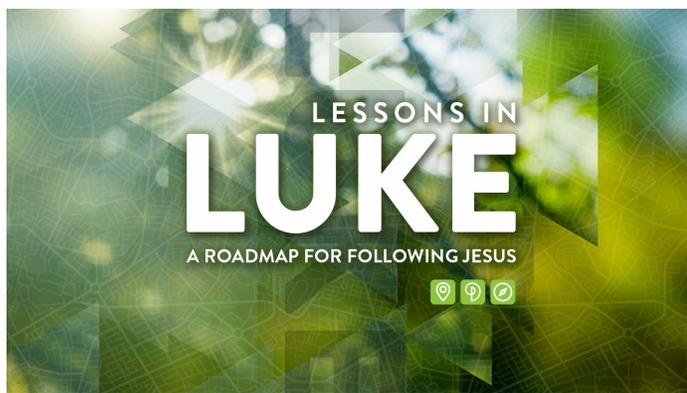


SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE



**PRINCE
OF PEACE**
Called to Connect



Conflicting Loyalties

July 4, 2021

Every day, by the choices we make, we are declaring our loyalties. Being loyal to Jesus can be hard in the beginning, but as we surrender, it breathes life into us. When we surrender the hurt and anger of a grudge we find expansive freedom. When we surrender our agenda and make someone else our focus, deep connection breathes deep joy into us. Loyalty to Jesus gives us life in all its fullness.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: LUKE 9:18-27

Read the scripture text together as a group.

BACKGROUND INFO

While Luke doesn't mention it, Matthew and Mark, who also record this story, tell us that it happened in a place called Caesarea Philippi. And that's significant. Caesarea Philippi was far north from Galilee where Jesus and his disciples did most of their ministry. In other words, they weren't just passing through. Jesus took them there for a reason. Caesarea Philippi had long been the site of worship for many different gods. The hillside where it's located is filled with niches where statues of various Greek gods had been placed. For centuries this had been a place identified with people's deepest loyalties – first to the Greek gods, and later to the Roman Emperor. Apparently, there were lots of rumors about who Jesus was – Elijah, one of the other prophets or even John the Baptist come back to life. But it was in Caesarea Philippi that Jesus asks the question, "Who do you say that I am?" And Peter, never afraid to be the first one to speak, answers, "You are the Messiah, sent from God."

We might be tempted to think that Peter answered this question like a contestant on a game show, as if getting the right answer will win him a prize. But it's so much more than that. Peter has just made a pledge. A loyalty oath. By calling Jesus the Messiah of God Peter is submitting his life to Jesus. He's surrendering himself, which is no small matter in and of itself, but when you consider that he's saying this in a place dedicated to the Roman Emperor you begin to realize the seriousness of Peter's words.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Share about a time when you experienced conflicting loyalties.
- What is Jesus teaching us in this passage?
- Why does Peter's answer to Jesus' question hold so much weight?
- How can we apply this story in our lives today? How do we declare our loyalty to Jesus?

APPLICATION: This week, consider to what or whom you pledge your allegiance. How can we be more aware of these loyalties in our daily life? Pray and ask God to guide you in this journey.