

*Jeff understands and dispenses grace, with passion,
humour and thoughtful content - a rare combination.*

PHILIP YANCEY

Life

WITH LUCAS

**APPLYING GOD'S
WORD TODAY**

**JANUARY -
MARCH 2022**

SAMPLER



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Published 2021 by SCM/Novio – PO Box 3070, Littlehampton, West Sussex BN17 6WX, UK

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Design by Piero Regnante – Rogfog Creative | rogfog.co.uk

Printed by Halcyon

scm *Novio*

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THIS VERY FIRST EDITION OF *LIFE WITH LUCAS*!

For nearly two decades I was privileged to partner with CWR to write *Life Every Day* – perhaps you were one of the many who used that resource in your walk with the Lord. When CWR (now Waverley Resources) moved in another direction, I thought that my days of writing Bible notes were over, but a huge response from many readers has shown me otherwise: hence this brand-new resource, published by my own ministry. As you'll see, there are a number of features that we hope and pray will help us all to understand, reflect on, and apply God's word, including online 'Going Deeper' sections and small group resources, opportunities to access podcasts, special book offers for readers, and more!

As we begin this new adventure together, I'm so grateful for your company!



INTRODUCTION

GETTING THE MOST OUT OF LIFE WITH LUCAS!

CHOOSE A TIME

Find the best time that works for you, ideally the same time, same place every day, when you can concentrate and have the least number of distractions.

PAUSE AND TALK TO GOD

Take a moment to focus on God and ask Him to speak to you as you read and reflect on His word.

READ GOD'S WORD

Read the daily passage from your Bible. Don't be tempted just to skip this part. It's important: who knows how the Holy Spirit might speak to you as you read the actual text?

MAKE NOTES

Writing slows you down and helps you focus. Write in your Bible, a notebook, or in the white space in the devotions. Don't hesitate to underline, write in the margins, or circle words.

ONLINE VIDEO INTRODUCTIONS, AND GOING DEEPER

When you see the video icon, this points you to a brief video introduction to the subject.

Make the most of the occasional 'Going Deeper' resources. You can find them at lifewithlucas.co.uk/goingdeeper. They will help you delve further into the passage.

GIVE YOUR DAY TO GOD

Thank God for what you've learned and ask for help if the day's notes brought to light anything especially applicable to your life at the moment.

**WEEKEND
01-02 JAN**

WHY BELIEVE?

READ

John 20:19-31,
3:1-15



**FOR A VIDEO
INTRODUCTION,
GO TO**
[lifewithlucas.co.uk/
whybelieve](http://lifewithlucas.co.uk/whybelieve)

As you enter our home, there's a framed photograph that was taken at our wedding. Draped in the horrendous fashions of 1978, I am wearing a suit with super-wide lapels, and sporting a tie with a knot that looked bigger than my head. People look at the beautiful face of Kay, my wife, standing next to the nerdy-looking me, and they usually ask Kay, 'Why?' They seem rather incredulous that she would have wanted to marry me.

As John presents us with a number of word portraits of his dear friend Jesus, he seeks to show us why we should believe in Christ and place our lives in His hands. But the belief that John speaks of is not some vague, merely intellectual notion that we might affirm on Sunday mornings – he wants us to experience the dynamic life that can be ours as we walk with Jesus daily. As we begin our journeying together in this brand-new Bible note project, let's pray that we will never settle down into a Christianity that is just about the right ideas and truths, a faith that has descended into theory, but rather seek one that will nudge us into a closer faith walk with Jesus each day – including today!

Consider: Let's ask the Lord to stir up our souls, and in this journey in John's gospel, show us Jesus afresh.



Going deeper

Go to lifewithlucas.co.uk for 'Belief according to John'.

MON 03 JAN

THE WEDDING GUEST

READ

John 2:1-11

Luke 2:52

FOCUS

Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding.

John 2:1-2

All that talk of wedding photographs yesterday leads us to one of the most famous weddings in history – the nuptials held at Cana. Jesus was close to His home village, because Khirbet Kana, as it was known then, was just eight miles from Nazareth. Obviously, the bride and groom are normally the centre of attention at their wedding, but John wants us to focus on what Jesus does. Before we move on to consider the crisis that unfolded, notice that John wants us to know that Jesus was specifically invited. Present there with six of his disciples, the whole team were not together yet. That invitation gives us wonderful insight into what He was like in His relationships with family and friends.

Dull people aren't popular at celebrations. And self-centred or unhealthily intense souls aren't usually high on guest lists either. Sometimes, I've met Christians who complain they are not popular in their workplaces, or say they find it difficult to make and keep friendships. Often, they conclude it's because they follow Jesus, and so are suffering for their faith, and that can be the case. But it pains me to say that some are unpopular, and it's not because of Jesus – it's because of them! Are we people that others want to be around?

Prayer: Lord, may Your love, kindness and beauty be formed in me. Amen.

TUE 04 JAN

SHAME SHROUDS

READ

John 2:1-3
1 John 1:8-10

FOCUS

When the wine was
gone...
John 2:3

It's a moment I remember, even though it happened decades ago. My brother brought a girlfriend home, and when she met me, she made a disparaging comment about me not sharing his good looks. That one sentence festered in my soul for decades; I was not just embarrassed, I felt ashamed.

When the wine ran out that day in Cana, it was more than inconvenient. The host family faced disgrace and shame, which may be why Mary intervened, because she saw disaster looming. Weddings were viewed as reciprocal events, and lawsuits could be launched if it was felt that a family was scrimping on providing for their guests. The celebrations could last for a week, and would grind to an awful halt without wine: a beautiful occasion wrecked by a crisis. Social shame would surround the hosts for years to come.

Shame comes to us in a variety of forms. Unlike guilt and conviction, which can point to where we have been wrong, shame smothers us and says that we are wrong, and when we live ashamed, our brightest days are blighted.

Perhaps you live with your head down, paralysed by shame because of past failures. You have repented from them but feel unable to move on. Accept the forgiveness and grace of God, which is not based on your feelings which aren't to be trusted, but on the fact of God's word.

Prayer: I bring my deepest regrets to you, Father. Enable me to not just believe in grace, but rest in it. Amen.

Going deeper: Go to lifewithlucas.co.uk for 'Shame'.

WED 05 JAN

STEPPING UP

READ

John 2:1-5
Matthew 20:20-28

FOCUS

When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine."

John 2:3

When attending a wedding, it's unusual for one of the guests to get involved if there is a catering problem – that would be the host family's responsibility. But to the surprise of many commentators, Mary quietly takes the initiative, and draws her son's attention to the imminent crisis. This was a culture where a wedding might be the highlight of a couple's life, as they were often dressed as a king and queen for the extended celebration. Now it was all on the brink of ruin. That's when Mary stepped up.

Some people meander through life lamenting the many problems in the world, and eager to point out the weaknesses and challenges in the Church. They loudly declare that something needs to be done – by someone else. They see themselves as spectators. Others roll up their sleeves and get involved: giving, serving, caring and praying. Many of these heroes intervene without fanfare, as Mary did, and contribute behind the scenes, which can mean they go unnoticed and uncelebrated.

Perhaps you are one of the many of those countless souls who tirelessly serve, and you're feeling weary and even presumed upon. Thank you for all that you are and do. May you know the smile and encouragement of the God who reserves the word 'great' for those who serve.

Prayer: Lord, show me when I need not just to notice a need, but meet it. Amen.

THU 06 JAN

PRAYER IS ABOUT MAKING SUGGESTIONS

READ

John 2:1-5
Matthew 14:22-36

FOCUS

"Dear woman, why do you bring me into this?" Jesus replied.

John 2:4

Yesterday, we saw that in telling Jesus about the wine shortage, Mary was suggesting that He do something about it. That's surely what prayer is, as we bring our requests and suggestions to the Lord. While prayer is more than asking, because it includes thanksgiving, praise, repentance, questioning, and even complaining, nevertheless request is at the very heart of prayer. Jesus teaches us to ask of God, and be persistent in our asking.

Initially stunned when he saw Jesus striding across the waves of the Sea of Galilee, Peter's water-walking happened because he suggested it: 'Tell me to come to you on the water.' Scripture points us to people of faith like Abraham and Moses who boldly offered God suggestions, and even engaged Him in negotiation.

That said, not all suggestions get a positive response, as James and John discovered when they sought permission from Jesus to annihilate a Samaritan village (Luke 9:51-56), and Peter found when he tried to suggest that Jesus should not go to the cross! (Matt. 16:22-23). The rather awkward exchange between Jesus and Mary also demonstrates that: He makes it clear that He was going to be walking in the will of His heavenly Father rather than the wishes of His earthly mother. But nevertheless, He still responded. Let's go ahead and bring our suggestions to God.

Prayer: I come to your throne of grace with boldness, because of grace, Father. Help me to make my suggestions, with faith and thanksgiving. Amen.

FRI 07 JAN

THE BEST WINE

READ

John 2:1-5
Matthew 20:20-28

FOCUS

"Everyone brings out the best wine first. They bring out the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink. But you have saved the best until now."

John 2:10

It's a thought that surely strikes many of us: especially when life is hard, prayer seems ignored, or following Jesus is painful and costly. In those seasons, we can be tempted to wonder – is it all worth it? Wouldn't my life be so much simpler without the demands of discipleship? What might life be like without God in the picture? After nearly five decades as a Christian, that thought occasionally circles my mind. We shouldn't be shocked when we're tempted to turn back, because Jesus always made it clear that being with Him would be demanding, as His story about tower building illustrates.

When Jesus ordered the jars be used for the miracle, He made a dangerous move. The jars were earmarked exclusively for the purification ritual that Jews performed when they entered a house. Using them to serve wine risked upsetting any Pharisees who might be attending the feast, or who would hear about what happened later. But as we will see tomorrow, this act was rich in symbolism, because Jesus was showing our cleansing would not come through old religious routines, but through His transforming work. And the wine that was produced in an instant was celebrated as the very best. When we walk with God and follow His ways, we are living according to the Maker's plan – the very best way.

Prayer: Lord, when the road is hard and steep, help me to remember that living for You and with You is the very best way, whatever the challenges. Amen.

**WEEKEND
08-09 JAN**

ON THE TRAIL OF CLUES

READ

John 2:11
Revelation 21:1-4

Before we move on, we should know this beautiful episode is about far more than Jesus rescuing a hapless family from the embarrassment of a wine shortage. We saw yesterday that following God leads to the best possible life, symbolised by the verdict that the wine Jesus provided was excellent, and it flowed in abundance – over a hundred gallons.

Commentators debate the significance of the detail that John gives, that this episode happened on the third day of the week. Tuesday, on the Jewish calendar, is still the preferred day for weddings in Israel. And that's because on the original third day of creation, God pronounced things 'good' twice; the only time He did so in the seven-day season of creating. The Jews view the third day as one of double blessing, the best day of the week to begin a new life.

John affirms that this was a 'sign', the first of seven, and one that begins a trail of clues about who Jesus really is. It's surely no coincidence that Jesus began His ministry at a wedding, one that speaks of the wedding feast to come that will happen because His mission has been completed with victory. Following Christ – it's the best possible way, with a stunning future promised.

To ponder: Consider the blessings and benefits of following Jesus. It's the best way to live – but why is that true?

A sample of

GOING DEEPER:

(which will be available online)

SHAME

When we look at the situation in the Garden of Eden, we see an absence of shame, because initially there was no sin in the perfect creation that God made. But that all changed with the first couple's rebellion, not only for them, but for all of humanity (Gen. 3:10).

Shame and guilt are not the same thing. Guilt can be a healthy response of a person with a moral compass – an absence of guilt about wrong would obviously lead to personal and societal chaos. According to one best-selling author, guilt is 'the most useless of all erroneous zone behaviours. Guilt zones must be exterminated, spray cleaned and sterilized forever'. But the idea that all guilt is negative is completely at odds both with biblical Christianity, and with any commitment to life within ethical guidelines or peaceful co-existence. So what is the difference between a positive sense of guilt and a destructive experience of shame?

Guilt, induced by the conviction of the Holy Spirit, points to **specific acts of error and sin** – it signals that we have **done wrong** and need to revise our behaviour. Shame smothers and insists that **we, as complete beings, are wrong**, unworthy of love, and lacking in value. This is not about our actions, but our very selves.

Many Christians experience shame.

Martin Luther said, 'Most Christians have enough religion to feel guilty about their sins, but not enough to enjoy life in the Spirit.'

The God we serve casts our sins from us as far as the east is from the west (Ps. 103:12). Confession of sin brings the promise of forgiveness (1 John 1:9). Paul, a former persecutor of Christians, affirmed that he was determined to move forward from the deep shame that he felt: 'Brothers and sisters, I don't consider that I have taken hold of it yet. But here is the one thing I do. I forget what is behind me. I push hard toward what is ahead of me. I move on toward the goal to win the prize. God has appointed me to win it. The heavenly prize is Christ Jesus himself' (Phil 3:13-14).

Article continues....

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The gospel of John is like a photograph album, as Jesus' friend and disciple, John, shows us some beautiful 'pictures' of Jesus. These word portraits are designed to stir our faith and trust in Christ, enabling us to experience the abundant life that He offers.

And then we will begin a visit to a troubled local church as we study Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. There we discover a community of believers who were experiencing some of the challenges that can come our way as we seek to live for Jesus – and share the faith journey with each other...

Join us for
Life WITH LUCAS

This is a sample of the brand new daily Bible reading notes, *Life with Lucas*, which will be available in full from January 2022. In an age where truth is often seen as relative, the notes are designed to help us to understand and apply the solid truth of God's word into our everyday lives, strengthening us in our walk of discipleship. Other resources, like an online 'Going Deeper' section, video introductions to themes, podcasts and more will be available. The notes will be issued quarterly, and will always have a section that is directly focused on the person of Jesus. The notes are available by subscription or through Christian retail outlets.



Life with Lucas is written by Jeff Lucas, an international author, speaker, broadcaster and coach. Married to Kay, his passion is to equip the Church with biblical, practical Bible teaching, marked by vulnerability and humour. Jeff is a best-selling author of 34 books, and broadcasts weekly on Premier Christian Radio. He is a teaching pastor at Timberline Church, Fort Collins, Colorado.



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