

engage

The sixth issue of **engage** is here and it's stuffed to bursting, full of Bible books you'd normally avoid and some you'll know a little better. As usual, there are articles to get you thinking and challenge you to really get to grips with God's word.

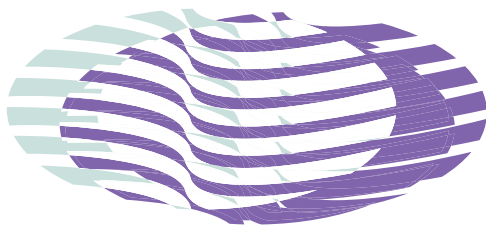
* **DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: We go on tour with Jesus in **Luke**; break into song with **Hosea**; get passionate about our faith with **Romans**; return to Nineveh with **Nahum**; pursue holiness in **Leviticus** and feel the pressure in **Psalms**.

* **TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

* **TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions that our friends bombard us with. This time: **Is the Bible sexist?**

* **STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **How do I know if I'm really a Christian?**



* **ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we ask: **Is the Bible enough?**

* **REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **Christians being persecuted around the world**.

* **TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you wrestle with the Bible and understand it for yourself. This issue we let the Bible writers give us **a helping hand**.

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see God's word at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say '**Read Luke 6 v 1-5**', look up Luke in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Luke starts on. Find chapter 6 of Luke, and then verse 1 of chapter 6 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

In this issue...

DAILY READINGS

- Luke:** Jesus on tour
Hosea: God's love song
Romans: Passionate
Christianity
Leviticus: Finding holiness
Nahum: No escape
Psalms: Songs to God

ARTICLES

- TRICKY**
Is the Bible sexist? **18**
- STUFF**
Am I really a Christian? **32**
- ESSENTIAL**
The Bible — is it enough? **44**
- REAL LIVES**
Christians under attack **60**
- TOOLBOX**
A helping hand **70**

ENGAGE MAESTROS

- Soulful song writers:** Martin Cole · Cassie Martin · Carl Laferton
Jim Overton · Helen Thorne
- Conductor:** Martin Cole
- Visuals:** Steve Devane
- Page-turning proof-readers:** Anne Woodcock · Nicole Carter



Luke

Jesus on tour

Quick. Grab a bag and stuff some clothes into it. You won't need many possessions because you're going on tour with Jesus, and people will provide you with all you need as you go from town to town, seeing history being made.

THE LOWDOWN

Luke wrote his book to tell the true story of Jesus. He wanted believers to know the facts about their Saviour, to strengthen their faith and to answer accusations and attacks on Christianity by unbelievers.

LIFE ON THE ROAD

In chapters 6–11 of Luke, we go on a tour with Jesus as He travels around Galilee and Judea. We'll see many mind-boggling things — miracles, life-changing teaching and plenty of controversy. And we'll get to see how the disciples reacted and how they began to see who Jesus really was.

CONTROVERSY

Jesus did and said many controversial things — He upset the Jewish leaders repeatedly, He spent time with not-so-respectable people, He went against Jewish tradition, He fought hypocrisy and said seemingly ridiculous things about His own death and about loving your enemies.

GET READY

Prepare to be blown away as Jesus defeats demons, heals diseases, controls storms, brings the dead back to life and does even weirder stuff (Luke 9 v 28–36). And His teaching could even change your life. If you act on it.

As you go on this road trip with Jesus, notice how the disciples' attitude changes as it starts to dawn on them who this incredible man really is. OK, let's get going...



1

Against the grain

The Jewish bigwigs were hoping to catch Jesus breaking the law. But there was a big difference between God's law in the Old Testament and all the extra laws made up by Jewish leaders that made life harder for people.

Read Luke 6 v 1–5

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What were the Pharisees upset about?*
- How did Jesus answer them? (v3–4)*
- What did He claim in v5?*

The Pharisees said that no work was allowed on the Sabbath rest day — not even picking corn to eat. Does that sound like work to you? Jesus pointed out that their hero, David, had done something far more shocking, but he did it to feed his starving companions. It was much more important to save life than keep specific rules.

Even more shocking than that, Jesus claimed to be *'Lord of the Sabbath'*. Jesus is God, so the Sabbath was His day — He created it. And more than that, He's in charge of the biggest rest day of all — eternal life.

Read verses 6–11

- What point did Jesus make? (v9)*
- How did the religious leaders react? (v11)*

According to these guys, even healing someone on the Sabbath counted as work and was breaking God's law. But they'd totally missed the point. How can it be wrong to heal someone, to show compassion?

This story isn't really about the day of rest or even about rules. It's about Jesus. He is God, so He was in charge of God's holy day. Jesus came to complete what was written in the Old Testament. So serving God no longer meant just obeying the law, it now meant following Jesus.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for sending His Son Jesus. Ask Him to help you follow Jesus with your whole life, rather than just trying to keep the rules.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Get some more rest on page 108.



2

Team talk

Jesus had harsh words for those who rejected Him. But now He turns to those who follow Him, to give them a team talk. If you're on Jesus' team, then you'd better listen up.

Read Luke 6 v 12-19

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What other name/role was given to the 12 special disciples? (v13)*
- ▷ *Why did the crowd want to be near Jesus? (v18–19)*

Before Jesus made the big decision of choosing His twelve closest followers, He spent the night in prayer. That's a pointer for us when we have big decisions to make — take it to God first. He called these guys 'apostles', which means they were 'sent out by God'. And notice the huge effect Jesus had on people — they saw His power and were desperate to get near to Him.

Read verses 20–26

- ▷ *What bad things can Jesus' followers expect? (v20–22)*
- ▷ *But what will they be given? (v20–23)*

- ▷ *What about those who live for themselves? (v24–26)*

Jesus calls His followers poor and hungry because they realised how pathetic they were compared to God and were hungry for God to rescue them from sin. Christians can be given a tough time for following Jesus (v22), but they can leap for joy because they'll be rewarded with life in God's kingdom (v20, 23). There's no greater prize.

'Those who are rich' means people who are happy with the rewards of this life and think they're OK with God. But people who live for themselves, not God, will end up weeping and mourning.

PRAY ABOUT IT

- ▷ *What will you thank God for?*
- ▷ *Which 'rich' people do you need to pray for?*

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Team selection on page 108.



3

Behind enemy lines

You've had enough of Shannon. She bad mouths you in front of your friends, 'borrows' stuff without returning it and even slapped you once. Hard. The question is, what will you do about it?

Read Luke 6 v 27–31

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *How does Jesus say we should treat people? (v31)*
- ▷ *What about when friends treat you badly? (v27–29)*
- ▷ *What does He say about lending and giving? (v30)*

This is radical stuff. It's so easy to get annoyed when people use you or treat you like dirt. Jesus not only says: 'Expect it', He says: 'Be prepared to take even more of it.' Give without expecting to get things back; take the abuse you get for being a Christian; pray for people who hate you.

Read verses 32–36

- ▷ *Why should Christians love their enemies and give to them?*

Believers need to be different from everyone else — more generous, less hate-filled, not seeking revenge.

When it all seems too hard, go back to v35–36. Disciples of Jesus need to live like this because of what God's done — forgiving us and giving us a place in His kingdom. So we'll put up with hardships along the way because we're looking forward to eternal life.

GET ON WITH IT

- ▷ *Who do you need to treat differently?*
- ▷ *How can you be more generous with your possessions?*
- ▷ *How can you show God's love to an 'enemy'?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Spend some time talking to God about your answers and what you're going to do about them.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Love your enemies.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Face your enemy on page 108.



4

Get the picture?

'A picture is worth a thousand words' according to some people. Mostly artists. Jesus often spoke in picture language to put across His radical message. Luke now shows us three of Jesus' pictures.

Read Luke 6 v 37–38

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What does Jesus command?*
- ▷ *From what we've already learned, when will Christians receive their reward?*

Jesus' first picture carries on from where we finished yesterday. We should show generosity and forgiveness to people, not for the reward ('measure'), but because God has been merciful to us.

Read verses 39–40

- ▷ *Who should and who shouldn't we learn from?*

We behave like the people we learn from. So if we have short-sighted teachers (like the Pharisees) who don't teach God's word properly, we're less likely to live God's way. If you follow a blind guide, you'll fall down a big hole. Choose your Bible teachers and role models carefully.

Read verses 41–42

- ▷ *When we see faults in others, where else should we look?*

Don't be a plank-eyed fool, picking faults with people but not bothering to deal with your own. First, take a long hard look at yourself and list the things you need to change to serve God better. Only then are you able to help out friends with their issues.

GET ON WITH IT

- ▷ *List three things you need to sort out after reading Luke today.*
- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

Now talk to God, confessing your sinfulness and pleading for His help with what you've written down.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Picture this: more on page 109.



5

Words in action

Thorn bushes, figs, grapes, builders, rock and sand. It may sound like a list of random objects, but Jesus uses them to make some big points about our lives.

Read Luke 6 v 43-45

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

▷ *What reveals what we're really like on the inside?*

Jesus shares one way you can tell whether someone belongs to God or not — by what they say. A prickly bush won't produce tasty pineapples, and it's the same for us. People can't produce good fruit — living God's way — if their evil heart is unchanged. Only people rescued by Jesus will really live for God. And the evidence is in what we do and say.

Read verses 46-49

▷ *What mistake were some of Jesus' 'followers' making? (v46)*

▷ *What's true for people who put His words into practice? (v48)*

▷ *And those who don't? (v49)*

Some people called Jesus 'Lord' and yet refused to obey Him and do what

He said. Right now there are people who call themselves Christians and yet live only for themselves and ignore Jesus' commands. When Jesus returns as Judge, such people will be washed away. Only those whose lives are built on firm foundations — obeying Jesus — will stand firm through the Day of Judgment.

THINK IT OVER

- ▷ *What do the things you say reveal about your heart?*
- ▷ *Do you put Jesus' words into practice?*
- ▷ *Which of His commands do you need to seriously work on?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Talk to God about the issues raised today and commit your whole life to serving Him.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Listen to Jesus and obey Him.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More words on page 109.



6

Faith from afar

Next, Jesus takes His tour to Capernaum. So far, it's been mostly Jews who've been amazed and impressed by Him. But even the Romans are starting to hear of Jesus.

Read Luke 7 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What do we learn about the man who sent for Jesus' help? (v1–5)*
- ▷ *What did he understand about himself? (v6)*

This guy was an important soldier in the Roman army, in charge of many men. Yet he cared greatly for his dying servant. The Romans were generally hated by the Jews, and yet this centurion had built a synagogue for the Jews and clearly got on well with them. More importantly, he realised that Jesus was someone special and far greater than he was.

- ▷ *What's your attitude towards Jesus?*
- ▷ *How much respect do you give Him?*

Read verses 7–10

- ▷ *What amazed Jesus?*

- ▷ *What had the centurion realised about Jesus? (v7)*

- ▷ *What was the outcome?*

Surprising stuff. This Roman showed more faith in Jesus than any Jews had. He believed Jesus could heal his servant — even from a distance. Jesus demonstrated His power and authority by making it happen. Great faith from the Roman. Greater power from Jesus, the ultimate Healer.

THINK IT OVER

Write a definition of faith from these verses:

How do you measure up to that?

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank Jesus for His authority over sickness. Ask Him to strengthen your faith and trust in Him.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Faith the facts on page 109.



7

Coffin buster

The Jesus tour rolls on — to the little-known town of Nain. Yesterday we saw Jesus heal a dying man without even going to see him. Today He tops that...

 **Read Luke 7 v 11–13**
ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *What was Jesus' first reaction to this sad scene? (v13)*

In a society where only men could go out and earn money, the loss was doubly devastating for this woman. Jesus was filled with compassion for her. He has great love for people, especially those in unfortunate situations. Jesus reaches out to those who need Him most.

 **Read verses 14–17**

- ▷ *What does this miracle teach us about Jesus' attitude to death?*
- ▷ *What did the people say about Jesus? (v16)*
- ▷ *Were they right, wrong or both? Why?*

Coffins were open so you could actually see the dead body. Jesus touched the coffin which, according

to Jewish law, made Him unclean. But for Jesus, death wasn't the end. He came into the world to bring life — eternal life. And by His resurrection He would defeat death forever. In raising this boy back to life, Jesus not only showed His love and care for the bereaved woman, He also revealed His power over death itself.

Onlookers were amazed and called Jesus a prophet. Many people know things about Jesus that are right: good teacher, perfect man, prophet etc. But that's not enough. They need to see who Jesus really is — the Son of God, Saviour of the world, risen from death, Judge, King — and submit to His rule.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Pray for friends/relatives who don't yet realise who Jesus really is.

 **TAKE IT FURTHER**

More about this on page 109.