Chuza</i>	A non-Jew, Nabatean, descendent of Abraham’s half-brother, Ishmael (Gen 25:13)
		Manager – right-hand man, chancellor of his exchequer
4	<i>parable</i>	short descriptive story, usually designed to show a single truth or answer a single question
10	<i>secrets</i>	<i>mysteria</i> , spiritual truths only God can reveal
15	<i>Noble and good Heart</i>	both words similar meaning - ‘good’ and ‘productive’ the place of Jewish mind / thinking

Bible connections

see also Matthew 13:2; Mark 4:1-20

1	<i>the Twelve</i>	the twelve men Jesus appointed ‘apostles’ (6:13) - ‘to be with Him, to preach and to cast out demons’. (Mark 3:14f)
2	<i>Susanna</i> means <i>Lily</i>	Song of Solomon 2:16;4:5;5:13;6:2,3; 7:2 possibly the ‘woman of the city’ (7:36ff)??
3	<i>Mary Magdalene</i>	watched crucifixion (Mt 27:55f; Mk15:40; John 19:25) saw where he was laid, (Mt 27:61; Mk15:47); Lk 23:55 went to anoint Jesus body (Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1; Lk24:10)
10	<i>...seeing, they may not see...</i>	<i>see</i> Isaiah 6:9-13
11	<i>the Word of God</i>	<i>see</i> Hebrews 4:12
	<i>God gives the growth</i>	1 Corinthians 3:7

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A lamp on a stand

Background information

Here we have three short sayings of Jesus, each with its own warning for life. The third one (v18) seems to link up directly with the foregoing parable of the sower and also that of the pounds (19:26) It is important to hear rightly.

Word List

16	<i>lamp</i>	a round pottery bowl to hold the oil; with what looked like a spout where the wick projected.
17	<i>into the open</i>	meaning 'seen' (lit 'into the light' cf vs 16)
18a	<i>consider carefully</i>	Greek 'blepete' - same word as 'watch out' (21:8)
	<i>Listen</i>	Greek 'akouete' - same word as 'hear' (8:8)

Bible connections

see also Matthew 5:15; Mark 4:21-22; Luke 12:2

16	<i>light</i>	A light on its stand	Luke 11:33
		Jesus is the Light of the world	John 9:5
		The Word of God is a lamp	Psalm 119:105
17	<i>nothing concealed</i>	REPEATED in	Luke 12:2
18	' <i>whoever</i> ' (same words in Greek – "os gar an")		Luke 9:26
	' <i>what he thinks he has will be taken away</i> ' REPEATED in		Luke 19:26

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Jesus' mother and brothers

Background information and word list

The most natural understanding of the phrase, 'Jesus' brothers', is that they were children of Joseph and Mary, younger than Jesus. Mark (6:3) gives the names of four, and also mentions sisters.

21 lit - 'hearing and doing the Word of God'

Bible connections

see also Matthew 12:46-50; Mark 3:21,31-35

19 *now* (Greek 'de') – a link word *c.f.* 7:36; 8:40 (in the other Gospels this event is set before the parable of the sower)

Jesus' care for his mother

see John 19:26

Jesus' brothers

see Matthew 13:55

Jesus' brother James

see 1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19; Acts 12:17

19,20,21 *Jesus' 'mother and brothers'* – mentioned three times

This is the last mention of Jesus' mother / family in Luke's Gospel.

21 *putting God's word into practice* *see* Luke 6:47; 11:28; John 14:21

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LIVE

- 1) What does it show about God (Father, Son, Holy Spirit)?
 - a) His nature and character?

 - b) His grace?

 - c) Jesus and His salvation?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

- 2) What should I do?

Now underline the application of the Main Point.

Sharing the Word

Use

'Hearing the Word' can be used alone, with one other person, or in a group

Preparing for a group

Time put in alone beforehand will greatly benefit time spent together.

Work through the stages - LOOK, LEARN, LISTEN, LIVE.

Write down your own questions and answers. *

Format

- a. LOOK - Any questions? (If answer is known or not!)
Relevant cross references in rest of the Bible?
- b. LEARN - Answers to questions?
- c. LISTEN - Key verse and Main Point?
- d. LIVE - What does it show about God /His grace/ Jesus?
What should I do

n.b. Leave plenty of time for the LIVE section!

By also eating together and a time of prayer, you will have shared something of the life of the early church! (Acts 2:42-47)

Remember!

As we gather round God's Word -

- a) Listen to the views of others.
- b) Make room for the novice. (They can join in too when you start by listing 'Any questions'.)
- c) Don't let the 'knowledgeable' dominate. Encourage everyone to think for themselves.
- d) Try to include others, especially 'seekers', in your time together.

* The **process** is explained and practiced in a four-hour course, suitable for all, called '**An Introduction to 'Hearing the Word'**

<https://hearingtheword.org.uk>

“I can read the Bible for myself!”

To show that the Bible is accessible to all,
the Rev Nigel Barge, a former minister of Torrance Parish Church,
has devised a tool called ‘Hearing the Word’.
The Manual explains the basic principles of Bible reading,
teaches them by means of an interactive course,
and practices them on a single passage, Mark 10:35-45,
Participants follow in a Workbook: *Hearing the Word - Introduction*,
which includes the next six passages in Mark,
so they may follow on for themselves.

As the principles apply equally to all, the course will both
instruct the novice and refresh the ‘hardened’ Bible student!

Further Study Guides cover various genres of Bible material –

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