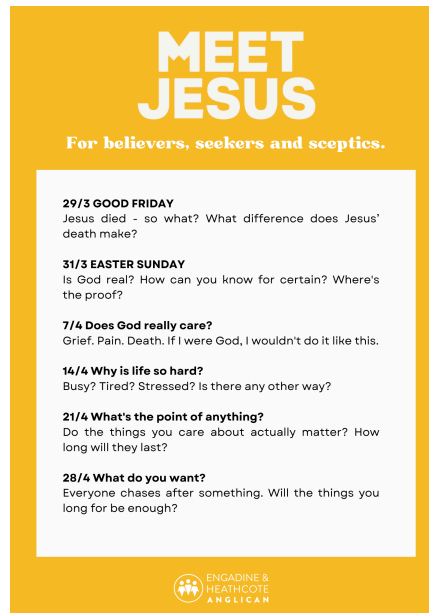
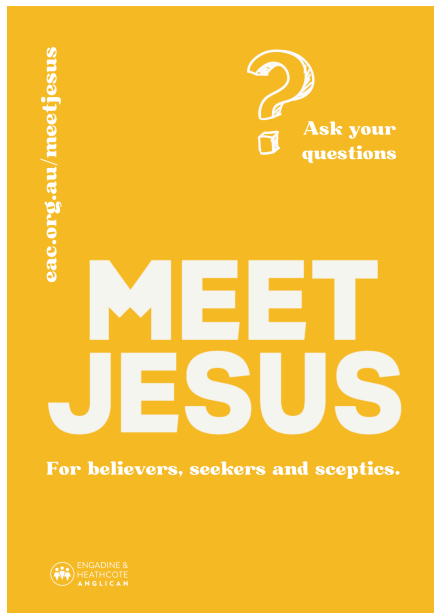


## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

### Meet Jesus Mission

We're excited to be partnering in a nation-wide mission. Read more about it: [meetjesus.au](http://meetjesus.au). We want everyone in 2233 to have a chance to consider Jesus for themselves - whether they would call themselves a believer, seeker or sceptic.

See the Sunday program here ([eac.org.au/meetjesus](http://eac.org.au/meetjesus)), plus we'll have growth group led events in Week 10.



### 2x2 Prayer

In Study 4 (p20), the studies explain the idea of '2x2 Prayer'. It would be great to introduce it earlier in the term as a simple godly discipline, which expresses trust in God and helps develop an intentional evangelistic way of thinking about each day.

### Prayer in Groups

The Studies include corporate prayers that could be prayed as a big group, as well as focus prayers for areas such as Mission Partners, Ministry Apprentices, church, and leaders.



## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

### Study 1 - Luke 14:25-35

This passage should make us slightly unsettled - Jesus is certainly choosing to get under the skin of the crowds following him (in light of all the excuses in v15-24).

The pastoral challenge of leading this study is helping your group see, hear and feel the weight of Jesus' challenge to exclusive discipleship, while:

- (1) not tipping over into quick legalism or judgmentalism ("Christians shouldn't have expensive cars or overseas holidays") or
- (2) not tipping over into despair ("I can't do that"), or
- (3) losing the privilege and treasure of following Jesus ("It's not worth it".)

Seeing the **context** (v25) is important - Jesus is not setting an impossible bar for faithful followers, but dividing the crowd into those who truly want to follow him, and those just hanging around. That's why it finishes like the parable of the 4 soils (v35b, cf Lk 8:8). Many will listen to Jesus (like the 4 soils, 8:12-15), but only 1 soil is really listening, as evidenced by their fruit.

The starting question '**Why** should I become a Christian' will probably surface all the good things we might say (forgiveness, peace, purpose), but this study then frames all those blessings within exclusive Lordship. Jesus' language is strong (v26-27), as are his 3 parables, and he ends with the appeal v34, because salvation and eternity are at stake (v24, see the lost and found theme in the next passage 15:7,10,32).

#### Tricky verses:

V26 'hate'. See quote in growth group studies. 'Hate' in Hebraic thinking signifies the thing rejected by choice of another. See Rom 9:13.

V27 'carry their cross'. In Jesus' context, the cross was not a piece of jewellery, but a symbol of execution. So this is a call to a death - that is the level of (exclusive) commitment discipleship requires. But as we read on in Luke, we see that our wonderful King went to the cross for us.

## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

V33 'give up everything'. This usually does not literally involve giving up everything (e.g. possessions), but it may. It is giving up all rival kings, which are illustrated in the previous excuses in v18-20.

V34 'salt'. Hotly debated how salt losing its saltiness - with at least 3 options: (1) salt could be compromised by other compounds, (2) salt could undergo a reaction in an oven, (3) salt could lose its impact by being mixed with other spices, as well as (4) this is an impossible scenario - salt can't lose its saltiness.

### Resources:

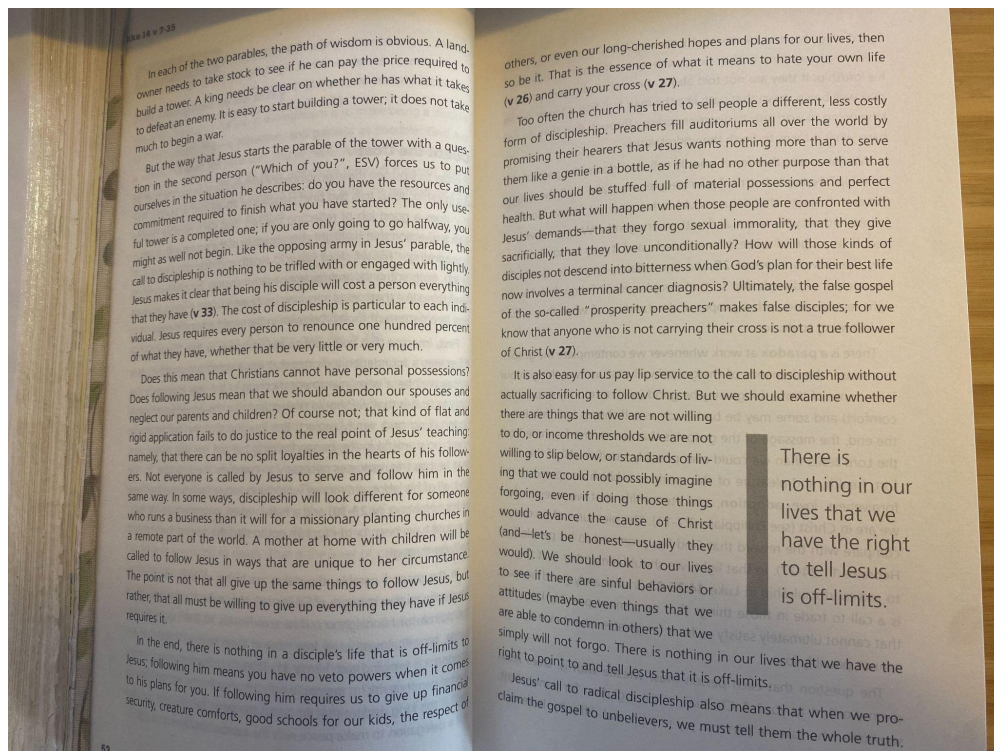
Read about Jim and Elisabeth Elliot's story:

<https://elisabethelliott.org/about/jim-elliott/>

Good article on the cost of commitment.

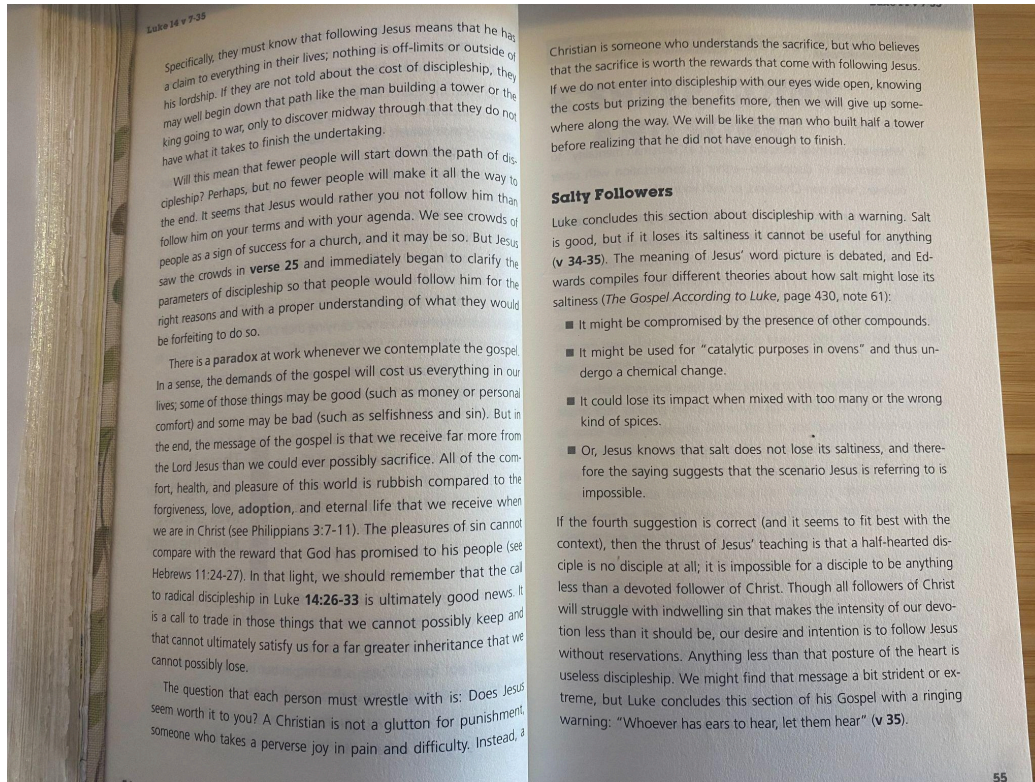
<https://www.thegoodbook.com/blog/usefulresources/2014/07/30/the-cost-of-commitment/>

McKinley, Luke for Us - see good pastoral implications.





## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes





## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

### Study 2 - Luke 15

Luke 15 is a very familiar passage for many people, but there's still so much gold to mine, as we ponder who is lost and found? There's lots of striking details (like the extended section on the older brother, which makes sense in the context of 15:1 - ie Jesus is critiquing the hard hearts of the Pharisees who don't care for the lost, showing that they are in fact lost themselves.

The cumulative progression of the 3 parables is interesting - parables 1 and 2 are quite similar (the story changes from a lost sheep to a coin), but there's still a little difference in how they finish - v7 explicitly critiques those who think they don't need to repent. Parable 3 has some striking differences - it is much longer, and slows down to concentrate on the initial lostness of the younger brother, and then the ongoing lostness of the older brother (v28), with the beautiful compassion and forgiveness of the father (v20, 22-24, 27, 31).

What's striking is that there is no search party in the 3rd parable, which seems to be a damning critique of the older brother who should have gone searching - like the Pharisees who gather around muttering (v2) while Jesus welcomes 'sinners'. Note the cliffhanger (unresolved) in v28-32. Does the older brother come back inside to celebrate with his Father and brother, or does he stubbornly stay outside, like the Pharisees 15:1?

The passage has pastoral implications for:

- (1) Seeing our own condition (as lost sheep who need finding),
- (2) Testing our proud heart, as those prone to be older brothers who don't rejoice in lost sheep being found (like the Pharisees),
- (3) Having hope for the prodigal 'lost sheep' we know, as God is the Good Shepherd who searches for them at such great cost, as the end of Luke reveals in the death of Jesus.

**OT background:** Isaiah 53, Ezekiel 34



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### Resources

Trusting the good shepherd (Rory Shiner)

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/trusting-the-shepherd/>

Why does the 3rd parable not have a search party? (David Shaw)

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/lost-and-found-some-thoughts-on-luke-15/>



## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

### Study 3 - Luke 16:1-18

This is a tricky study, so we start with a framework of how to interpret parables. Some of the complexity is:

- (1) What exactly is shrewdness? "Shrewdness" seems to be making decisions in light of the future.
- (2) The main character in the parable (the manager) is dishonest at the beginning (v1-2). Clearly Jesus can't be advocating that dishonesty in business is OK. That would be over-applying the parable, as it's inconsistent with the rest of Scripture.
- (3) While the manager's attitude of shrewdness is commended (v8), it is not clear whether the manager's type of "shrewdness" was also dishonest. Does v8 refer to him as 'dishonest' just in the past or also in the present?
- (4) How does Jesus apply the parable? For example, in v9 what does it mean to 'use worldly wealth to gain friends, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings'? Is Jesus talking about evangelism - seeking the lost (ch 15, see 15:1 cf 16:14)? The Pharisees are not using their money (v13) to seek the lost (15:2).

Summary: The manager's shrewdness is commended by the rich man, and then used as a foil by Jesus in v8. Jesus seems to be saying: If unbelievers know how to be shrewd (ie make decisions in light of their 'future'), then how much more should believers (who know the future). And then Jesus applies it to how believers use money (cf 16:19-31), in contrast to the Pharisees, and ultimately Judas (22:1-5) who sides with them.

#### Resource:

<https://cfc.sebts.edu/faith-and-culture/why-did-jesus-teach-in-parables/>



## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

### Studies 4-7

Rico Tice's book 'Honest Evangelism' is full of great quotes that helpfully capture our common experience of wanting to evangelise, but often pulling back in fear. The 'painline' is a helpful way to capture this experience - we naturally keep away from something that might cause us pain. But if we do that in evangelism, we end up silent.

\* From a **human** perspective, there's a soberness about evangelism in 2024 Australia - the gospel is marginalised and can be seen as a threat - many people will feel this in their families, street, schools and workplaces. While being realistic about this context, it's important to not let this be only and main point of reference. From **God's** perspective, there are so many gospel opportunities, as this is the last days, when God is seeking the lost. 2 Peter 3:9 is a very important verse to keep in mind - God is being patient with the world, so that more will have time to repent. Keep telling gospel stories about all the exciting opportunities in our lives and at church, so that we bring honour to God and warm people's hearts. For example, we have family members who are starting to read the Bible for the first time, completely unchurched people just walking into Sunday gatherings, and many non christian families are part of our kids and youth ministries, and wonderful openings at Moran and JPV.

**Study 4: Motivation.** This study critiques our heart (eg we don't feel shame at God's name being dishonoured) so should lead to repentance and marvelling at Jesus who did honour God's name, and God's forgiveness for us. But the study also warms our heart as we see again the gospel itself will push us forward. We see that build up and reach out are so closely connected - ie as we build each other in growth groups (to see the wonderful gospel truths more clearly), we will inevitably have a bigger heart for evangelism. The heaven and hell discussion is interesting - do we know what our friends think? It suggests a good gospel conversation starting point - "What's your view of the future?"

**Study 5: Barriers.** This is a helpful study which helps us to all be honest about how we find evangelism hard. However, see the point above (\*) about not tipping over into





## Term 1 2024: Growth Group Leaders' Notes

defeatism - 'It's too hard' or guilt ('I've just got to do it, even though I don't want to.'). Evangelism is always a privilege, and we have so many wonderful opportunities - this is the 'day of salvation' (2 Cor 5:11-6:2, 1 Cor 1:18).

### **Study 6: Partnership with God.**

A wonderful reminder that we simply plant and water (share the gospel, 1 Cor 3:5-9), but God grows (opens eyes/heart). God's Spirit works through his Word (Rom 10:14-15) - ie the Spirit removes the veil so an unbeliever can see the glory of Jesus (2 Cor 4:1-6).

### **Study 7: Partnership with God.**

A wonderful reminder that while we have our own individual/personal evangelism opportunities, and so need constant encouragement from each other (build up), much of evangelism is together, and it can be wise to "merge our universes" more.



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### Resources

Guide to Rico Tice's book 'Honest Evangelism.'

<https://www.westminsterpca.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Honest-Evangelism-Complete-Guide-6.pdf>

God's glory

<https://newcreationinx.com/2016/01/21/evangelism-as-an-overflow-of-worship/>

Hell

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-willingly-do-people-go-to-hell>

Painline

<https://rts.edu/resources/what-is-the-pain-line-and-how-do-we-cross-it/>

God's sovereignty

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/4-verses-that-transformed-evangelists-evangelism-rico-tice/>

Partnership in evangelism as church

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/the-together-of-evangelism-rico-tice/>