

**W@WLuke121**

**Word@Work from BeaconLight**

**SHALLOW SOIL**

**Luke 8:13** *Those on the rock are the ones who receive the word with joy when they hear it, but they have no root. They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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Scatter seed on rocky ground, allow the rain and sun to do their work and just watch the little plants burst into life. But for how long? Without a depth of soil, water will not be retained; the roots will not find enough resources to support the plant against the heat of the day, the cold nights or the storms. The climatic testing will be too much for the little thing; and the promising start will be shamed as the plant withers away.

Jesus said that some of His hearers would be like that: quick to respond, but unprepared for the gospel which will demand more than their initial enthusiasm. Without removing the obstacles to Christ's life developing within them, their faith would dry up. Jesus chose twelve disciples to be His apostles (although Judas Iscariot fell away, demonstrating the shallowness of those who love to hold onto their old way of life). They needed a three year apprenticeship to learn how to minister effectively. Part of that training was not to presume the spiritual depth of new converts in the Early Church: because every new believer needs to be discipled.

Shallow faith may look deep when copying others in church. The real test comes when believers are isolated in the workplace or persecuted in the community. The spiritually-healthy will thrive in such circumstances because they have removed the obstacles to spiritual growth (the 'rocks' of the old sinful life). Their spiritual roots are firmly anchored in Jesus and God's Word. But those who thought they could stand firm because of their enthusiasm, fall away. Stay shallow and your spiritual life will shrivel! Retain the rocks and your roots will rot! Please pray, that as Word@Work is sent to over 29,000 subscribers today, these people all over the world will want to read, deepen their faith and grow strong to keep standing for Jesus when life gets tough.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God, my loving Heavenly Father. Thank You that Your Word is attractive to sinners who need a Saviour. But I know that this sinner must remove the barriers which prevent me developing a deep and strong relationship with Jesus. Please forgive me for agreeing to the temptation that 'shallowness is ok'. Please help me to desire a new depth in my spiritual life, and a prayerful passion that my believing brothers and sisters may choose to do the same. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WLuke122**

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**STRANGLED TRUTH**

**Luke 8:14** *The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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The Gospel is very Good News: that is why so many find it initially attractive. These people may believe that God is there, but somehow cannot bring themselves to trust Him. Jesus said they are like ground covered by thorn bushes on the perimeter of a field. If seed is scattered there, it will germinate and start to grow until the seedlings get choked by the undergrowth. The seed of God's Word is still potent, but the distractions of people's self-centred lives give no room for the truth to mature in their lifestyle.

Worries, riches and pleasures have one thing in common - they all encourage us to focus on ourselves. Worries demand that we find a solution to problems by ourselves. Money and possessions seduce us with desire to have them for ourselves, and when we have got them we change our lifestyle to serve and protect them. Pleasures are never enough to satisfy us, we always want more. So instead of being free to enjoy God's blessings and be thankful, we become slaves to our possessions, ambitions and circumstances until they effectively own us!

That kind of life gives little room to hear the Lord, and no peace of mind to explore His Word. People struggling with thorny issues find that they have no desire for God's Word because they are too busy trying to be in control of life. Whatever they do understand is quickly drowned out by the noise of immediate demands. Of course, the real solution is to give God's Word the space to breathe into your soul. Fail to make the Lord your first priority and everything else will scream for your attention until your spiritual life shrivels to nothing. But place the Lord in command of your life and see how He replaces the selfish worries, treasures and pleasures with purposefulness, peace and joy!

**Prayer:** *Wonderful Lord. Thank You that Your Word is designed to bless me, my family and work colleagues and to give us all new life in Christ. Please forgive me when I get obsessed with trying to control my own life so that I ignore Your Word, and fail to trust You to be in command of everything that affects me. Help me to wake up to the dangers of the thorny distractions which demand my attention, so that I can put them under the authority of Christ. And help me to help my friends and colleagues by encouraging them to do the same. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**GOOD RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

**Luke 8:15** *But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - *in English, and many other languages*

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The agricultural parables of Jesus were loaded with economic implications - perhaps that is partly why they gained such an attentive audience. Good seed was expensive; sowing it was literally throwing it away, to be at the mercy of the soil and weather. So it was very important that most of the seed went into fertile ground. The financial return would only come after a good crop had been harvested, having survived attacks by rain, drought, cold and heat; as well as from pests and animals.

Having already stated the reasons for failed crops ([Luke 8:11-14](#)), Jesus then described the soil which would produce an abundant harvest. He likened the fertile field to people of 'noble and good heart'. That expression condenses the idea of being "*excellent in its nature and characteristics, and therefore well adapted to its intended purpose*". It is refreshing to be reminded that the intended purpose of every human heart is to receive (hear, honour and obey) God's Word. Without His Word we can never satisfy our deepest needs, multiply His blessings to the world or bring glory to God.

But it is not always easy. Jesus speaks of the need to 'persevere' - this word is used to describe people who are not diverted from their essential objectives or loyalty even by the greatest trials and sufferings. The distractions and difficulties of life will come unpredictably, and we need to be ready to withstand them and not be shaken. Receiving the Word must become a regular habit, because we never know when we will need God's courage or wisdom; neither do we know how many problems we will avoid by being regularly obedient to His Word. Then the believer will be equipped for every good work ([2 Timothy 3:16-17](#)). So whatever pressures you face, keep receiving God's Word; it is the one part of life which must never be down-graded in the priority list. If we do that, God will certainly receive a good return on all He has invested in us and we will share in His Glory.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Thank You for designing my heart so that I may relate to You and receive the only truth which will shape my life so that I am profitable to You. I am sorry for the many times when I have assumed that I 'know it all' and do not need a regular supply of 'daily bread'; forgive me for the confusion I create for myself and others, and for the sinfulness I inevitably fall into. Please help me to persevere in Your Word so that I am ready to withstand the trials of life and come through stronger and more able to glorify You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**W@WLuke124**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **THE LIGHT SEARCHES INSIDE AND OUT**

**Luke 8:16-18** *"No-one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light. For there is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed; and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open. Therefore consider carefully how you listen. Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has will be taken from him." (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Why light a lamp or switch on a light bulb? Obviously, in order to see well. But some people prefer to live in the darkness, so that their actions cannot be seen: their choice speaks volumes about their character. Truth is like light. If we hide it from others, they cannot know what is good, and if we hide away from it ourselves or fail to put it into action, it reveals our own moral make-up.

The disciples had wanted to know the meaning of the parable of the sower. When Jesus told them, He 'turned the light on' so that they could understand their commission to distribute God's Word, but also be prepared for different people responding according to what was in their hearts. Their reaction to the gospel would display their true inner desires because it both illuminates God's plan and searches people's hearts at the same time. So, God's truth is both a picture and a mirror.

Therefore, what we do with the truth we receive is more significant than we may have thought. If we ignore it, why should God reveal more? If we hide from it, our action says more about us than about the quality of God's Word. If we share it, we are living a life of purpose, but if we hide it from others we have forgotten what our purpose in life is. On the other hand, if we receive it with joy and allow it to work in our lives to produce Christ-likeness, then we will be greatly productive in the 'family business' of God's Kingdom.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God and loving Heavenly Father. Thank You for your wonderful ability to communicate with human beings through Your Word. Please help me to honour You properly by taking notice of what You are saying in the Bible, and then taking the right action with Your help. Forgive me for the times when I have presumed on Your grace, ignoring Your desire to speak to me, and then making up a lifestyle to suit my desires instead of Your purposes. May Your Word shape me today. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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### FAMILY LOYALTY

**Luke 8:19-21** Now Jesus' mother and brothers came to see him, but they were not able to get near him because of the crowd. Someone told him, "Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to see you." He replied, "My mother and brothers are those who hear God's word and put it into practice." (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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In most cultures, family relationships are very important. The people who know us best should stimulate the greatest love and loyalty; which is why dysfunctional family life is so painful. In today's account, Jesus was surrounded by His disciples and a crowd who had come to listen to His teaching. Many people were there and when His mother and brothers came, they could not get through to see Him. So a message was passed through the throng of people. This was a special moment and everybody wanted to know how the Master would treat His family in public. Would He obey the commandment and give the greatest honour to His mother?

His response to the message would have been shocking to many, and still is to some. Instead of stopping His ministry to greet His human family, Jesus took the opportunity to clarify who had authority in His spiritual family. Although He obeyed the authority delegated to Mary and Joseph when He was growing up ([Luke 2:51](#)), they were only part of His Father's family, and not the head of it. The head of His family was Father God; and as the Son of God, Jesus' highest responsibility was to His Heavenly Father. It was His messages which took priority, and the way people responded to them identified who were the true members of His family.

Although many people think that closeness to God is measured by time spent in prayer, Bible reading and corporate worship, Jesus said that we are 'close family' if we have an appetite for God to speak to us, and then a desire to do what He says. Religious rites mean nothing unless there is a willingness to obey God's Word. Perhaps we assume that everything is fine between us and God because we agree with what He says. But He wants more than passive acceptance: He is looking for an every-day eagerness to do it. The people who do so are close to Him; they are His family.

**Prayer:** Sovereign God. Thank You that You have not just established a set of rules for us to follow, but You tell us what is on Your heart and invite us to work together with You to achieve Your purposes. I am sorry for being satisfied with religious habits when I fail to satisfy You by ignoring Your command to show my love through practical obedience. Help me to take Your Word to work with me today, and to my home and community: may they see that I believe what You say because I do it - thus demonstrating that I really am part of Your family. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

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### UNPREDICTABLE LIFESTYLE

**Luke 8:22-23** *One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Live with Jesus and anything might happen! The disciples had experienced amazing teaching and miracles from Jesus but, until now, they had not been in any personal peril. So Jesus intentionally led them into a crisis of personal survival in order to train them how to face danger. He knew just what would happen, so He slept as they sailed across the lake. He was not at all worried because He always has the power to deal with whatever will happen. His slumber did not indicate weakness, indifference, inattention or apathy. He could sleep because His heart was at rest; knowing all would be well.

Then the wind increased, threatening to overpower the sail - which would have been shortened. The waves also increased and the boat was in real danger of sinking. The disciples, some of whom were experienced fishermen, could see no way out of the problem. And Jesus was still asleep. It was a real test to see what they would do, for certainly the presence of the Son of God has not prevented the problem. In years to come they would encounter many different sorts of life-threatening circumstances; then they would remember their helplessness and the unnecessary terror they felt before Jesus intervened, so that when it happened again, they would put their faith in Jesus.

The Christian life is not easy. God never said it would be and Jesus often warned of hardship and persecution. Some people wrongly think that conversion will remove every difficulty; but as with the disciples, Jesus will not always stop the problems coming. However He will always be there. [1 Corinthians 10:13](#) says, "No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." How often we forget this, and become fearful! We fail to see that each difficulty is a training exercise teaching us to trust Him more next time! Don't forget, if you belong to Jesus, He is committed to enabling you to handle every problem well; so that you will get the blessing which comes through trusting, and He will get the glory.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You for Your love and care, and the confidence I have as I trust in Jesus. Although I would like all the problems to go away, thank You for trusting me with a series of training exercises which are designed to build up my faith. Please forgive me when I complain about difficulties, instead of looking to You and trusting that You will know how to deal with them; because I know that Your power is so great and You are always willing to work with me. May my colleagues at work see what real faith is like, as I face the challenges which You allow to come into my life. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

**W@WLuke127**

## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **RAGING LACK OF FAITH**

**Luke 8:24-25** *The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him." (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Personal danger exposes our true belief-systems. The disciples were scared that they might die, and in their panic they woke up the Son of God as though He did not know what was happening! Of course He knew what the weather would be like for their lake crossing - it was to be an early test of their faith. Jesus already knew that the disciples were ruled by natural fear and had not yet learned to trust Him, but the test was necessary so that they could see the state of their own hearts, which was confirmed by Jesus' rebuke.

Jesus simply stood up in the half submerged boat and told the wind and waves to calm down, just like commanding a dog to sit still. Immediately, the inanimate water and wind obeyed and the boat was quiet! A moment before, the disciples were screaming with fear, now they were asking the question that really mattered, "Who is Jesus that He can speak into the storm and produce peace"?

The answer to that question is critical if anybody is to develop true faith. If Jesus is the Son of God, the CEO of creation, the Saviour of the World, the Judge of all people and the Hope of the Nations, then to trust Him is the greatest wisdom. And that is why the Gospel accounts were written ([John 20:30-31](#)), so that people may know the identity of Jesus and that their faith will be based securely on the facts in the Bible. Those who believe in Him find that they receive His Holy Spirit of power, love and self-control ([2 Timothy 1:7](#)). So when the problems come, they can rest assured that Christ is in command and they do not need to suffer the inner raging of unbelief.

**Prayer:** *God of power and might. I am in awe of Your amazing ability to do whatever You choose; and to encourage people like me to trust in Your grace. Forgive me when fear takes a hold of me because I have forgotten the character and authority of Jesus Christ. Please help me to accept that You look after me as Your own child and that I can rest in the knowledge that You are at work in my life every day, helping me to trust in Your Word. In His Name. Amen.*

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**DEMONIC CONFRONTATION**

**Luke 8:26-28** *They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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A stormy boat trip had just taught the disciples that Jesus had authority over the forces of nature. Arriving at the shore the Twelve were with Jesus for His next appointment - taking authority over demons. As they landed, the naked demonised man met them. He was unable to live near people; demonically robbed of his dignity, community and sanity, he lived in isolation and slept among the graves of the dead.

The arrival of Jesus challenged the authority of the evil spirits. The Son of the Most High God had invaded their space and they knew that He had the power to cast them out into a prolonged and painful destruction. The manipulated man screamed out in his tortured state, recognising who Jesus was and fearful of what He might do. The evil spirits knew they were at Jesus' mercy but also wanted to bargain with Him to remain in control of the man. And so the intrinsic confusion which exists within everything that is evil was pouring out of the man's mouth.

Evil has no integrity. Those who allow evil to rule in their hearts end up believing their own lies and think that they can bargain with God. Generally speaking, it is not that the wicked refuse to believe in God, but that they deny His right to rule. As this narrative unfolds we shall see that Jesus Christ is totally in command and that Satan cannot defy Him. Like the disciples, it is important for us to know that their Master was not just a teacher and healer, but that He would go into Satan's territory to rescue those whose lives had been wrecked by evil. That is why the gospel is such good news: Jesus came to save sinners who are incapable of releasing themselves from Satan's grip. And Christ still has that power today.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You that Jesus deliberately confronted the agents of Satan, and won. Please forgive me when I accept the devil's lies and allow myself to be confused, half agreeing that Jesus has the right to rule, and half believing that evil will be a better way. Please alert me to these compromised areas of my life and give me the grace to call on Your help. Please cleanse me from all wickedness and enable me to live in the power of the Spirit, to Your praise and glory; and so that others at work and at home may see that they too can be set free from the grip of sin. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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### **POWER STRUGGLE**

**Luke 8:29-31** *For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places. Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "Legion," he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Some people think that God and the devil are equal and opposite forces like opposing teams in a football match, where human beings are the ball. Not so! God has the supreme right to rule and Satan can only operate by permission. People are not the passive victims of a heavenly struggle, for they can and do choose who will be their master. Legion had made his choice, and yet was taken prisoner by his own demonic house-guests, and was manipulated by them into unpredictable violence.

When Jesus confronted the demonised man, Satan's agents knew that they could not win. They knew that Jesus was about to terminate their 'residence permit'. The only question was where would they be sent? The fact that they repeatedly begged Jesus not to deport them to the place of the dead showed that they were struggling for the power to continue to demonise the living; but they knew that they were ultimately subject to the authority of Jesus.

The good news is that those who want to be released from Satan's bondage can have complete confidence that Jesus has the power to deal with the problem. There is no power that Jesus cannot break. So why don't more people come to Him? Perhaps they have never heard, or if they have, they still believe the lie that they are the helpless victims of an eternal struggle, and there is no certainty as to who will win! Of course Jesus will win ([Revelation 20:7-15](#) is quite clear about that). What they need is to be told the truth; and who better to do that than you! But many would say that lots of other Christians could say it better, explain it more clearly and answer questions with greater confidence. Maybe: but are they near your troubled friend, are they in your workplace, do they have refreshment breaks at the same time, do they travel on the same train? No! But you are there, on hand to minister in the Name of Jesus! So, wherever you find troubled souls, tell them that Jesus has the power to set them free.

**Prayer:** *Holy Lord of power and might. Thank You that demons have to go in the Name of Jesus. Please forgive me if I have tolerated evil guests in my heart, and never trusted Jesus to dislodge them. May I submit myself to Him. Help me to have Christ's heart of compassion and to announce His presence wherever I go so that those who are living in torment might find release in Him. Especially, help me in my place of work to be alert to those who seek release and relief, so that I can introduce them to my Saviour. In His Name. Amen.*

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**W@WLuke130**

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**SEEING THE POWER OF EVIL**

**Luke 8:32-33** *A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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It is rare to see the raw power of evil. Jesus was about to free Legion from the many demons that had controlled and manipulated his life. But why did He do it? Firstly, it was a warning to Satan that his wicked rule would be challenged until it was destroyed; secondly, it was Divine compassion for a tormented man; thirdly, it was evidence of the power of Jesus to the local townsfolk, jolting them out of their indifference to the Saviour. But it also showed the disciples the extent of the devil's wicked power which could only be handled by Jesus. As the trainee leaders of the Early Church they would need to know that, in Jesus' Name, they could deal with Satan head on, and win.

Some have asked about the ethics of Jesus 'destroying the pigs'. Well, actually it was not Jesus who brought destruction on the large herd, but Satan. The drowned carcasses of the swine was a potent reminder of Satan's nature, to destroy and kill ([John 8:44;10:10](#)). The demons had been operating in that naked man for so long and he had been held under sentence of death by the devil. Jesus changed all that and considered the spiritual freedom of one man to be more significant than the loss of thousands of pigs.

The values of Jesus are refreshingly wonderful in a greedy and corrupt world. He put the salvation of one person above the wealth of a town; and He exposed the way in which Satan operates by showing that wickedness has great power. In other words, the devil has to be dealt with, and Jesus is the only One who can do it! This was going to be the message of the cross and Pentecost, sparking the church into action around the world for the next two thousand years and more. The disciples needed to see this message in action so that they might preach with confidence and have no fear of evil. We need that same assurance today. Surrounded by evil, we must not be intimidated from our purpose as servants of the gospel; and so this account was included to encourage us that however strong the opposition, Jesus is able to rescue souls who have been held captive by Satan.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God. Thank You for this account showing the destructive power of evil, but also of the authority of Jesus to release the tormented man. Forgive me for being frightened by big displays of wickedness, when I have Jesus with me. Please help me to develop the confidence to reach out to those in need in the Name of Jesus, knowing that only He has the authority to demolish wickedness and restore the captive soul to the dignity of being a child of God. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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#### CHOOSING THE BEST

**Luke 8:34-37** *When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The townsfolk had a shock when farm-hands, who had been looking after a large herd of pigs, came running with the news. All the pigs had drowned in the lake. Their owners came to the water's edge to see for themselves, and to confront Jesus who had apparently destroyed their businesses. The pigs were both capital assets and revenue, as the meat and hides were traded outside of Israel (Jews would not be associated with these animals in any way).

Apart from a silent hillside and porcine carcasses floating in the water, the farmers and their worried investors also saw Jesus sitting next to the formerly demonised man. This man had been banished from society because of his violent behaviour and naked terrorism of the locals; now he was quiet and willing to listen to the Man who had rescued him from Satan's grip. You might have thought that this miracle would have thrilled the people who used to be terrified of the man's unpredictable behaviour. But, no! They were more concerned about their loss of money. Instead of praising Jesus for delivering the frightening man from his controlling demons, they were afraid of Jesus' power. They were content to try to deal with demons, but did not want to be delivered from them.

It is the same today. Human beings want to be in control, and they get frightened if anybody else (especially God) demonstrates that they are not all-powerful. Power in business, in trading and money markets give the illusion that we are king, or queen. Academic pride, manufacturing efficiency and construction triumphs all encourage the same fantasy. But when they are stripped away we have a choice; do we want Jesus to be in command? If so, He will want to deliver us from evil. And that is very good news ... if that is what we want too!

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You for the astonishing authority which Jesus demonstrated against the powers of Satan. Thank You that evil must release its grip in Jesus' presence. Please forgive me for wanting to be in control, when that is Your job; and for allowing the devil hidden space to operate in my life as I pursue my own ambitions. May I learn that a soul committed to Jesus is of far greater value than all the success, wealth and fame I can imagine; and help me to set my course today, with the intention of allowing Jesus to be King. In His Name. Amen.*

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#### THE WORK OF WITNESS

**Luke 8:38-39** *The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Satan's power-game with one man had been stopped. Jesus had expelled a legion of demons from this previously tormented person; and they displayed the full force of their destructive power by driving a herd of pigs down the rocky slopes to drown in the sea. The once-demonised man could now control himself, he was dressed and able to sit quietly, listening to Jesus. The naked tantrums had gone: a new life had begun, and it was all because Jesus had the authority to destroy the work of the devil ([1 John 3:8](#)).

This man, having been driven out of the town and presumably disowned by his family, instantly found himself in a new family with Jesus and the disciples. Surely it would be best to make his home with them; and so he begged Jesus to allow him to join the travelling team. But no! Jesus had a better plan - to send him back to his town and family. The Saviour wanted them to see the remarkable change in the man he had saved, to show them that Satan's power could be broken and captives set free. Instead of arguing, the man gladly obeyed and did everything Jesus told him to do (that alone was evidence of a major life-change)!

So, the released man became a model for millions of believers, who know that part of their life's purpose is to tell family, friends and colleagues how much Jesus has done for them. Although a different lifestyle may be intriguing, others will never know how it came about unless they are told. Some new believers would like to leave the old life behind completely, and wonder about seeking full time church-based ministry; but the work of verbal witness to those who know them well, is vital. It is a part of a new life-purpose. Indeed, the gospel enables followers of Jesus to see their home and workplace in a new light. Instead of being places to earn money, socialise, eat and sleep, they become full of people who need to know how to find the liberation which only Jesus can bring. And if you know Jesus, that is a big part of why He has placed you there!

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord God, my loving Heavenly Father. Thank You for dealing with the deceiving work of the devil in my life and for bringing me into Your family. Although sometimes I would like to be removed from the secular world, I know that You have placed me there so that I can explain what You have done for me. Please help me to be clear-minded about my witness for You today; I do not know how much Your Word is needed in the lives of any of my friends, but You do. And I believe You will use the words of truth I speak about Jesus so that seekers will find their Saviour. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **WELCOME TO WORK**

**Luke 8:40-42** *Now when Jesus returned, a crowd welcomed him, for they were all expecting him. Then a man named Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue, came and fell at Jesus' feet, pleading with him to come to his house because his only daughter, a girl of about twelve, was dying. As Jesus was on his way, the crowds almost crushed him. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Jesus had become a popular celebrity and a crowd gathered to welcome Him back to His Galilean base in Capernaum. However the religious leaders were very suspicious of Him, fearing that He might undermine their authority. But there are times when personal needs become more important than political principles; as Jairus found. He was the respected Synagogue Ruler in the town; the man who presided over religious services, acted as a judge in community disputes and represented the congregation outside the local community. He was important, but his problem was bigger than his status. His daughter was dying.

He now saw Jesus in a different light. No longer was He a threat; indeed, Jairus longed that the Teacher would give him preferential treatment and quickly too. He did not care about his dignity, what others would think about him or how his local elders would criticise his appeal for help: Jairus rushed through the crowd and prostrated himself at Jesus' feet, pleading for the life of His little girl. All that showed one thing - he believed in Jesus. And Jesus responded by agreeing to go to the man's house. But would He get there on time? The crowds were suffocatingly dense, even to the point of almost crushing the Lord. You can imagine the frustration in Jairus' mind!

Everybody will encounter personal circumstances that exhaust all available resources. Whether it is health, or money, family or business, church or community - something will bring us to our knees. At that point, who or what we are kneeling before will tell the Lord how much we trust Him. Some of our readers say they are tempted to find the answer in religious ritual, tribal healers, occultists or email appeals; some simply succumb to despondency. This passage shows us that the good way forward can only come through Jesus. We must be willing to turn from all other alternatives, throwing ourselves on His mercy and the kindness of His grace. How He will answer, what He will do and when He will do it ... are all for Him to decide. Our task is to trust that He alone has the answer and the power to make it happen.

**Prayer:** *Sovereign Lord. Thank You for still being willing to help poor, weak, weary and sinful people in this corrupted world where the perfection of Your original creation has been spoiled. Thank You for sending Jesus to be the answer to our greatest need to be made right with You. Thank You that everyone who trusts in Jesus will receive mercy and grace, and help for every day. May I not be too proud to seek Your help, influenced by what others might think or seduced by false gods that I fail to come to Jesus in repentance and faith. And please help me to trust You to deal with the matter in Your way; without dictating to You, how and when You must act. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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### Word@Work from BeaconLight

#### A PRESSING NEED

**Luke 8:43-46** *And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years, but no-one could heal her. She came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak, and immediately her bleeding stopped. "Who touched me?" Jesus asked. When they all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the people are crowding and pressing against you." But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; I know that power has gone out from me." (NIV)*

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Jesus was having a busy day. Returning to His base in Capernaum He was mobbed by crowds eager to see Him; and then the synagogue ruler, Jairus, made a scene in front of everybody by begging Jesus to help his dying daughter. As Jairus started to lead Jesus to his house, the crowd was so large that the road was blocked ahead of them: would Jesus fail to reach the girl in time to save her life? Then just at that moment, a woman with severe menstrual bleeding pushed through the back of the crowds and the disciples following Jesus. She reached out her hand in faith to touch the bottom of His coat, and then melted back into the crowd.

Jesus immediately knew that His power had healed somebody who believed in Him; so He asked who it was. Of course, He knew, but He wanted to test the reactions of the disciples and also to encourage the woman to confess her faith. The disciples were rather bemused by His question and thought that the massed throng of people was an adequate answer as everybody was jostling to get near to the Master. This was all new to His trainee Apostles, who had yet to experience the powerful realities of ministry for themselves, and to know when God was at work.

But what might they have learned so far that day? Firstly Jesus was never in a hurry: He was so in harmony with God's purposes and timing that He was never late for any appointment. Secondly, no apparent obstruction can upset God's timetable; indeed He weaves all the difficulties into blessings for those who trust Him ([Romans 8:28](#)). Thirdly, nobody in need is turned away from Jesus: a previously critical religious official was as welcome as a ceremonially unclean woman without anyone to help her. And there was still more to come that day! If the disciples had been learning properly (disciple means 'learner') they would have been both awed and comforted by Jesus' ability to get everything right at just the right time. Two millennia later, have we learned those lessons yet? Or are we still nervously almost expecting that Jesus will forget; be too busy elsewhere; not know how important things are and fail to be on time!! That does not sound much like faith! So if you are like that, stop now to remind yourself that God knows everything, will exercise His power in response to faith, and He will never be late in bringing blessing. Trust Him - He's God!

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. Thank You for this reminder that You do all things well. You are never surprised by the difficulties that come to our lives: You know everything and how to bring the blessings to those who trust You. Forgive me when I have doubted Your care, mistrusted Your actions and complained when time has been short. Please help me to take this little passage to heart and become a quick learner, putting it into practice by trusting You when today's problems and obstacles come along. And in that way, train me to be more usable as a disciple of Jesus Christ. In His Name. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **CONFESSING FAITH**

**Luke 8:47-48** *Then the woman, seeing that she could not go unnoticed, came trembling and fell at his feet. In the presence of all the people, she told why she had touched him and how she had been instantly healed. Then he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace." (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The woman, who touched the edge of Jesus' cloak, was desperate. Twelve years of social isolation as a result of her condition, also excluded her from worship and the great festivals of Israel. Dr Luke who wrote this account seems a little shy of telling us, "*She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse.*" ([Mark 5:26](#))! In coming to Jesus she did not know what to expect from Him, but believed that she would be healed ([Mark 5:28](#)).

Jesus wanted her to be well, but also wanted her to confess her faith in Him. Perhaps she thought that in touching Jesus, He would become unclean and therefore angry with her. But He was not angry at all! He was so glad that His power had healed her. The narrative ignores all the rest of the action going on around Jesus to simply focus on the woman telling her story, and the instant healing - so that the disciples could hear. Then Jesus spoke to affirm that she was healed because He was powerful and she was trusting. The lady who dared to reach out was not rebuked, but given the blessing of peace.

Normal Christianity is no more a secret thing than the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. [Romans 10:9-10](#) says, "... if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." Of course, openness may get some people into trouble, but that happened to Jesus too. However the blessing of publicly admitting faith in Christ is the assurance of being saved and growing in the confidence of God's peace. So, it is important to ask the question, "When did I last tell somebody at work or at home that I am trusting in Jesus?"

**Prayer:** *Dear Father God. Thank You for the faith You have given me to believe in Jesus as my Saviour and Lord. And yet I am sometimes reluctant to express my faith, as though I am slightly ashamed of Jesus. Please give me the opportunity to practise speaking about Jesus this week, and give me courage to explain what Christ has done for me. I also pray for my Christian brothers and sisters who live in fear of harsh regimes. Give them the wisdom to know how to live and when to speak, so that Your people may be safe and Your gospel scattered like seed. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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**TESTS OF FAITH**

**Luke 8:49-53** *While Jesus was still speaking, someone came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue ruler. "Your daughter is dead," he said. "Don't bother the teacher any more." Hearing this, Jesus said to Jairus, "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed." When he arrived at the house of Jairus, he did not let anyone go in with him except Peter, John and James, and the child's father and mother. Meanwhile, all the people were wailing and mourning for her. "Stop wailing," Jesus said. "She is not dead but asleep." They laughed at him, knowing that she was dead. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The synagogue ruler had come begging Jesus to save his daughter's life. The circumstances of the day, a dense crowd of people blocking the way and a woman who wanted healing, had delayed the journey back to Jairus' house. Then the news came that his daughter had died. "Don't bother the Teacher any more", they said. It was too late, nothing could be done, and the child's life had gone. But Jesus knew differently and continued the walk to Jairus house. On arrival, the sound of wailing filled the air and the mourners added to the crowd around Jesus.

"Stop all that noise!" Jesus said, "She is not dead but asleep". Instantly, the mood changed from grief to ridicule. From being the wise teacher, Jesus was now considered as foolish and ignorant. The crowd knew better than Him. They had the evidence, and He was just speaking words. However, as we shall see, the words of Jesus would be much more powerful than the evidence of a lifeless corpse. But the Saviour was not seeking crowd-approval; just their silence, for their faithlessness could add nothing. It was Jairus who had been challenged to believe - not even the disciples believed; only three of them were called into the house to act as witnesses.

'Knowing better than God' is at the core of our sinful nature. We can always find evidence to prove that we are right, even when we are wrong! Because we cannot know the future, we usually predict the future on the basis of our past experience. We do not allow the possibility that God will change the course of our present circumstances. But we are called to better things! He has the power to change anything that is outside of His will. So He asks us to put our faith in Him, to believe His promises and to live in the confidence that He is in control of the future: because His Word is all-mighty. Many will discourage us from doing so, but it is only the Lord's voice we need to hear above the din of worldly hopelessness.

**Prayer:** *Dear Lord of power and might. Thank You for being God! Thank You that I am not doomed to live without hope and die without Christ, for He has called me to trust in Him. Please forgive me when I assume the worst because I have not believed Your Word, committed my circumstances into Your hands or believed that You have abandoned me. Thank You for the many promises in Your Word which assure me that You do not leave me, and that You will hear and answer my prayers. Help me to trust You; even when the world, the flesh and the devil are screaming at me to give up: because I know You will always keep Your Word. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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## **Word@Work from BeaconLight**

### **WHEN REALITY EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS**

**Luke 8:54-56** *But he took her by the hand and said, "My child, get up!" Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The story so far: Jairus, the synagogue ruler, had come to Jesus because his daughter was very ill. Jesus agreed to visit the family's home but was delayed on the way. Meanwhile the girl had died and a messenger brought the news to Jairus, and said not to trouble Jesus any further. However, Jesus was not deterred, telling Jairus that if he believed, his girl would be healed. Arriving at the house, and silencing the traditional loud mourning, He took Peter, James and John with Him to see the dead child.

Simply, and without any drama, Jesus held her hand and told her to get up - which she did immediately! There was no period of confusion or need to recover in bed; because she got off the bed mat and stood up, hungry for a meal. Although Jairus and his wife had obviously agreed to ask Jesus for help (despite the potential disapproval of other religious authorities), and Jairus must have believed that Jesus could heal - they were really not prepared for their daughter being raised from the dead! They were amazed! But Jesus did not want this to boost His popularity. He wanted the three trainee-Apostles to witness the event and learn to expect that God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine ([Ephesians 3:20](#)).

Of course it is wonderful to see God working powerfully in ways we do not expect, but why are we so often surprised? Have we not yet learned that when we ask, the Lord answers; that when we believe, He works in power? Have we just got used to small expectations and little horizons, and assume that the Lord of heaven and earth will not be interested in our lives? Do time delays upset our ideas of how God should work and leave us uncomfortable to ask any more? One of the reasons why the Early Church grew so quickly was that the Apostles were absolutely confident that God would act. They were well trained. But where do we start? With the Jesus of the Bible, He is the same yesterday, today and forever ([Hebrews 13:8](#)). These gospel narratives are not just good stories - they are for us to learn that the Lord is compassionate, kind and powerful; and He always keeps His promises. So come to Him today in honesty and faith. Tell Him what is on your heart, and trust Him to act in wisdom and at just the right time.

**Prayer:** *Wonderful Lord. Thank You for this reminder that You can achieve whatever You choose. Forgive me for doubting You so often, for limiting my prayers to the little things I patronisingly think You can do. Help me to see the needs around me and to work with You so that Jesus may be made known, and that people may have much joy in receiving Your grace. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

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#### DELEGATED AUTHORITY

**Luke 9:1-2** *When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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The next phase of training had begun. The apprentice-Apostles had been observing Jesus as He healed the sick and cast out demons. Although they did not realise it, much of the teaching was to equip them to do the same. Now it was their turn. Jesus called them together for a briefing session before sending them out. The next few verses give practical instructions, but today's reading focuses on the commission, authority and power.

The assignment would have been limited to a few weeks at the most, and they would go in pairs to different villages ([Mark 6:7](#)). Jesus would not be physically present but He delegated power and authority to them (temporarily until the Holy Spirit was given at Pentecost), so that they could do what He had done. Their work was spiritual, not medical or educational: they were to dispossess Satan of his illegally held authority to exercise destructive power over the people they would meet. This was not a technique to be learned but a delegated authority to be exercised. Jesus gave them the right to command sickness and Satan to leave the people alone, so that they might hear the good news of God's Kingdom and believe in Him. This was to be the church's work in the centuries to come.

As members of that church, it is important that we understand the nature of our calling to believe in Christ and serve Him. His Kingdom on earth has been given authority by Jesus, and power to make a difference. That difference will include demonstrations that Jesus really is King, and not Satan! So, in Jesus' Name, some will testify to physical healing; while others will show supernatural courage to suffer with joy. Some will be released from gripping addictions and others from spiritual anguish: and the words of the gospel will powerfully convict sinners of their guilt before God so that they may turn to Jesus and be saved. This is not a matter of manipulative skills or psychological techniques: it is a simple acceptance of Christ's commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)), and the obedience to do it. Our briefing sessions are in prayer with another believer; our commission is to go to work and around the community in the power of the Holy Spirit, and our task is to announce that Jesus is Lord.

**Prayer:** *Almighty God. I believe that all authority has been given to Jesus, and that He has commanded His church to work with Him to rescue those who have been held in Satan's clutches. But I confess I have little confidence in Jesus and even less courage; at times almost denying the powerful Name of Jesus by my reluctance to step forwards in faith and obedience. Please help me to understand the nature of Your call upon my life, so that I will accept Christ's commission, and the Holy Spirit's help, so that You will be glorified as people believe that Jesus is Lord and turn from darkness to light. In His Name. Amen.*

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### TRAVELLING LIGHT

**Luke 9:3-6** *He told them: "Take nothing for the journey--no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra tunic. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave their town, as a testimony against them." So they set out and went from village to village, preaching the gospel and healing people everywhere. (NIV)*

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Today's title has a double meaning. Wherever disciples of Jesus travel, they are the light of the world - His agents to illuminate this dark world with the gospel ([Matthew 5:14](#)). But they also need to 'travel light'. That is, they must go in faith, trusting that the Lord will provide for them physically as well as spiritually. Without any reserve provisions, they must depend on Him to supply daily bread and every need. That kind of missional lifestyle is a demonstration that the Jesus advertised to others supplies their needs too.

The disciples had never been out on this sort of mission by themselves (in groups of two) before, and would have been concerned about how they would survive the experience. So, Jesus gave clear instructions to the disciples: "Take nothing", said Jesus, "if you are welcomed, receive their hospitality; if not, move on to where you (and the message) will be received". Surprisingly, He commanded them to show God's rejection of those who rejected their message by shaking the dust of that town off their sandals - a sign that the gospel was not only for the salvation of believers but also for the judgement of those who refused. In that way Jesus was teaching His apprentices that the message of the Kingdom was not a casual idea, but that people's response to it would critically affect their eternity.

Yet, for many believers, the gospel has lost its 'life and death' power. Radical faith has been replaced by comfortable Christianity ... a quiet personal harbour rather than running the risks of a turbulent ocean to take the salvation-message where it is most needed. It is too easy for ministers and ministries to attract the trappings of corporate business, with its money, status and power; all a far cry from the apostles' experience ([2 Corinthians 11:23-29](#)). I know many in the world-wide church pity those with Western faith, who demand a style of financial and practical security which Jesus never had himself; while 'ordinary Christians' hide behind the 'professional clergy' and avoid the responsibility of telling the gospel message in the community and workplace. Those of our brothers and sisters under persecution understand today's verses much better, because they have to live them! Let these verses be a reminder to travel light, as a messenger with the message, and leave all the supply problems to the Lord.

**Prayer:** *Gracious Lord. Thank You for Your intense commitment to the gospel, and Your promise to provide for all who will dare to declare it, wherever they are sent. Please forgive me for failing to tell people about Jesus - through my fear, faithlessness or being uncaring of the eternal destiny of my friends and colleagues. Help me to seize the opportunities to witness for Christ, and to see that as a sacred responsibility. Give me that compassion for lost souls, a passion for their salvation and courage to explain the gospel as I 'travel light' in my life as a Christian. For Christ's sake. Amen.*

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#### GUILTY CONSCIENCE

**Luke 9:7-9** Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on. And he was perplexed, because some were saying that John had been raised from the dead, others that Elijah had appeared, and still others that one of the prophets of long ago had come back to life. But Herod said, "I beheaded John. Who, then, is this I hear such things about?" And he tried to see him. (NIV)

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You can read the verses around this Bible passage from the [Internet Bible](#): - in English, and many other languages

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Truth never goes away. Just after the disciples had been sent out on their first mission trip without Jesus, Luke reported that King Herod was getting agitated. Perhaps the trainee-Apostles appeared to be like John the Baptist's disciples, announcing the Kingdom of God. They obviously made an impression, because Herod thought they might be something to do with John (who he had beheaded for telling the truth about his private life). Had John come back to life again? Whatever Herod heard about their gospel message troubled the dark depths of his own soul with its memory of John's murder. Herod's guilty conscience was working overtime.

Herod's thinking was both wrong and right. Wrong, that John the Baptist had come back to life, but right about the message being the same as Jesus' (because John's job was to prepare the way for Him). Herod was right about needing to resolve his guilt but wrong if he thought that a chat with the dead John the Baptist would sort it all out. What he needed was to confess his sin to Jesus and ask for mercy. But when Herod eventually did meet Jesus, he mocked Him ([Luke 23:8-12](#)). Herod knew the truth but refused to do what was right.

Guilt is a moral pain which tells us something is wrong. However, its purpose is frustrated if we refuse to confess our sin and ask for God's mercy. Alas, many of our friends in the community and at work live uneasily in the 'guilt-trap'. Because the truth about their sin will not go away, they try to dull the ache in their heart by the ointments of pleasure, wealth, activity, ambition and respect from others, or alcohol, nicotine and other drugs. But the guilt keeps surfacing, triggered by innocent little reminders, precipitating a fresh wave of anxiety. The only answer is to turn to Jesus in repentance and faith ourselves, and encourage others to do the same. That is why we have been placed in a sinful world - to announce the Saviour and lead people to Him. Announcing the Saviour is not a task reserved for ministers and missionaries. If you know Jesus, you can tell your friends and work colleagues whether you are an engineer, teacher, construction worker, transport official, local leader, trader, student, farm hand or health worker. Your responsibility is to give the message, theirs is to respond.

**Prayer:** Holy God. Thank You for the gift of guilt, to alert me to my sin and prompt me to seek cleansing at the cross of Christ. Please forgive me when I try to camouflage my sin or dull my guilt by futile addictions. And forgive me when I see others doing the same and I keep silent about the hope of forgiveness through Jesus. Please help me to repent of my sin and receive Your grace; and also to speak openly about my Saviour who longs to save my friends as well. In Jesus' Name. Amen.