

A vibrant, high-angle photograph of a dining table. The scene is filled with various dishes, including a large bowl of food, a glass of water, a glass of red wine, and a hand holding a knife. The lighting is warm and golden, creating a rich, textured appearance. The overall composition is dynamic and visually appealing.

UNEXPECTED

MEALS WITH JESUS IN LUKE



GROWTH GROUP BOOK

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INTRODUCTION TO UNEXPECTED



The gospel of Luke is a historical biography of Jesus written by Luke. We read in Luke 1:1-4 that this biography was a carefully investigated, eye-witness account, written in an orderly way for the purpose of giving Theophilus and all who read this book certainty of the things they'd heard about Jesus.

In this series at Southside the journey we are going to go on is looking at the times Jesus sat down with people over a meal. It is a journey that explores the beautiful way Jesus interacted with all kinds of people. As we will see, over food, in so many different ways, Jesus shocks us with the beauty and power of his words and his interactions.

As we explore Luke together, here are a few things to note about Luke and about how to get the most out of this series.

This is a book about Jesus first.

Whenever we read anything (particularly in the Bible), our temptation is to think immediately, "What has this got to do with me?". While we will engage with God in this series, it is always a good reminder that this is the gospel - literally good news - about Jesus. Jesus is the hero of the story, and knowing Him is the most important journey we can go on together. We will benefit greatly by asking the question first - What does this show me about Jesus?

INTRODUCTION TO UNEXPECTED

There are things we won't understand.

God's word is so rich in the depth of its beauty as it shows us about our God. In this series, we want to recognize and appreciate that there are times when we won't understand everything going on. We want to ask and explore these ideas, and as we do in a non-judgement environment, we will see how helpful honesty in community really is.

God will speak to us individually.

Luke is a book about Jesus first, however, because it is God's word there is a reality that when we open the Bible - God speaks. God speaks in a way that is personal, and so we want to spend time thinking about this, and sharing with each other how God speaks to us personally.

God's Word shapes and reshapes our prayer.

Growth groups are not simply Bible Studies, despite the fact that we do study the Bible. The purpose of spending time thinking about how God's word shapes our prayers is to reflect our desire as a Church to grow, and not simply just in our knowledge of God, but in our relationship with Him. Prayer is a key aspect of this, so we will think about how God's word shapes our prayers and spend quality time praying with each other.

As we go on this journey together looking at the Meals with Jesus, we invite you to be honest and open with God and each other.



UNEXPECTED
MEALS WITH JESUS IN LUKE

WEEK 1:

AN UNEXPECTED SAINT

LUKE 5:27-32

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, **28** and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

29 Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. **30** But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

31 Jesus answered them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 1:

AN UNEXPECTED SAINT

LUKE 5:27-32

Wrestle further:

Which character do you resonate more with in your life day to day: The Pharisees – looking down on other people; or Levi's – being looked down on by others?

How does this moment with Jesus reshape your thoughts?

Have you ever found yourself crushed by your own sin? Read 1 Timothy 1:15-17 carefully – how does Paul equip us to handle those moments?

How does Levi's reaction to leaving everything and following Jesus impact you? Would you react the same way? Are there areas of your life you're holding back from Jesus?

WEEK 1:

AN UNEXPECTED SAINT

LUKE 5:27-32

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

What can we pray for you in relation to the people you're on mission to?

WEEK 2:

UNEXPECTED GRACE

LUKE 7:36–50

36 When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 38 As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

40 Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."
"Tell me, teacher," he said.

41 "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."
"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46 You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47 Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

50 Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

WEEK 2:

UNEXPECTED GRACE

LUKE 7:36–50

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

Wrestle further:

Why does Simon, the Pharisee, struggle with the idea of grace? How does this same struggle show itself in our lives (is there a bit of Pharisee in us)?

The woman's life of sin was very public and common knowledge. To know she was forgiven was really significant and she showed it. When we look into our own lives, what kind of person do you see? Have you been forgiven much, or forgiven little?

Is the way you love/treat others a true reflection of how God has loved you? How should we put this into practice in our response to God and others?

WEEK 2:

UNEXPECTED GRACE

LUKE 7:36-50

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

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WEEK 3:

UNEXPECTED ABUNDANCE

LUKE 9:10-17

10 When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida, 11 but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.

12 Late in the afternoon the Twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away so they can go to the surrounding villages and countryside and find food and lodging, because we are in a remote place here."

13 He replied, "You give them something to eat."

They answered, "We have only five loaves of bread and two fish—unless we go and buy food for all this crowd." 14 (About five thousand men were there.)

But he said to his disciples, "Have them sit down in groups of about fifty each." 15 The disciples did so, and everyone sat down. 16 Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke them. Then he gave them to the disciples to distribute to the people. 17 They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 3:

UNEXPECTED ABUNDANCE

LUKE 9:10-17

Wrestle further:

Put yourself in the shoes of the Disciples. How would you feel after experiencing the events of what happened a few verses earlier, 9:1-6? What would the conversation have been like in vs 10?

If you are a Disciple (specifically referred to as 'apostles' in this event which is meant to emphasize their calling to serve and minister to others), how would you handle the situation of it being late in the day and people are hungry? Have you been in a situation where you can't fix people's problems and how did you handle that pressure?

Through the events that played out that day, what was Jesus teaching the disciples about their calling as his followers? Who's in control and who's not?

In what ways do you feel like one of the disciples? What makes it hard to trust Jesus, even though He has all authority and full of compassion?

WEEK 3:

UNEXPECTED ABUNDANCE

LUKE 9:10-17

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

What can we pray for you in relation to the people you're on mission to?

WEEK 4:

AN UNEXPECTED DECISION

LUKE 10:38-42

38 As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. **39** She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. **40** But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

41 "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, **42** but few things are needed—or indeed only one. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 4:

AN UNEXPECTED DECISION

LUKE 10:38-42

Wrestle further:

Have you felt like Martha, being the one doing all the work when others (siblings) don't help? Why does the world need Marthas?

Why, then, does Jesus say that Mary has done what is better? What did her actions reveal about her priorities?

What was wrong with Martha's choice? How did her actions and heart reveal her priorities? In what ways do we get so concerned about matters in life that we stop listening to Jesus?

Should we become monks, cut off from the business of life to spend our time meditating on God's word? How can we hold the two things (doing & listening) together?

WEEK 4:

AN UNEXPECTED DECISION

LUKE 10:38-42

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

What can we pray for you in relation to the people you're on mission to?

WEEK 5:

UNEXPECTED HONOUR

LUKE 14:1-14

One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. 2 There in front of him was a man suffering from abnormal swelling of his body. 3 Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" 4 But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man, he healed him and sent him on his way.

5 Then he asked them, "If one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull it out?" 6 And they had nothing to say.

7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. 11 For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

12 Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. 13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 5:

UNEXPECTED HONOUR

LUKE 14:1-14

Wrestle further:

Jesus came into the meal with the Pharisees looking down on Him very suspiciously (even skeptical) of Him. What does Jesus' healing of the man and His rebuke of their understanding of the law reveal about their true status in comparison to Jesus?

How can we be like the Pharisees who think they're better than others? What areas of your life (spiritually, morally, socially, intellectually, or other) do you resonate with where in your heart you can think you're more superior to others?

How does Jesus say we should conduct ourselves when it comes to humility and pride? And, why does it matter?

WEEK 5:

UNEXPECTED HONOUR

LUKE 14:1-14

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

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WEEK 6:

UNEXPECTED REPENTANCE

LUKE 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

9 Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 6:

UNEXPECTED REPENTANCE

LUKE 19:1-10

Wrestle further:

Can you associate with Zaccheaus who was looked down on, rejected, and a social outcast? How can feeling like this lead you to chasing self-respect in things like employment status or wealth like Zaccheaus?

We're not told about the exact conversation that happened, but what changed for Zaccheaus after meeting Jesus?

Why was it such an unexpected thing to happen? What would Zaccheaus have to give up or change by following Jesus? Why would he do this?

How has the gospel shaped your identity? How is that reflected in your priorities in what you chose to pursue, or what you give up?

Are there things we need to repent of (let go of)? What should a Christian life of repentance look like?

WEEK 6:

UNEXPECTED REPENTANCE

LUKE 19:1-10

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

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WEEK 7:

UNEXPECTED SAVIOUR

LUKE 22:7-27

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover."

9 "Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked.

10 He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, 11 and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' 12 He will show you a large room upstairs, all furnished. Make preparations there."

13 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

14 When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. 15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. 18 For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. 21 But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. 22 The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed. But woe to that man who betrays him!" 23 They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this.

24 A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. 25 Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. 26 But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. 27 For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.

WEEK 7:

UNEXPECTED SAVIOUR

LUKE 22:7-27

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

Wrestle further:

Read Exodus 12:1-13 - What is the meaning behind the Passover? What is the significance of Jesus' words in 22:19-20? How does Jesus fulfill what the Passover was about?

Jesus was going to lay down His life and become the lamb to be slaughtered for the sake of others which was not what the Disciples were expecting from their leader. Why is sacrificing yourself for others so counter-cultural (and even counter-intuitive) today? Why do we see it as weakness more than greatness?

How are we like the Disciples? In what ways do we make the same mistakes when it comes to greatness? What have you found helpful to pursue as we think about change?

WEEK 7:

UNEXPECTED SAVIOUR

LUKE 22:7-27

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

What can we pray for you in relation to the people you're on mission to?

WEEK 8:

AN UNEXPECTED STRANGER

LUKE 24:13-35

13 Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. 15 As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; 16 but they were kept from recognizing him.

17 He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

19 "What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. 20 The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; 21 but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. 22 In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning 23 but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. 24 Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus."

25 He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

28 As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. 29 But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

30 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

WEEK 8:

AN UNEXPECTED STRANGER

LUKE 24:13-35

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

Wrestle further:

Describe the emotional roller coaster these two men have had and why did it matter so much? How did the experience of that day change their lives?

Rather than Jesus proving himself by showing them His scars in His hands and feet, He points them to the Scriptures. What does this say about the Bible and how God reveals Himself? How do we sometimes expect God to reveal Himself in supernatural ways rather than digging into the Scriptures ourselves?

These two men had an amazing experience to say their hearts were burning within them - what caused their hearts to burn? Is this something we can experience today? Have you experienced this today - what might lead to that feeling?

WEEK 8:

AN UNEXPECTED STRANGER

LUKE 24:13-35

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

How are your relationships with others?

What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

What can we pray for you in relation to the people you're on mission to?

WEEK 9:

UNEXPECTED INVITATION

LUKE 14:15-24

15 When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, “Blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.”

16 Jesus replied: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. 17 At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, ‘Come, for everything is now ready.’

18 “But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, ‘I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.’

19 “Another said, ‘I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.’

20 “Still another said, ‘I just got married, so I can’t come.’

21 “The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, ‘Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.’

22 “‘Sir,’ the servant said, ‘what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.’

23 “Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full. 24 I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.’”

Hear God speak:

Jesus: What does this passage tell us about Jesus? Is there anything about Him that is unexpected?

Understand: Are there any questions that you have? What is the main point of this passage?

Me: What is God saying to me?

Prayer: How does this passage help me pray?

WEEK 9:

UNEXPECTED INVITATION

LUKE 14:15-24

Wrestle further:

There are a number of characters in this story that represent different people. The Master represents God. What can we learn about God from this passage?

The first invitees are the Jews (context 14:1-14). What is the lesson for the Jews? How can we be like the Jews?

The second and third invitees (unexpected guests) are outcasts or gentiles. What do we learn about them? How are we like them?

There are also the Master's servants, representing believers who know God the Master. What can we learn from them (also look up 2 Cor 5:20-6:2)?

Who do you associate with most? What is God calling you to do? What action points should we take away from this parable?

WEEK 9:

UNEXPECTED INVITATION

LUKE 14:15-24

Prayer: (Break into groups of 3 to discuss and pray)

How has God been at work in your life this week?

How's your relationship with God?

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What do you want prayer for in relation to the study tonight?

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