

Commissions

Jesus commissioned His followers to proclaim the gospel.

LUKE 24:36-49

MEMORY VERSE: LUKE 24:48

STUDY Luke 24:36-49, noting the scenes in the story. Observe how Jesus' appearance and His pointing to Scripture gave the disciples confidence for their future task.

CREATE a teaching plan for your group using the ideas on pages 140-142. Look for ways of using the Key Doctrine (God the Son, PSG, p. 122) to help the group understand God the Son. Consider using a teaching approach you have yet to use this quarter. See page 142 for ideas.

GATHER the following items:

- Personal Study Guides (PSGs) for each group member

Prepare to display:

- Pack Item 2** (*Outline of Luke*)
- Pack Item 6** (*Key Verse: Luke 20:17*)

Make copies of:

- Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*)
- Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Jesus' Post-Resurrection Appearances*)
- Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Proof of the Resurrection*)

CONSULT the weekly Explore the Bible adult podcast to gain insights on the go about this week's study on Ministry Grid, Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, Spotify, LifeWay's Digital Pass, or at goExploreTheBible.com/adults-training.

REINFORCE the session by directing the group to resources that may help them become more comfortable or prepared to share the gospel.

FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

God the Son

Jesus was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion (Matt. 28:9).

Military personnel do not debate orders to report for duty or to undertake a mission. They carry out their commission; that's what they signed up to do. Christians also have a commission—a Great Commission. After the resurrection and before ascending again to heaven, Jesus gave His followers their marching orders—to take the good news of salvation to all the world. He wants all people to know Him and how they can be saved through Him.

(In PSG, p. 118) **Do you view your daily activities as a commission, duty, or something else? How do these duties compare to the commission of carrying the gospel to others?**

BIBLE SKILL

Use multiple Scripture passages to understand a major doctrine.

Review Romans 8:11; Philippians 3:21; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8; and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. Consider how Jesus' bodily resurrection gives believers hope. How does Jesus' bodily resurrection offer hope for Christians?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

LUKE 24:36-53

Some of the women had visited the tomb, found it empty, and reported angelic pronouncements that Jesus was alive. Yet, the disciples doubted. Peter and John also went to the tomb and likewise found it empty. The other disciples questioned their testimonies. Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and later to Peter, both of whom reported their experiences to the larger group. While more open to this news, the disciples wondered what it meant. Just before Jesus' appearance to the larger group of followers, the two disciples from Emmaus excitedly shared their visit with Jesus. Yet, the disciples had locked the door for fear of the Jews.

More incredulously, when Jesus suddenly appeared in their midst, the disciples were frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost or spirit. Luke says they were amazed and experienced disbelief because of their joy (Luke 24:41). They were so overwhelmed by His presence that they were afraid to believe their own eyes.

Jesus spoke peace to them and showed them His hands and feet. They witnessed the nail prints and saw the place where a Roman spear pierced Jesus' side. To prove He was flesh and blood, Jesus let them touch Him. He demonstrated His bodily presence by eating a piece of fish with them. Jesus was alive and had returned to them.

Jesus took time to re-instruct the disciples about the Scriptures that foretold His death and resurrection. He showed how the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms revealed many prophecies that were fulfilled in Him. They needed the biblical foundation for their commission to proclaim His gospel throughout the world. Jesus sent them to proclaim His message everywhere, starting in Jerusalem.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ASSURES (LUKE 24:36-43)

Verses 36-40

Jesus' disciples had experienced quite a day. From the despair of darkness, morning dawned to an empty tomb. The testimony of a group of women and the witness of Peter and John should have been enough for the larger company of disciples, but they remained confused. Eyewitnesses gave further credence to the report that Jesus was alive. He appeared earlier in the morning to Mary Magdalene and then to the other women. Jesus also appeared to Peter (1 Cor. 15:5). Finally, two disciples returned from Emmaus, excitedly sharing about their long walk and dinner with Jesus. Their testimony was affirmed by the other disciples who said it was true—Jesus was alive!

The disciples were **saying these things** when Jesus **himself stood in their midst**. The group may have been meeting in the large room where Jesus shared the Last Supper with the apostles. Just as the tombstone was not enough to keep Jesus in the grave, a door could not prevent His joining them. The phrase *in their midst* means He was not standing off to one side or near the door as if He had entered by it. The description of His appearance portrays a sudden occurrence. Although His glorified body was definitely physical, Jesus was no longer subject to the normal laws of physics.

Anticipating their fright, Jesus reassured them with a greeting of **“Peace to you.”** His statement was more than a salutation. He wanted them to experience the inner peace only He could give (John 14:27). He understood they were confused and disturbed. His appearance was intended to settle their hearts and prepare them for the next phase of discipleship.

In spite of Jesus' reassurance, they were **startled and terrified**. The use of the collective pronoun *they* suggests even Peter and those disciples who saw Jesus in Emmaus were affected by His unexpected appearance. The term *startled* is a participle while *terrified* is an adjective. Together, they could read as “being startled, they were terrified.” This rendering helps us connect their fright with the unexpected nature of Jesus' appearance. Because it happened so suddenly, they **thought they were seeing a ghost**. How else could He have joined them behind locked doors? This statement does not support the idea that ghosts are real. It merely demonstrates they momentarily thought He was a bodiless spirit as opposed to a physical being.

Jesus' two questions were not designed to discover unknown information but to help them understand themselves. He asked **“Why are you troubled?”** in the way of challenging their fear. He used a different word from the two terms for *startled* or *terrified* in verse 37. This participle conveys the idea of being shaken up or stirred. Because of their fear, their previous excitement over the new witnesses degenerated into trembling uncertainty.

Similarly, Jesus questioned why **doubts** arose in their **hearts**. The term *doubts* describes a struggle as if two parties were debating. Before His

VERSES 36-40

³⁶ As they were saying these things, he himself stood in their midst. He said to them, “Peace to you!” ³⁷ But they were startled and terrified and thought they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸ “Why are you troubled?” he asked them. “And why do doubts arise in your hearts?” ³⁹ Look at my hands and my feet, that it is I myself! Touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you can see I have.” ⁴⁰ Having said this, he showed them his hands and feet.

appearance, they testified to one another about their experiences. Excitement and joy filled the room, but now they began to be double-minded.

Jesus' patience and loving-kindness stepped in to settle the disciples' vacillation. He wanted them to calm down and believe. He encouraged them to look and to **touch** His **hands** and **feet**. The term **see** in verse 39 comes from the same root word as *look*, but in this instance He meant that by touching Him, they could understand and prove His bodily reality.

A **ghost does not have flesh and bones**. They did not have to verbalize what they were thinking. Jesus' omniscience revealed their thoughts as if they had shouted them aloud. He was no spirit but had a tangible body. As Jesus said this, **he showed them his hands and feet**. They could see where the nails pierced Him. Even in His glorified body, He bore the marks of the cross.

Verses 41-43

VERSES 41-43

⁴¹ But while they still were amazed and in disbelief because of their joy, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" ⁴² So they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, ⁴³ and he took it and ate in their presence.

Even though Jesus demonstrated His physical presence, the disciples **still were amazed and in disbelief**. Both terms are participles, indicating ongoing action. They were marveling at what they were seeing and hearing. Because of their **joy** these disciples could only stand and watch incredulously. Some commentators suggest the disciples thought this was just too good to be true.

As further proof they were encountering a physical person and not a spirit, Jesus asked if they had anything to **eat**. The disciples must have had an earlier meal, probably about the same time as Jesus' meal with the two disciples in Emmaus. This evening was within the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread that followed Passover. Their supper probably included unleavened bread, fish, and other food. Since the dinner took place at least two or three hours earlier, they only had a **piece of broiled fish** remaining. They gave Him what they had.

Jesus **took it and ate it**, not so much to satisfy His hunger but to demonstrate His physical nature. What further proof did they need? Jesus was **in their presence**. Not only had multiple eye-witnesses seen Him at various times during the day, but the entire group watched as His wounded hands held food and He ate. This was no apparition. Jesus was alive!

Believers can be assured of Jesus' physical resurrection. His bodily resurrection is fundamental to our faith. Eyewitnesses included the women, Peter, the two disciples from Emmaus, the larger group of disciples in Jerusalem, and over five hundred people at one time (1 Cor. 15:6). These people not only risked their lives for this message, many of them died because of their testimony to a living Christ.

What assurances do unbelievers need to accept the risen Jesus? How does our testimony demonstrate that while we have not physically seen Him, we believe and know He is alive?

OPENS (LUKE 24:44-46)

Verses 44-46

On several occasions before His crucifixion, Jesus told His followers about His impending death and resurrection. He referred to these teachings as **my words that I spoke to you**. The phrase **while I was still with you** sounds unusual since He was speaking with them at the time. Jesus was talking about prior to the crucifixion. Luke recorded at least three of those occasions. After Peter acknowledged Jesus was the Messiah, Jesus warned He would be rejected and suffer before rising the third day (Luke 9:21-22). After casting a demon out of a child, Jesus told the disciples He would be betrayed (9:42-44). As Jesus led His followers toward Jerusalem that final time, He described how the prophets wrote in detail about His being mocked, insulted, spit on, flogged, and killed before rising on the third day (18:31-33).

He reminded them once more of what was written about Him in **the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms**. These prophecies were more than ancient writings, they were spiritual truths that **must be fulfilled**. Without His death and resurrection, centuries of prophetic utterance would be in vain. Even more importantly, without His death and resurrection, Jesus' life would have been a lie and we would remain in our sins (1 Cor. 15:17).

Just like Jesus opened two disciples' eyes in Emmaus, he **opened** the disciples' **minds** so they could **understand the Scriptures**. They had learned these Scriptures from their childhood onward but failed to grasp the meaning as applied to the Messiah. More personally, when they heard His earlier warnings, they could not bring themselves to imagine their Lord experiencing such horrific suffering and death. These matters cannot be understood by mere human understanding; they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14). The disciples needed Jesus to open their spiritual eyes so they could comprehend the truths of God's Word. In the same way, today we need the Holy Spirit to help us see how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

He told them once more, **this is what is written**. Jesus often quoted Scripture. As He was tempted by the devil, He responded with Scripture (Luke 4:1-12). When He sat in His home synagogue, He taught fulfillment of Scripture (4:16-21). When questioned about spiritual truth, He relied on Scriptures (10:25-28). In His great sermons, He clarified application of Scripture (Matt. 5-7). Quietly opening the Scriptures again, Jesus showed His followers that **the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead the third day**. Jesus was not the victim of the Jews' conspiracy or the Romans' complicity. His death was determined by the Father before the world was created (Rev. 13:8). Everything that happened in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection was intentionally brought about by the Father so you and I might be saved.

Believers can know that God has an eternal plan to redeem His creation. He did not reverse-engineer salvation's plan as an afterthought to Jesus' crucifixion. From the beginning of Genesis, God revealed that one day the serpent would bruise the heel of the woman's seed, but He would crush the devil's head. Satan thought he won when Jesus cried, "It is finished," but the only thing finished was Christ's victory over sin and Satan.

VERSES 44-46

⁴⁴ He told them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He also said to them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead the third day,

**Why did the disciples have such difficulty understanding Jesus' teachings?
How can we help people understand Jesus' death and resurrection?**

SENDS (LUKE 24:47-49)

Verse 47

VERSE 47

⁴⁷ and repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

The fact of Jesus' death and resurrection would have been mere local news if the story stopped with these disciples. Their lives were forever changed as the living Lord spoke to them. They no longer would hide behind locked doors, but by the power of God's Spirit they would proclaim His message **to all the nations**. The good news contained several important aspects.

First, salvation begins its transformative work when people turn from their sins and toward God. The disciples' message emphasized the priority of **repentance**. *Repentance* is more than feeling sorry. The word *repent* means a change of mind that results in a change of purpose, attitude, and behavior. It begins with a new view of God and oneself. We understand we have sinned against a Holy God and stand condemned (John 3:18). We desperately need **forgiveness of sins**. Jesus' death provided atonement for our sins (Rom. 3:26).

Second, forgiveness is proclaimed **in his name**. Jesus is the only name given among men whereby we might be saved (Acts 4:12). If Jesus had remained in the tomb, His name would have been forgotten in the halls of history. Only through Jesus' victory over death and hell could He have a name that makes the forgiveness of sins possible.

Third, this good news is so vital it must be proclaimed *to all the nations*. The Jews misunderstood their purpose. They thought God's kingdom was exclusively theirs. In cleansing the temple, Jesus declared that God's house was intended for all people (Isa. 56:7; Mark 11:17). His disciples would start at **Jerusalem**, for salvation should first be offered to the Jews as God's special people, and then to the Gentiles (Rom. 1:16). They must take the gospel to all people of every nation (Matt. 28:19-20).

Verses 48-49

VERSES 48-49

⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And look, I am sending you what my Father promised. As for you, stay in the city until you are empowered from on high."

Jesus reminded them that they were **witnesses of these things**. They did not have second-hand information. Luke began this letter to Theophilus with the promise that his narrative depended on people who had actually observed these matters (Luke 1:2). John later wrote that they declared what they had seen, heard, and felt (1 John 1:1). When Peter preached the powerful sermon at Pentecost, he claimed that he and the other disciples were witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (Acts 2:32).

Personal knowledge is a powerful motivator. For over three years, these disciples had walked with Jesus. They heard the authority of His voice as He taught. They watched the lame walk, the deaf hear, the blind see, the lepers cleansed, and the dead raised. Now they were conversing with the One who had died on a cross just three days earlier. They didn't fully

understand it, but they knew it to be true. Jesus was alive, and they had the most important message a lost world could desire.

Jesus' statement in verse 49 included two important components. He not only was sending them to the world, but He was sending to them what the **Father promised**. They would not be going in their own power but would be **empowered from on high**. Knowing they could not succeed without the Holy Spirit, Jesus told them to **stay in the city** (Jerusalem) until the Spirit empowered them. They would need the Spirit's person, presence, and power.

This statement sounds much like Jesus' commission in Acts 1:4-5. The end of Luke's narrative includes Jesus' ascension from the Mount of Olives near Bethany, so he could have telescoped the events into two scenes (Luke 24:50-53). However, Jesus also might have reiterated His commission for emphasis. Since Luke wrote Acts as well as his Gospel, he already had the information for both texts in mind. The important aspect of this passage involves the promise of the Spirit's power for all believers as we carry Jesus' good news to the world.

Believers are sent to tell all people about the forgiveness found in Jesus. Everyone desperately needs the message entrusted to us. Ours is not a duty but a privilege to be heralds of salvation through Jesus Christ. Nor do we have to depend on our own resources, but we share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. The result rests between the individual and God.

To whom has God sent you? How does the Holy Spirit give you confidence to share about Jesus?

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION

BEGIN: As the group arrives, invite them to share a word they would use to describe their daily activities. Record responses on a board.

RESPOND: After most have arrived, review the responses listed on the board. Call attention to the first paragraph on page 118 of the Personal Study Guide (PSG) and the questions included. Discuss: ***Do you view your daily activities as a commission, duty, or something else? How do these duties compare to the commission of carrying the gospel to others?*** (PSG, p. 118)

TRANSITION: *Christians have a commission—the Great Commission. Today’s session focuses on how Jesus sent and empowered His disciples to witness. He does the same for believers today.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

INTRODUCE: Explain that this session concludes the series of studies on the Gospel of Luke. Lead the group to locate the Outline of Luke (PSG, p. 9) or point to **Pack Item 2** (*Outline of Luke*). Note how the studies have progressed from Jesus’ birth through His ministry, death, resurrection, and now commissioning of disciples.

SUMMARIZE: Summarize the information from Understand the Context about Jesus’ appearances after His resurrection (PSG, p. 119) or refer to **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Jesus’ Post-Resurrection Appearances*). Note that today’s session focuses on Jesus’ last appearance to His disciples, when He commissioned them to take the good news of salvation to the world.

TRANSITION: *We are saved to be sent. Jesus’ presence not only gives us courage but also empowers us for the task.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **Luke 24:36-43**, as the group listens for ways Jesus assures the disciples.

EXPLAIN: Jesus appeared to the disciples when they were behind a locked door. Use information from the second paragraph under information about verses 36-37 (PSG, p. 120) to explain why the door was locked.

SEARCH: Form two teams. Invite one team to search comments under verses 36-43 (PSG, pp. 120-122) to discover the disciples’ reaction to Jesus. Guide the second team to search the information for how Jesus assured the disciples. Invite a spokesperson from each team to summarize their findings.

DISCUSS: ***What assurances might a person desire or need to accept the resurrection of Jesus?*** (PSG, p. 122)

HIGHLIGHT: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Proof of the Resurrection*). Briefly overview the theories of the resurrection. Focus on evidence for the literal, bodily resurrection of Christ. Ask: ***What is the significance of Jesus’ being physically resurrected? How does Him being physically resurrected impact how we view our own resurrection?*** (PSG, p. 121)

READ: Read aloud **Luke 24:44-46**, asking the group to listen for how Jesus opened the minds of His followers so they could understand the truths about Him.

HIGHLIGHT: Direct attention to the phrase “while I was still with you” (v. 44). Note that Jesus was talking about the time prior to the crucifixion. Use information on verse 44 (PSG, pp. 122-123) to discuss how Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

DISCUSS: *How do fulfilled prophecies concerning Christ provide us with assurance in the providential plans of God?* (PSG, p. 123)

EXAMINE: Direct the group to read the comments on verses 45-46 in the PSG (pp. 123-124). Guide them to discuss with a partner the comments read. Encourage them to identify the concept that best helps them understand Christ's fulfillment of the Old Testament. Direct partners to discuss their responses to the questions at the end of the comments for verses 45-46. Ask: ***How has your understanding of our minds being opened to Scripture changed as a result of this study?***

TRANSITION: *Now that Jesus Christ has shown His disciples that He suffered and rose from the dead for the salvation of all who believe, He sent them to proclaim that message to others.*

READ: Direct the group to read silently **Luke 24:47-49**, locating Jesus' promise and empowerment to the disciples.

RESPOND: Invite volunteers to highlight the element in the passage that stands out most to them. Allow them to explain.

IDENTIFY: Direct attention to the comments about verse 47 (PSG, pp. 124-125). Lead the group to locate the definition of *repentance* and the significance of the phrases "in His name" and "to all thenations." Ask: ***What was the significance of Jesus identifying Jerusalem when He had already pointed out that they were to tell "all the nations," which included Jerusalem?***

CONTRAST: Recall the description of the disciples at the beginning of the session (vv. 36-43). They were in a locked room, startled, and terrified when they saw Jesus because they thought He was a ghost. Lead the group to contrast this with the disciples as described in verses 48-49.

DISCUSS: *How does this passage give us courage to fulfill the responsibility of sharing Jesus with others?* (PSG, p. 125)

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Call attention to the session summary statement under the title for this session (PSG, p. 118): *Jesus commissioned His followers to proclaim the gospel.* Lead the group to identify how the three summary statements under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 126) relate to the summary statement.

REINFORCE: Call attention to the third question set under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 126): *As a group, identify practical ways that you can help your church in taking the gospel to the nations. What actions need to be taken in the next week to help this happen?* Encourage the group to commit to taking at least one action as individuals in the coming week.

REVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 6** (*Key Verse: Luke 20:17*). Lead the group to reflect on their study of the Gospel of Luke. Ask: ***What's one thing you'll use from our studies to help you stay focused on Jesus in the coming days?***

PRAY: Conclude the group time with prayer, thanking Jesus for commissioning His followers to proclaim the gospel. Praise Him for the power of the Holy Spirit, which enables believers to do His work throughout the world.

OPTIONS

Use these options to supplement and enhance the group plans on the previous pages.

MUSIC

As this is the last session in this unit, use “Tell the Good News,” by Gene Bartlett to review. Sing or read aloud the words to the song. Then call attention to the outline on page 9 of the PSG. Discuss how the song lyrics connect with sessions in the unit. Lead the group to write an additional verse based on the passage in this session about Jesus’ commissioning of His followers to proclaim the gospel.

CHART

Gather paper and markers.

Lead the group to name reasons people give for being reluctant to proclaim the gospel. Invite volunteers to restate Jesus’ promise to empower believers, based on Luke 24:48-49. Suggest that they refer to page 125 of the PSG for additional information. Ask: ***How can Jesus’ promise and power help you overcome any reluctance to share the gospel?***

PRESENTATION

Pre-enlist a volunteer to give a brief overview of the various views of Jesus’ resurrection based on **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: Proof of the Resurrection*). Call attention to the Bible Skill (PSG, p. 121). Invite volunteers to look up the passages listed. Discuss: ***How does Jesus’ bodily resurrection offer hope for Christians?***

CREATIVE WRITING

Gather paper and pencils.

To summarize the Bible passage, provide paper and pencils to the group. Form two teams. Instruct teams to write a journal entry from the perspective of Jesus’ disciples based on interactions with Him in this passage. Ask one group to write as disciples in Luke 24:36-43 and the other to write as disciples in Luke 24:44-49. Call for volunteers to share their journal entries. Contrast the emotions between the two experiences.

VISUAL

Gather art supplies.

Provide art supplies. Direct the group to illustrate each scene in today’s passage. Encourage them to include how each statement under Apply the Text (PSG, p. 126) is seen in each scene.

ILLUSTRATION

Gather colored pencils or pencils and paper.

Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Memory Verses Bookmark*). Provide a piece of paper and pencils to each person in the group. Suggest that they use the paper and pencils to illustrate the memory verse—what it means to them to be witnesses.