

# The Gospel According to Luke

Part One

## **Discussion Tips for Facilitators**



LITURGICAL PRESS

Collegeville, Minnesota

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**LESSON 1 (Luke 1)**

1. The introduction identifies four major themes, or motifs, of Luke:
  - 1) Jesus' earthly ministry is a battle between Christ and Satan.
  - 2) Jesus' ministry will launch a great reversal in human affairs that will culminate at the end of time.
  - 3) Christ's coming will bring about divisions between people.
  - 4) Joy is given to all who accept the redemption brought about by Christ's death and resurrection.
2. Luke wrote his gospel after carefully consulting others who had written about Christ and after consulting eyewitnesses to Christ's ministry. Luke wrote in order to provide an orderly sequence to Jesus' words and deeds and to assure "Theophilus" of the accuracy of what had already been communicated to him about Jesus Christ.
3. Theophilus might have been an actual person, a benefactor of the local church, a church leader, or even a civil authority of some sort, or some combination of all three. Because his name means "Beloved of God," the name might also be symbolic of everyone who reads the Gospel of Luke.
4. John will go before Jesus in the spirit and power of Elijah to turn the hearts of fathers toward children and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to prepare a people fit for the Lord.
5. Both Matthew and Luke include an angelic annunciation account, proclaiming that Mary was a virgin at the time of conception and that her child was conceived through the power of the Holy Spirit. They differ in that Matthew tells us of the annunciation to Joseph, and Luke tells us of the annunciation to Mary, and so all the particular details of each annunciation vary accordingly.
6. Most who have hoped to become parents, grandparents, or friends or relatives of those yearning to participate in bringing new life into the world will have little difficulty answering. Follow-up question: How does this joy you felt help you to enter into the scene of the two women meeting?
7. The theme of the great reversal appears in the Canticle of Mary in verses 1:52-53, where she proclaims that God has thrown down rulers and lifted up the lowly and filled the hungry but sent the rich away empty.
8. a) Elizabeth and Zechariah had no relatives named John. It was expected that the name given to their son would honor a relative.  
b) When Zechariah affirms that the boy's name is John, in effect he affirms all that the angel announced to him, which he had been struck mute for doubting. With this affirmation his ability to speak is returned to him.
9. a) Zechariah calls Christ the "horn for our salvation." As such, Jesus will save Israel from its enemies, enabling the people of God to worship in holiness and righteousness all the days of their lives.  
b) John will be a prophet who will announce salvation by way of forgiveness of their sins.

**LESSON 2 (Luke 2)**

1. Roman historians left written accounts of enrollments of peoples for taxation and made note of one during the time of Quirinius, whom Luke states was governor of Syria at the time Joseph and Mary journeyed to Bethlehem for Joseph's enrollment. The problem historians have is that Roman histories place Quirinius's governorship outside the time frame given by Luke.
2. a) Sharing experiences like these will heighten our awareness of God's work in our daily lives.  
b) Because David was born in Bethlehem (1 Sam 16:1) and because expectations had arisen that the messianic heir to David's throne would also be born in Bethlehem (Mic 5:1), Jesus, the Messiah, was destined to be born in Bethlehem.
3. Luke's concern for the poor is revealed in his portrayal of Jesus' humble circumstances of birth in a manger and in the angels' proclamation of his birth to shepherds, who were among the poorest of Israelites.
4. For many of us, our awareness of the importance of Christ's birth and our faithfulness in handing on that awareness occurs in the context of our families. Others may have come to a critical awareness at a certain specific time. Still others might suggest that they are still growing in their appreciation of our Lord's nativity.
5. Over time, gospel accounts or events we reflect on most deeply may change.
6. Our names are important to us. In some ways we always think of them as "who we are."
7. In many ways the people of Israel had lived in travail, exile, or under oppression for hundreds of years. The consolation of Israel probably meant for Simeon that God's presence in and for his people would no longer be doubted.
8. Certainly, Simeon and Anna demonstrate the virtue of hope in that it led to their patient awaiting of God's Anointed. That hope would have been born of both their faith in God and their love for God.
9. Jesus was truly special, but he was not unlike other children in that he grew in knowledge and wisdom.
10. Anyone who has felt the sudden panic of realizing a child is not where expected can imagine the fear and urgency and determination of Mary and Joseph.

**LESSON 3 (Luke 3–5)**

1. Many reasons might be speculated. Then (as even now), many people were anxious about the direction of history and believed deeply that God might soon intervene. John's presence and bold preaching would have been seen as signaling the beginning of that intervention. Some may have even believed that John might be the Messiah.
2. In Matthew, the heavenly voice addresses an audience other than Jesus himself (possibly John the Baptist and/or others following John's activities). In addressing John and/or his followers, the announcement that Jesus is "my beloved Son" is a proclamation of the Gospel both to them and to us, who read of it. In Luke, the heavenly voice speaks directly to Jesus himself. In addressing Jesus directly ("You are my beloved Son"), the voice reveals to us, the readers of Luke, the intimate relationship between Jesus and God the Father.
3. Luke's genealogy stretches back to Adam, highlighting Jesus' relationship to the Creator as the "Son of God." Matthew's genealogy emphasizes Jesus' identity as a Jew, a true child of Abraham who has entered the world to fulfill God's promises to his people.
4. a) In Luke, the temptations that Jesus is confronted with are said to be symbolic of riches (bread—ease of sustenance), glory (earthly rule) and power over nature (ability to leap unharmed from the parapet of the temple).  
b) This discussion could identify how today's followers must be alert.
5. The theme of schism in Luke is seen where people are sharply divided in their response to him. After Jesus proclaims a reading from the prophet Isaiah in his hometown synagogue, the people speak highly of him and are amazed, and yet many soon try to throw him off a cliff after he challenges their desire to see him perform miracles.
6. One reason given by the commentary is that his refusal demonstrates the greatness of his power over the demons.
7. Jesus says the purpose of his ministry is to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God. For many participants this may mean that Jesus is proclaiming salvation and the opportunity to go to heaven. A careful reading of Luke would also suggest that this good news was that in Jesus, heaven was coming down to earth.
8. Peter plays a prominent role here and in many scenes in Luke, not always as an exemplary figure. Peter's prominence in Luke and elsewhere in the gospels and Acts is evidence of his great importance in the early church as the leading figure among the apostles.
9. Recalling someone's helpfulness in a time of need can stir fresh feelings of gratitude.
10. The coming of the messianic age was written of in Isaiah as a wedding between God and Israel that would include a great and wondrous wedding feast.

**LESSON 4 (Luke 6-7)**

1. Resting from labor on the Sabbath was central to Judaism (as it is for observant Jews today). While the Pharisees and other Jews adhered to a very strict observance of Sabbath rest, it is evident that Jesus and his disciples regarded the Sabbath rest as something meant to enhance life altogether, allowing for good deeds and life sustaining activity, and wasn't instituted to make life more difficult.
2. The Beatitudes and the woes of the Sermon on the Plain reverse what common sense might say about who are blessed and who can expect woe. The poor are blessed, the hungry are to be sated, those who weep will laugh, while those who laugh now will end up grieving, and so on.
3. Some think that by addressing the crowds directly ("you"), Jesus creates the hope and expectation that the blessings and woes he announces are not for a far off time or something that awaits in heaven. On the other hand, those who endure suffering would be right to hope in an ultimate blessing in the world to come.
4. A variety of answers are possible. For example, our culture is especially concerned with success in a competitive world. Loving those who might threaten our success or achievement can seem countercultural in the extreme. It requires learning to see them as genuine objects of Christ's love.
5. Responses will vary. Our experiences in these matters can be quite humbling!
6. The centurion is most probably a Gentile and knows that, for religious reasons, it would not be proper for him either to approach Jesus too closely or to ask Jesus to enter his home.
7. Both Elijah and Elisha were made famous in the Old Testament for raising the sons of widows from the dead.
8. John the Baptist wanted to know, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus' response is to inform John that his (Jesus') words and deeds are the fulfillment of the prophetic promises God makes to Israel through the prophet Isaiah. He is fulfilling the Jewish expectations of "the one who is to come."
9. We may have differing reactions. What Jesus says about himself is not that he's just out for a good time, but that being in his company is something he deliberately chooses to make enjoyable in the appropriate setting of a celebratory meal.
10. The woman shows courage in entering the house during a meal where only men are gathered. Washing Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair, knowing how others would regard her behavior, shows great humility.

**LESSON 5 (Luke 8–9:50)**

1. At the very least, Luke tells us that the women supported Jesus and his male disciples financially. That they accompanied them along the journey to Jerusalem tells us that they were far more than just hangers-on. They would certainly have learned the way of discipleship by sharing in the cares and concerns of Jesus' ministry, listening carefully to his teachings, witnessing his deeds, and ultimately, we know, to be among the very few who did not abandon him at his crucifixion.
2. a) & b) Will require personal reflection on how each of us attends to the word of God as it is planted into our hearts.
3. Jesus redefined the meaning of family to be a relationship that ignored blood ties and placed all emphasis on responding positively and actively to his teachings (the word of God).
4. While the location of this exorcism is not known for certain, it is described as being in a Gentile region, where lack of concern for Jewish religious purity (the raising and eating of swine) gives added emphasis to the contrast between Jesus and the demoniac (as well as the people of the nearby village).
5. May our hope always be renewed when we reach out in faithful expectation to Jesus.
6. While few of us have chosen to give up all the comforts of life, we each have our own call to follow Jesus, and that makes it inevitable that in some or many ways we have been led to make sacrifices in order to serve him. Sharing examples from your lives is a strong witness to one another.
7. Every Sunday at Mass we profess faith in who Jesus is, but for each of us, either during specific moments in our life or during a lifelong process (or both), it becomes important to affirm in our hearts who Jesus is for us.
8. As at the Last Supper, Jesus takes bread, says a blessing over the bread, and breaks it. Subsequently, as at every Eucharist in which we partake, it is Jesus' disciples who distribute the bread.
9. The appearance of Moses and Elijah represents the Law and the Prophets, making this moment a sign of fulfillment. The way is now set toward Jerusalem.
10. At the very least, we should be cautious in criticizing the good deeds others do simply because they do not share exactly the same faith as we do. If their deeds bring praise to God, we can rejoice in that.

**LESSON 6 (Luke 9:51–11:54)**

1. a) Luke's gospel presents Jerusalem as central to Jesus' mission. Jesus knows that he is to suffer and die in Jerusalem, and so "being resolutely determined to journey to Jerusalem," means that Jesus has resolutely determined to achieve the climax of his mission in the city where he is destined to make his exodus (his death and resurrection).  
b) Jerusalem is the city of the Jewish temple, seen by the Samaritans as a great symbol of their alienation from the Jews. Jesus, a Jew, is leading his disciples on an apparent pilgrimage to the temple, and the Samaritans want nothing to do with Jesus because of it.
2. Remembered times of rejoicing usually bring with them the seeds of renewed joy and the subsequent hope for future rejoicing.
3. a) The parable of the Good Samaritan is challenging to both Jews and Samaritans because of their historic mutual enmity. They are both challenged to see each other as neighbors to be loved.  
b) Unfortunately, many groups in our communities often regard each other with distrust and prejudice. This parable challenges everyone to love everyone else as a neighbor.
4. The one thing is "to love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself," a reinforcement of the greatest commandment.
5. a) Individuals may notice praise, humility, hope, petition, forgiveness, and trust, etc.  
b) Answers will vary. There is need for persistence in prayer whether or not any certain thing is being persistently requested. Persistence in prayer fashions us into prayerful people.
6. Jesus insists that it is not blood (familial) ties to him that bring about blessedness, but rather hearing and acting on the word of God. Far from casting any shadow on Mary's blessedness, Luke shows us time and again that Mary is the ideal disciple, always taking to heart her son's words, even when she finds them hard to comprehend.
7. In Luke 11:29-32, Jesus describes Jonah as a sign of the call to repentance—of turning away from sin and embracing the Gospel. In Matthew 12:39-40, Jesus also employs Jonah's three days in the belly of the whale as a sign of Jesus' forthcoming death and resurrection.
8. Paul, in Philippians 4:8, provides us with a simple guide to fostering what could be called light in our souls: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."
9. Historically, almsgiving was usually thought of as a direct monetary gift to someone in need, someone who was often reduced to begging in order to receive the alms. Today, we have many worthy organizations that will use our donations to make wise distributions of goods and services to those less fortunate than ourselves.

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