

The Hike of Hikes— Luke’s Travel Narrative (Luke 9:51–19:27)

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Chapters 9:51–19:27—often referred to as the ‘central section’ of Luke’s Gospel for its perceived importance in the Gospel—recounts Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem which in Luke becomes an epic travel narrative comprising over 35% of the Gospel (roughly equivalent to the much shorter accounts in Mark 10:1–52 and Matt. 19:1–20:34, which respectively comprise only 8% and 6% of their Gospels).¹ The trip’s beginning, and the unit’s opening, is clearly designated in language unique to Luke’s Gospel (but reminiscent of his unique account of Jesus’ conversation at his transfiguration concerning ‘the exodus he was about to undergo in Jerusalem,’ 9:31): “it happened that as his days of being lifted up were coming to fulfillment, he resolutely set his face to go to Jerusalem” (9:51).

This portion of Luke’s Gospel has undergone much structural analysis, particularly in seeing it crafted as a large chiasm.² A prevailing weakness of these analyses, however, is that their schemes have too many points. Bundles of four and seven points are the norm in the NT; bundles of 11, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 29 are not common to Luke-Acts or the NT. A uniform strength of these studies is locating the featured center material in chapters 13–14. As we will argue in this paper, its seven-part symmetric design (fig. 1) is without parallel in the Gospel tradition and its contents form a literary masterpiece on discipleship that is acutely relevant at any time in the life and history of the church for people of any age, gender, social standing, and race. Its pairings are fairly evenly balanced (A-A’ = 110 vv.; B-B’ = 104 vv.; C-C’ = 122 vv.; D = 70 vv.).

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¹Some scholars extend it through Jesus’ triumphal entry (19:28–44).

²Michael D. Goulder, “The Chiastic Structure of the Lukan Journey,” *SE 2/TU 87* (Berlin: Akademie, 1963), 195–202 (10:25–18:18; 22 parts; center: 13:31–33, 34–35); Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet & Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke*, comb. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 1:80–82 (9:51–19:48; 19 parts; center: 13:22–35); Craig L. Blomberg, “Midrash, Chiasmus, and the Outline of Luke’s Central Section,” in *Gospel Perspectives*, ed. R. T. France and D. Wenham (Sheffield: JSOT, 1983), 3:217–61 (9:51–18:14; 11 parts; center parable: 14:7–24); Walter L. Liefeld, “Luke,” in *EBC 8*, ed. F. E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 932 (9:51–19:44; 14 parts; center: 13:10; 14:1); Hobart K. Farrell, “The Structure and Theology of Luke’s Central Section,” *TrJ 7* no. 2 (1986): 34–36 (9:51–19:44; 14 parts; center: 13:31–33, 34–35); Heinrich Baarlink, “Die zyklische Struktur von Lukas 9.43b–19.28,” *NTS 38* (1992): 487–490 (9:43b–19:28; 29 parts; center: 13:33); Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Luke: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Third Gospel*, rev. ed., RNT (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2002), 117–18 (9:51–19:46; 20 parts; center: 13:31–33, 34–35); Paul Borgman, *The Way according to Luke: Hearing the Whole Story of Luke-Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 9, 78, 203 (9:51–19:44; 19 parts; center: 13:23–30).

Fig. 1 Jesus' journey to Jerusalem and the theme of discipleship (Luke 9:51–19:27)

- A the mission of Jesus, the *rejected Lord*, turns toward Jerusalem (9:51–10:37)**
- Jesus denounces the Galilean cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for not repenting in light of the miracles he did in them
 - Jesus sends out the seventy-two to preach the kingdom of God, heal, and exorcize demons
 - *racially* marginalized focus group: the Samaritans
 - a Samaritan's generous behavior pictures what it means to be a neighbor
- B persistent pursuit of God and Jesus Christ mandated according to the Gospel standards of Jesus' life and teaching (10:38–11:54)**
- the disciples ask Jesus, "teach us to pray"
 - Jesus' exorcisms *visibly* show that the kingdom of God has come
 - six woes pronounced against existing practices of the Pharisees and teachers of the law
 - persistent prayer: parable of a friend asking for bread in the middle of the night
 - ends *ominously*: the Pharisees and scribes fiercely oppose Jesus
- C lessons on money/possessions and faithful service to the Master (12:1–59)**
- consists mostly of Jesus' teaching
 - has *four* teachings on money, possessions, and stewardship
 - offers extended teaching on pursuing the kingdom of God: a seeking
 - an unexpected meal: the master waits on his faithful servants at the table
 - ends with a warning
- D CENTER: repentance of sin and submission to Jesus—the hard, but only way into the kingdom of God (13:1–14:35)**
- Jesus must go to Jerusalem because no prophet dies outside of Jerusalem
 - *two* short parables and *two* longer parables on the kingdom
 - the need for all people to repent
 - a severity: few are saved; discipleship is costly
 - ends: "he who has ears to hear, let him hear"
- C' lessons on money/possessions and faithful service to the Master (15:1–16:31)**
- consists mostly of Jesus' teaching
 - has *four* teachings on money, possessions, and stewardship
 - offers extended teaching on pursuing the lost: a seeking
 - an unexpected meal: the father throws a feast for his lost son who is now found
 - ends with a warning
- B' persistent pursuit of God and Jesus Christ mandated according to the Gospel standards of Jesus' life and teaching (17:1–18:8)**
- the disciples ask Jesus, "increase our faith"
 - change from within a person *visibly* shows that the kingdom of God has come
 - *one woe* warning the disciples against causing others to stumble through false teaching
 - persistent prayer: parable of a widow asking a judge for legal protection
 - ends *ominously*: Jesus asks, "Will the Son of Man find faith when he comes?"
- A' the mission of Jesus, the *rejected client king*, nears Jerusalem (18:9–19:27)**
- Jesus predicts his coming betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem
 - Jesus tells the Twelve about his coming passion and resurrection in Jerusalem
 - *socially* marginalized focus group: tax collectors
 - a tax collector's humble cry to God for mercy illustrates that kind of person God justifies

Points A (9:51–10:37) and A' (18:9–19:27). The paired A points bracket the travel narrative with mention of Jesus setting out on his journey to Jerusalem and arriving in its vicinity: "he firmly fixed his face to go to Jerusalem" (9:51, also v. 53) begins the opening episode of point A (9:51–56); "because he was near Jerusalem" (19:11) begins the closing episode of

point A' (19:11–27). Common themes open and close each point. Point A begins with Jesus *graciously* responding to a racially despised people group by moving on to another Samaritan village, rather than calling down judgment from heaven on the one that refused them hospitality because he was traveling to Jerusalem (9:51–56); it ends with a parable where a *foreigner*, in this instance a Samaritan, demonstrates through his *generosity* what it means to be a neighbor (10:25–37). Point A' begins with the story of God *graciously* responding to a socially despised people group by justifying a tax collector because he mournfully pleads for God to have mercy on him a sinner, rather than the self-righteous Pharisee, who only prays about himself (18:9–14); it ends with a parable where servants show the extent of their allegiance to their master by what they do with his money and dissatisfied *foreign* citizens of the land where this nobleman becomes client king are severely judged for their *rejection* of him (19:11–27).

Structurally, the points follow seven-part symmetric patterns (A, fig. 2; A', fig. 3).

Fig. 2 The mission of Jesus, the rejected Lord (Luke 9:51–10:37)

- A **a Samaritan village refuses to give Jesus lodging because he is traveling to Jerusalem; Jesus graciously moves on to another village** (9:51–56)
- B **Jesus teaches on discipleship** (in *three* separate incidents) (9:57–62)
- C **Jesus sends out seventy-two disciples, two-by-two** (10:1–12)
- the disciples are commanded to heal the sick
- D **CENTER: Jesus pronounces woe upon three unrepentant cities in Galilee—Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum** (10:13–16)
- C' **the seventy-two return to Jesus** (10:17–20)
- the disciples rejoice that demons submitted to them in Jesus' name
- B' **Jesus teaches on discipleship** (in *three* comparisons) (10:21–24)
- A' **Jesus gives the parable of the compassionate Samaritan to show an inquisitive Jewish lawyer that to behave in this neighborly self-sacrificing way toward others knows no ethnic boundaries or racial borders** (10:25–37)

Fig. 3 The mission of Jesus, the rejected client king (Luke 18:9–19:27)

- A **the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector is about how the reign of God works: he will justify those who humbly recognize their sinfulness and cry out to him for his mercy and he will withhold his mercy to all the self-righteous** (18:9–14)
- B **Jesus' teaching on little children illustrates entrance into God's kingdom** (18:15–17)
- ends (with a key teaching): “truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall never enter it”
- C **Jesus encounters a wealthy ruler**—ends with the ruler not heeding Jesus' counsel and Jesus' teaching on the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom of God (18:18–30)
- D **CONTROLLING IDEA: Jesus' betrayal, suffering, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem will fulfill all that is written by the prophets**—but for the time being its meaning is still providentially hidden from the disciples (18:31–34)
- C' **Jesus encounters a blind beggar**—ends with the blind man receiving his sight and following Jesus his healer (18:35–43)
- B' **Jesus' visit to Zacchaeus' house illustrates the mission of the Son of Man** (19:1–10)
- ends (with a key teaching): “for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost”
- A' **the parable of the ten minas is about how the reign of Jesus works: at his return he will honor those who have faithfully been about his kingdom work and judge those who have rejected him** (19:11–27)

Among their many links, the most prominent is the terse unmatched middle passages (10:13–16, 4 vv.; 68 wds.; 18:31–34, 4 vv.; 61 wds.), depicting Israel's wide-scale rejection of Jesus. The first is *backward* looking to Jesus' Galilean ministry that he is now leaving. He denounces ("woe to you") in messianic judgment the Galilean cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum for not repenting in light of all the miracles that he did in them, saying that it will be more bearable for the corrupt OT cities of Tyre and Sidon at the final judgment than for these cities (10:13–14). The second is *forward* looking to the harsh reception that awaits him as the royal Messiah in Jerusalem. He tells the Twelve that betrayal, suffering, and death (also resurrection) are in store for him there, all in fulfillment of what the prophets have written.

Thematically, the pairing centers in at least seven ways on the kind of heart that Jesus accepts and the kind of heart that he finds lacking. First, Jesus thanks God that he has hidden the things that are happening in Jesus from the wise and learned and has revealed them to little children, i.e., the disciples (10:21), and teaches that unless a person becomes like an infant he will never enter the kingdom of God—the seriousness of this teaching is seen in Jesus' preface of it with the dogmatic expression, "truly I say to you" (18:17)—one of only six uses in Jesus' teaching in the Gospel (elsewhere, 4:24; 12:37; 18:29; 21:32; 23:43).

Second, conflict scenes elicit a gracious response from Jesus: he rebukes James and John ("them," 9:55) for their judgmental attitude toward an inhospitable Samaritan village and quietly moves on to another village (9:52–56); he permits the little children to come to him after the disciples rebuked the parents ("them") for bringing the children to him (18:15–16), using these young children as the model of what one must be like in order to enter the kingdom of God.

Third, in terms of discipleship, each contains *three* occurrences of the verb ἀκολουθέω (*akolouthēō*, "to follow," the only uses of the verb in the unit) with three positive examples (#s 1, 5–6) and three negative ones (#s 2–4). In Jesus' encounter with three would be followers, (1) one says, "I will follow you wherever you go" (9:57); (2) Jesus tells another, "follow me," but the would be disciple wants to first go and bury his father (9:59); (3) yet another says to him, "I will follow you Lord but first let me go and say good-bye to those at home" (9:61). (4) Jesus tells the rich young ruler, "come, follow me" (18:22), but he does not; (5) Peter tells Jesus, "we have left all our things and followed you" (18:28); (6) upon receiving his sight, the beggar "followed him [Jesus]" (18:43).

Fourth, Jesus instructs the disciples on how they should respond to the house that welcomes them during their mission: "in whatever house you enter" (10:5); "say, 'peace be on this house'" (10:5); "remain in the same house" (10:7); "do not move from house to house" (10:7); Zacchaeus' home illustrates a house that is welcoming of Jesus: "today I must stay in your house" (19:5); "today salvation has come to this house" (19:9).

Fifth, Jesus interacts with racially and socially despised people to show how far he intends his mission to go (*two* episodes in each): with Samaritans (9:51–56; 10:25–37); with tax collectors (18:9–14; 19:1–10).

Sixth, Jesus uses a despised Samaritan and tax collector to illustrate conduct that God honors and a Levite, priest, and Pharisee to illustrate conduct that God deplors: in the parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37), his generous behavior toward the injured man pictures what it means to be a neighbor versus the priest and Levite who avoid the wounded man; in the parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (18:9–14), the tax collector's humble

cry to God to have mercy on him a sinner illustrates the conduct and attitude God justifies in contrast to the Pharisee's self-centered prayer.

Lastly, both identify conduct and status that obstruct reception into the kingdom: lack of total commitment (9:62); lack of dependence on God (18:17) and the problem of wealth (18:24–25).

Points B (10:38–11:54) and B' (17:1–18:8). The B points of the travel narrative are constructed as parallel patterns of eight parts (B, fig. 4) and four parts (B', fig. 5). Their episodes revolve around the general theme of persistent pursuance of God and Jesus Christ according to the Gospel standards of Jesus' life and teaching.

Fig. 4 Pursuit of God and Jesus Christ (Luke 10:38–11:54)

- A **Jesus visits Martha and Mary; he corrects Martha in her complaint to him**—a correction that supercedes even the cultural hospitality norms of the day (10:38–42)
- B **Jesus teaches on prayer; involves asking God** (11:1–13)
 - C **Jesus *contrasts* his exorcizing of demons by the finger of God to people accusing him of sorcery in casting demons out by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons** (11:14–23)
 - analogy: a fully armed strong man [Satan] protects his property until a yet stronger man [Jesus] overpowers him and plunders his property
 - D **CLIMAX: Jesus pronounces the final state of a person who is freed of a demon but whose soul remains unoccupied as worse that his former condition, because instead of filling himself with Jesus the exorcized demon later reenters with seven other demons more evil than itself** (11:24–26)
- A' **an unnamed woman blesses Jesus' mother (Mary); he corrects her compliment of him**—a correction that supercedes even cultural courtesies of the day (11:27–28)
- B' **Jesus teaches on this generation's demand for a sign; involves asking him** (11:29–32)
 - C' **Jesus *contrasts* the clear eye that fills the whole body with light to the bad eye that leaves the whole body in darkness** (11:33–36)
 - analogy: a lamp lights up the whole room for people to see who enter it
 - D' **CLIMAX: Jesus pronounces six woes on the Pharisees and lawyers whose final state turns out to be worse after hearing Jesus than before hearing him, since instead of reforming their conduct, they now plan to lay traps to ensnare him in what he says** (11:37–54)

Fig. 5 Pursuit of God and Jesus Christ (Luke 17:1–18:8)

- A **four short teachings on faithful service** (17:1–10)
 - the apostles tell Jesus (their only interaction with him in this point): "Increase our faith!"
- B **HIGHLIGHT: the importance of faith and gratitude—the miracle of Jesus cleansing the ten lepers** (17:11–19)
 - ends: "he said to him, 'Rise up and go, your faith has made you well.'"
- A' **one extended teaching on showing vigilance in awaiting the coming of the Son of Man** (17:20–37)
 - the disciples ask Jesus (their only interaction with him in this point): "Where Lord?"
- B' **HIGHLIGHT: the importance of persistent prayer—the parable of the widow and judge** (18:1–8)
 - ends: "I say to you . . . when the Son of Man comes will he find faith on earth?"

The featured passages ending the slopes of the two points stand in jarring contrast to each other according to the thinking of the day but are in harmony with the way of Jesus and the kingdom. The two featured passages ending the slopes of point B are *negative* and appear to have the religious elite in view (and anyone else who tastes of the benefits of the gospel but does not in the end follow Jesus): in the D passage the final spiritual condition of the person with a vacant soul left by Jesus' expulsion of a demon, but who fails to fill the space with Jesus, is worse as the demon returns with seven other more evil demons (11:24–26)—a teaching (and warning) given to members of the crowd who were testing Jesus (11:15–16; specified as the Pharisees and scribes in Matt. 12:38; analogous to the book of Judges when Israel was oppressed by a foreign nation and would cry out to God for deliverance, God would raise up a judge to deliver Israel; Israel superficially followed God as long as the judge lived, but because they did not pursue God inwardly, when the judge died Israel repeatedly fell into levels of wickedness that even their fathers did not know; hence, their final condition was worse than their former); in the D' passage Jesus warns the Pharisees and lawyers in six areas of conduct that will anathematize them before God unless they reform their behavior (11:42–52); their final state, however, turns out to be worse after hearing Jesus than before, since instead of repenting, they now plan to lay traps to ensnare him by what he says (11:53–54).

The *two* featured passages ending the slopes of point B', on the other hand, are *positive* and use common and marginalized people to convey its teaching—a leprous Samaritan and a widow: in the B passage the healed Samaritan shows faith and gratitude to Jesus and God for healing him by putting forth the effort to return and fall before Jesus in order to thank him for healing him (17:15–19); in the B' passage a widow who in Jesus' parable persists in asking a judge to provide her legal protection against her adversary personifies Jesus' teaching on persistence in prayer to God (17:6–8).

For many, following Jesus generates hardships with family, friends, and society who are opposed to him and the gospel. The question of power is ultimate in a couple of ways. For the present life, is Jesus able to provide despite any obstacles and hostilities from people and demons? And for the future life, is there indeed life with God and Jesus after death? Each point is cognizant of this. Each stresses Jesus' supernatural power and sovereignty over Satan and false Christs: Jesus visibly over-powers Satan in his exorcisms as a yet stronger man overpowers a strong man (11:21–22); all claimants to being the Christ must be ignored because of the observable magnitude of the Son of Man's coming—everyone will see it immediately, like lightning flashing across the sky (17:23–24). Moreover, each speaks of the indestructible and relentless presence of the kingdom of God. Its coming is to be prayed for: “let your kingdom come” (11:2). It is a work of God and Jesus. Only they can defeat demonic and human powers ranged against it, and its full consummation will only be realized at Jesus' future return. The Pharisees ask Jesus when the kingdom of God is coming, to which Jesus replies that it does not come with the kind of things they are looking for (17:20–21). Jesus' exorcisms (11:20) and personal change from within (17:21) supply the indisputable visible evidence that the kingdom has come in power in him. All who personally know the transforming power of the gospel have this as divine confirmation that the kingdom has truly come.

An essential staple to nurturing a life of spiritual growth in the midst of the pressures of tribulation and worldly enticement is maintaining constant contact with God in prayer. Both

points offer a parabolic teaching of Jesus on the urgent need for persisting in prayer through the story of a man and a woman: a friend asking for bread in the middle of the night (11:5–8); a widow asking a judge for legal protection against an adversary (18:2–5). What is common to both is the constant asking until the petitioners gets what they are asking for. Initially the friend refuses, “don’t bother me” (11:7), but eventually gives in because of the man’s continued boldness in staying at the door in the middle of the night and asking for it (11:8); initially the judge refuses (18:4), but eventually gives in lest the widow wear him out with her constant asking (18:5).

The disciples reflect the kind of thinking that is essential for pursuing Christ. Each point contains a single short, but key request that they make to Jesus that lies at the heart of spiritual formation. They ask Jesus, “teach us to pray” (11:1); “increase our faith” (17:5). Each pictures a devoted heart to Jesus in a woman’s and a man’s willing humble position before him (in relation to his ‘feet’): Mary sits at Jesus’ feet listening to him teach (10:39); the healed Samaritan leper returns and falls at Jesus’ feet, thanking him (17:15–16). Jesus, in turn, affirms Mary and the Samaritan in language that penetrates to the core of discipleship, i.e., having faith in Jesus and learning from him despite all the surrounding distractions, that can be quite pressing at times: he tells Martha that Mary has chosen the better way and it will not be taken from her (10:42); he tells the Samaritan that it was his faith that ‘has made him well’ (lit., “has saved you,” 17:19).

Jesus’ warns that even though a person might be most zealous for God, it is quite possible not to be following him as much as the sinful desires of one’s heart couched in religious language. He censures six times the grave misconduct of the Pharisees and lawyers in the language of anathema, “woe to you” (11:42–44, 46–52). He similarly warns the disciples in this sobering language, “woe to the person who,” that quick suicide is better than what awaits the person who causes a follower of his to stumble, particularly through false teaching (17:1–3a). Each point cuts to the chase on one’s allegiance to Jesus in a dominical saying, “the one who is not with me is against me, and the one who does not gather with me scatters” (11:23); “whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will preserve it alive” (17:33).

Each point ends ominously. In point B the Pharisees and scribes fiercely oppose Jesus, planning to besiege him with questions in trying to find fault with him (9:53–54), a religious opposition that will soon play a major part in leading to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. In point B’ Jesus asks, “Will the Son of Man find faith when he comes?” (18:8b). In other words, will Jesus find people who are constantly looking to him as the widow was to the judge in the preceding parable?

Points C (12:1–59) and C (15:1–16:31). The themes of money and service to a master converge in the travel narrative’s paired C points as their prominent teaching. Concerning their make up and layout, each point follows a four-part arrangement (C, fig. 6; C’, fig. 7) and incorporates mostly Jesus’ teaching—unlike the unit’s other points, they contain no miracle episodes and only a meager portion of narrative material.

Fig. 6 Lessons on money and faithful service to the Master (Luke 12:1–59)

- A **a courageous confession of Christ before people in times of danger** (12:1–12)
- envisions hardship for Jesus' followers: those who kill the body; standing trial before religious and political authorities
- B **CENTER: seeking first the kingdom of God, rather than material possessions** (12:13–34)
- call to store up treasure in heaven “where a thief does not draw near”
- B' **CENTER: faithful service to others in God's household, rather than to self** (12:35–48)
- call to readiness, unlike the owner who did not know “what hour the thief was coming”
- A' **the coming crisis as a time of decision** (12:49–59)
- envisions hardship for Jesus' followers: division in the home

Fig. 7 Lessons on money and faithful service to the Master (Luke 15:1–16:31)

- A **Jesus gives three parables on the lost being found in reply to the Pharisees' and scribes' complaint that he welcomes sinners and eats with them**—God delights in repentant sinners (15:1–32)
- begins with the Pharisees' and scribes' complaint to Jesus
 - Jesus directs his words to them: “What man among you . . . ?”
 - ends (with a *positive* two-fold depiction): the repentant son was dead and lives, was lost and is found
- B **CLIMAX: parable of the shrewd household manager** (16:1–13)
- concerns the use of wealth
 - gist: wealthy believers are to use their wealth to help poor believers and the work of God; poor believers will then welcome wealthy believers into their eternal dwellings
 - ends with an emphatic declaration on personal allegiance
- A' **Jesus gives three teachings on ungodly pharisaical conduct to the Pharisees who have been hearing him speak and sneering at him**—God abhors the self-righteous (16:14–18)
- begins with the Pharisees' strong contempt of Jesus
 - Jesus directs his words to them: “you are those who justify yourselves before men . . .”
 - ends (with a *negative* two-fold depiction): the man who divorces his wife and remarries commits adultery; the woman who divorces her husband and remarries commits adultery
- B' **CLIMAX: parable of the rich man and Lazarus** (16:19–31)
- concerns the use of wealth
 - gist: the rich man's neglect of the poor man's needs on earth prevents him from sharing the poor man's comfort in the afterlife
 - ends with an emphatic declaration on personal allegiance

Common topics pinpoint where the points start and finish. Each begins with people gathering around Jesus to hear him speak: after large crowds gather together, he begins to speak to his disciples (12:1); tax collectors and sinners draw near to hear him (15:1). Each ends with a solemn warning: the person who does not settle with his accuser will never get out of prison until he has paid every last cent (12:59); Abraham tells the rich man, “if they [his brothers] do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not even be persuaded if someone raises from the dead” (16:31).

Each has *four* common teachings on money, possessions, and stewardship. First, both tell a story about a foolish rich man: a farmer tore down his barns and built bigger ones to store all his grain, but he died and never got to enjoy the fruits of his labor (12:13–21); a rich

man lived a life of luxury, but neglected the plight of poor Lazarus, and when they died the rich man experienced an agonizing reversal in his circumstances in Hades (16:19–31). The dividing line in each story is death (12:20; 16:22). Both men were self-centered in life as depicted in the act of eating: the farmer thinks he can now “take it easy, eat, drink, and be merry” (12:19); Lazarus “longed to be fed from scraps of food that fell from the rich man’s table,” but was neglected (16:21). Each closes with a solemn ‘word to the wise’: “it will be like this for the person who stores up treasures for himself and is not rich toward God” (12:21); “if they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, nor will then be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (16:31). Material wealth in this world tends to create a spiritual bankruptcy with God that will only yield dividends of destitution and separation from him in the life to come.

Second, both have a story of a household manager: a wise and faithful household manager handles his responsibilities well and the master rewards him liberally by putting him in charge of all his possessions (12:42–44), with mention also of the grim outcome for him if he mishandles the master’s possessions (12:45–48a); a shrewd household manager (16:1, 3, 8), whom his master is about to fire for mishandling his possessions (16:1), reduces what each of his master’s debtors owes him in order to gain their favor and a job prospect with them after the master dismisses him (16:1–8). Each closes with a teaching on stewardship: “to everyone who has been given much, much will be required of him, and to the person whom they entrusted much, they will ask even more from him” (12:48b); “the person who is faithful in a very small matter is also faithful in much and the person who is unrighteous in a very small matter is also unrighteous in much . . .” (16:10–12, v. 10 cited).

Third, both prioritize the importance of focusing on God and not on money and material things. Jesus encourages his followers to entrust the matters of food and clothing to God and seek his kingdom above all else (12:22–31), and to sell possessions and give to the poor and in the process make money bags that will not wear out as they contain treasure in heaven (12:32–33). Jesus declares that a person cannot serve two masters. He will invariably love the one and hate the other, be devoted to one and despise the other—particularly when it comes to God and money (16:13). And each has a negative line. Jesus counsels the disciples not to obsess on food and drink like all the nations of the world do who run after these things (12:29–30); he cautions, “for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (12:34). After the comment that the Pharisees love money (16:14), Jesus says to them, “God knows your hearts; what is highly valued among people is detestable in God’s sight” (16:14–15).

Fourth, both use money and material things to illustrate what God highly values. Jesus speaks of the cheapness of sparrows, that five of them are bought for only a couple of pennies but God does not forget one of them, concluding that each of the disciples are worth more than many sparrows, meaning that God will by no means ever forget any of them (12:6–7). Jesus explains to some religious authorities that the reason he eats with tax collectors and sinners (15:1–2) is because they are highly valued by God and heaven, as he illustrates in several parables in terms of possessions, money, and progeny: a repentant person is valued like the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine sheep safe in pasture to find the one that is lost (15:3–7); like the woman who has ten silver coins turns the house upside down until she finds the one that she lost (15:8–10); and like the father who celebrates in joyous unrestraint the son who left home, squandered his inheritance, and returns to his father in deep contrition (15:11–32).

The parables of finding the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (esp. the first two, 15:7, 10) portray what amassing a heavenly treasure that cannot be depleted, stolen by a thief,

or destroyed by moths mentioned in 12:33 looks like, i.e., searching for repentant sinners. Moreover, the shepherd that seeks after the lost sheep until he finds it (15:8) illustrates Jesus' teaching on not letting the seeking of food and drink become life's priority but rather the seeking after God's kingdom (12:31).

Each point contains a short but forceful teaching against the contaminating influence of the Pharisees. He counsels the disciples to stay away from the yeast of the Pharisees, which he calls hypocrisy (12:1) and then promises that what is done in secret will be made public (12:2–3). The comment about the avarice of the Pharisees and their efforts to justify themselves in the eyes of people coupled with Jesus' words that God knows their hearts and finds detestable what is highly valued by people in point C' (16:14–15) illustrates his teaching in point C about their hypocrisy, making public things done in private, and why the disciples should stay away from them.

Seeing the Pharisees sneering at Jesus because of his teaching (16:14) would be intimidating for his disciples. Following Jesus is not easy. For many, there are imposing impediments among family, friends, and the wider community, including these religious authorities of Jesus' day. This is why Jesus asserts that he has not come to bring peace on earth but fire and division (12:49, 51), as is so readily seen then in the sometimes brutal responses that allegiance to him stirs up in family systems (12:52–53). Nonetheless, the kingdom is being preached and despite these hardships people are struggling through them and forcing their way into the kingdom, as exemplified in the coming to Jesus of tax collectors such as Levi (5:27–29) and Zacchaeus (19:1–6, 8–9), the healed Samaritan leper (17:11–19), the penitent sinful woman (7:37–38, 44–48, 50), the blind beggar (18:38–43), in spite of the complaints of people (18:39; 19:7) and the outspoken disapproval of the religious authorities (5:30; 7:39, 49; 15:1–2).

Despite the intimidation of hostile power structures, whether they be religious, political, or family, Jesus tells his followers not to fear them, but to fear God, who has the power to throw a person into Gehenna, i.e., hell (12:5), keeping in mind that since God does not forget small things, like sparrows worth only a fraction of a cent, he certainly will not forget his people, followers of Jesus Christ, no matter how small they may appear in the eyes of the world (12:6–7). An example of this then is the rich man who lived in luxury in life but in death is now in torment and agony in Hades (16:23, 24–25); poor Lazarus, on the other hand, is not forgotten by God, in death he is now comforted at Abraham's side (16:23, 25).

Lastly, each point depicts an unusual and unexpected meal where in the first instance the master represents the returned heavenly Jesus as host and in the second the father represents God as host: the recently returned master has his faithful servants recline at the table and he girds himself up to serve and wait on them (12:37); the father throws a feast for his lost son who is now found (15:22–24, 32). In each instance, the recipients of these lavish divine displays are the children of God, the followers of Jesus Christ. Such esteemed position money cannot buy. The ticket in is pictured in the behavior of the son and the servants—repentance and faithfulness.

Point D (13:1–14:35). The travel narrative's unmatched middle D point features the themes of repentance of sins and submission to the Lord Jesus as the hard, but only way into the unstoppable, ever-growing kingdom of God. It has an eight-part parallel structure (fig. 8) that is appropriately introduced with a two-fold emphasis on the all inclusive need for repentance, whether for people living in first-century Galilee or Jerusalem (or at any other time and place in the world)—“no, I tell you, but unless you repent, all of you will likewise perish” (13:3);

“no, I tell you, but unless you repent, all of you will in like manner perish” (13:5)—and appropriately concluded with a summons to obey, to submit to the teaching of the unit’s final episode (14:25–35), and by extension, the entire point and unit: “he who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Fig. 8 Repentance and submission—the way into the kingdom of God (Luke 13:1–14:35)

- A **Jesus teaches that unless all people living in Galilee or Jerusalem repent they also will perish like the two Galileans whom Pilate killed while they were offering sacrifices in the temple or like the eighteen people who were killed when the tower in Siloam fell on them;** Jesus gives a parable extending hope and warning of judgment: the sterile fig tree will be carefully nurtured and tended for another year before it is chopped down if it remains fruitless (13:1–9)
- begins: “at that very point in time”
- B **Jesus heals a crippled woman on the Sabbath**—it portrays the nature and extent of his deliverance work on his journey to Jerusalem (13:10–17)
- consists of a healing scene, a conflict scene with a religious authority, and a pronouncement from Jesus in *two* questions
- C **two short parables on what the growth of the kingdom is like** (13:18–21)
- parables of a mustard seed and leaven
- D **CLIMAX: a severity—few are saved; there is only one way, and it is hard, into the kingdom** (13:22–30)
- *one* hard saying: struggle to enter through the narrow door
 - a disqualification: “many are seeking to enter and will not be able to”
 - analogy: narrow door
 - Jews not embracing Jesus, and all who think by birthright, etc. that they are in, are being thrown outside and will not sit with the patriarchs at the banquet at the end of the age
 - ends (with a proverb-like saying): “some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last”
- A' **Jesus states that despite Herod’s threat to kill him, he will keep making his way to Jerusalem, exorcizing demons and healing as he goes, declaring that it is not fitting that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem;** Jesus warns that Jerusalem will be left desolate until they welcome him as one who comes in the name of the Lord (13:31–35)
- begins: “at that very hour”
- B' **Jesus heals a man with dropsy on the Sabbath**—it portrays the nature and extent of his deliverance work on his journey to Jerusalem (14:1–6)
- consists of a healing scene, a conflict scene with the religious authorities, and a pronouncement from Jesus in *two* questions
- C' **two long parables on who will occupy the kingdom** (14:7–24)
- parables of the wedding guests and the great banquet
- D' **CLIMAX: a severity—discipleship is costly; there is a specific, but difficult, path that all must follow** (14:25–35)
- *three* hard sayings:
 - (1) if anyone comes to me and does not hate his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, and even his own self
 - (2) whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me
 - (3) everyone of you who does not renounce all of his own possessions
 - a disqualification (after each hard saying): “is not able to be my disciple”
 - three analogies: building a tower; fighting a battle; salt
 - salt that has lost its saltiness and is now useless they will throw outside
 - ends (with a proverb-like saying): “he who has an ear to hear, let him hear”

This point records *three* miracle-working episodes, totaling seven for the unit that reflect a deliberate arrangement around the unit's seven-part symmetry.

- A exorcisms: the 72 disciples report their exorcizing of demons (verse length, 10:17)
- B exorcism: Jesus heals a mute man by exorcizing a demon of muteness from him (verse length, 11:14)
- C *no* miracle working recorded
- D three miracles:
 - (1) Jesus heals a woman, crippled by a spirit for eighteen years, on the Sabbath (13:10–17)
 - (2) Jesus sends a message to Herod that he will continue to drive out demons and heal people until he reaches his goal (Jerusalem) (13:32)
 - (3) Jesus heals a man with dropsy at a Pharisee's house on the Sabbath (14:1–6)
- C' *no* miracle working recorded
- B' healing: Jesus heals 10 lepers, of which only a Samaritan returns to thank him (episode length, 17:11–19)
- A' healing: Jesus gives a blind beggar sight (episode length, 18:35–43)

First, the opening two miracles are one verse long descriptions (A-B), whereas the final two are episode length (B'-A'; each 9 vv. long). Second, the first three involve an exorcism: the seventy-two excitedly exclaim that “the demons submit in your name” (10:17); Jesus drives out a demon that produced muteness in the man (11:14); a woman was afflicted for eighteen years by a spirit of infirmity that caused a severe stoop in her back (13:11). The final three miracles make no mention of demons and involve Jesus healing a man with dropsy (14:4), ten lepers (17:14), and a beggar of his blindness (18:43). Third, the C points record *no* miracles. Fourth, the unmatched middle or fourth reference to miracles features Jesus sending a message to Herod that he will continue doing the miracles these episodes (and slopes) recount him doing as he continues on to Jerusalem: casting out demons and healing people (13:32). Fifth, the three pairings of the six recorded miracle episodes (including the disciples' recounting of their exorcism work) underscore the fact that no one is ineligible for Jesus' gracious work: the first two involve exorcisms, the next two involve healing a man and a woman, the final two involve healing the racially and socially marginalized: a Samaritan and a beggar. Sixth, the third and fifth miracle episodes suitably occur as part of the unit's featured D point. They involve Jesus healing on the Sabbath and include antagonism scenes with religious authorities (13:14–17; 14:1, 3–6) that foreshadow the truthfulness of Jesus' words about a prophet dying in Jerusalem (13:32). The paired miracles capture the current state of affairs at this time for Jesus: the Sabbath setting would be the most natural time in God's program to heal someone. It was a time of physical as well as spiritual restoration. That it so incensed the religious authorities (a synagogue official, 13:14; the Pharisees, 14:1, 4, 6) reveals how far they have drifted from God in their thinking and practice and thus why they are rejecting Jesus and why death will await him at their instigation in Jerusalem.

This point also contains one passion announcement where Jesus establishes his providential authority over Herod (13:31–35). Some Pharisees tell Jesus that Herod wants to kill him. Jesus is not intimidated. He brushes Herod off, sending word to him that he will continue to do what he has been doing as he makes his way to Jerusalem—healing and driving out demons. Jerusalem is the place that he must die and nothing will prevent that from

happening. He comments that it is imperative that as a prophet he should die in Jerusalem. This passage serves notice that it is by divine design that this Jesus who is sovereign over disease and demons is going to Jerusalem to die. It is part of the envisioned exodus, God's redemptive scheme, that he was discussing with Moses and Elijah atop the mount of transfiguration (so 9:31).

Connected with this journey to Jerusalem is the kingdom teaching given in four parables in the C passages: *two* short parables (of the mustard seed, 13:18–19, and yeast, 13:20–21) in C illustrating how the kingdom starts small but will in the end take over everything and *two* longer parables (of the wedding guests, 14:7–14, and great banquet, 14:15–24) in C' on who will occupy the kingdom—not depicted in the person taking the VIP seat or in the people who are more well off, but in the person who takes a lower seat and is moved up by the host and in the poor, crippled, blind, and lame who readily accept the master's invitation. Certainly, the kingdom does not look like it is present or sound very intimidating with Jesus planning on dying and his attention to the poor, the socially and racially despised and outcast, the sick and demon-possessed *et al.* But this is the way of it and why it is so difficult to get into it. Not because its king is a blood-thirsty tyrant, a legalistic perfectionist, or a social elitist. Rather, it is because so few people want it on his terms—picking up their cross and exclusively following him to his place of crucifixion (14:27). But because it is the way of the sovereign God and the Lord Jesus Christ, it can only prevail and will in the end take over everything in its unstoppable growth, a growth that only flourishes the more the dark powers of this world try and up root it (as Acts, e.g., attests in the spread of the gospel stemming from the persecution spawned in Jerusalem against the church at the time of Stephen's death, 8:1–11:24).

The climaxing fourth passage of each slope of this point emphasizes *a severity*: few are saved (D, 13:22–30); discipleship is costly (D', 14:25–35). Greatness with God and Jesus looks like loss in the world's eyes. Abandoning family and possessions to follow Jesus to the place of shame is not very appealing, nor is it a picture of success. Many will seek it, but few will find it, because the desires of the flesh and opposing family and societal allegiances in many cases will win out. The door is, indeed, narrow. Each passage ends with a revealing proverb-like saying: “some who are last will be first and some who are first will be last” (13:30); “he who has an ear to hear, let him hear” (14:35). It all depends on one's response to Jesus. The majority of the religious elite are bitterly opposed to him and will soon look for a way to have him killed; on the other hand, a seeming rag-tag bunch of people like Samaritans, tax-collectors, prostitutes, the demon-possessed, the poor, the crippled, lepers, the blind, fishermen, and women are following him because of his healing and restoring power. The last are in fact first and the first last because of their response to Jesus.

In standing back and looking at the unit as a whole, one last observation is necessary here. The travel narrative contains a total of forty-two episodes (6 x 7): point A, *seven* (9:51–56, 57–62; 10:1–12, 13–16, 17–20, 21–24, 25–37); point B, *eight* (10:38–42; 11:1–13, 14–23, 24–26, 27–28, 29–32, 33–36, 37–54); point C, *four* (12:1–12, 13–34, 35–48, 49–59); point D, *eight* (13:1–9, 10–17, 18–21, 22–30, 31–35; 14:1–6, 7–24, 25–35); point C', *four* (15:1–32; 16:1–13, 14–18, 19–31); point B', *four* (17:1–10, 11–19, 20–37; 18:1–8); point A', *seven* (18:9–14, 15–17, 18–30, 31–34, 35–43; 19:1–10, 11–27). In Semitic literary practice, using factors of seven exhibits literary ‘tidiness’ and would amount to a literary endorsement that this material is fully adequate and sufficient for teaching and guiding *anyone* from *any* culture at *any* time who wants to follow Jesus Christ.

Properly speaking, 9:51–19:27 is not the only travel narrative in Luke's Gospel. The material immediately preceding the transfiguration unit is also a travel narrative, here of Jesus in Galilee (5:1–9:6). These travel narratives are best understood as 'books' on discipleship. They emphasize the indiscriminate nature of Jesus' ministry. Anyone who receives him and his gospel work, he welcomes as his own. Whether Luke intended his Gospel for a particular church or to be used as a manual on discipleship for any church (or both) is not known. But what is certain is the relevancy of this material for the spiritual guidance and growth of all the congregations who would use it. As the gospel continued to expand to more and more lands geographically and people groups ethnically the demand for this teaching is virtually matchless in the Gospels and NT. The focus is Jesus Christ and conformity to his behavior and teaching. As Acts then will show (and insist on), to be a follower of Jesus is to behave in the same way as he did, fully welcoming as brothers and sisters all who come to him. These units are timeless and relevant to any local congregation of believers made up of diverse people groups scattered around the Mediterranean and in time all around the world. As such, it would have been a most useful resource to the many congregations formed throughout the Mediterranean in the missionary work of Paul and the early church. Properly speaking, the culture of the church, then and now, is Jesus Christ and his 'way.'