

Gospels: LUKE

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel of Luke was written to offer an accurate account of the life of Jesus Christ by presenting him as the perfect sinless human and Savior. Author Luke was a doctor who was a Greek Gentile Christian, the only known Gentile author of any New Testament books. He was a close friend and companion of Paul (Colossians 4:10-14) and also wrote the book of Acts.

Luke tells us what his book is about right from the start. In Luke 1:1-4, he says he's writing so readers can be *certain* about what Jesus did and promised. His first audience was Theophilus ("lover of God") and other Gentiles, so they could trust what they'd learned about Jesus. The whole book shows how God's plan was *fulfilled* through Jesus' life and work. Luke ends (24:44-48) by reminding readers that everything written about Jesus came true and that His followers are now *witnesses* to what He's done.

The general vocabulary and diction show his education. He often makes frequent references to illnesses and diagnoses. It is the most comprehensive of the Gospels, stressing Jesus' relationships with people; emphasizing prayer, miracles and angels; giving prominent places to women. It is a kind of investigative journalism leaving a historical footprint, using eyewitnesses, historical dates, names of people, places, and time references as he recounts the life of Jesus. Luke gives details so we can believe in the reliability of the history of Jesus' life.

IMAGE FOR UNDERSTANDING

How do you get to know someone through a mutual friend? You hear eyewitness testimony from your friend about that person's character, physical characteristics, likes/dislikes. You may see a photo. How do you verify that what your mutual friend is telling you are valid descriptions or observations? Do you stalk social media posts? Talk to some other mutual friends? How do you know who/what to believe, what the validity of all the info collected really is?

Luke helps his readers understand what is their relationship to Jesus as His followers. Luke has more to say to us about our relationship to the Father and the Son than any other Gospel writer. He helps us understand what are our privileges and our responsibilities and how prayer enters into our relationship.

BOOK ORGANIZATION

Chapters 1-4: Preparation for Ministry
Chapters 5-8: Ministry in Galilee
Chapters 9-18: On the Way Toward Jerusalem
Chapters 19-21 Ministry in Jerusalem
Chapters 22-24: Death & Resurrection

JESUS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke describes how God's Son entered human history and lived as the perfect example of a human. After a perfect ministry, he provided a perfect sacrifice for sin so we can be saved. He offers forgiveness to all who will believe in his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of their sin. Luke writes to help his readers engage with Jesus and have certainty about who he was and what

he did for them, knowing that in Jesus God has fulfilled what He promised. Luke affirms Jesus' divinity, but emphasizes Jesus's humanity. Jesus the Son of God is also the Son of Man.

Luke shows that Jesus was deeply interested in people and relationships and showed warm concern for his followers and friends, whether men, women, or children. He showed tender sympathy to those who were poor, despised, hurt, sinful – no one was rejected or ignored by him. Luke shows us a Savior who was compassionate and tender toward those society had forgotten or left out: He healed the broken; cleansed lepers; ate with tax collectors and prostitutes; loved, honored, cared for women and used them in his ministry. Luke documented the joy that resulted from Jesus' saving and healing works and stressed Jesus's call for people to become his disciples.

Luke also writes that the Holy Spirit was present throughout Jesus's life at his birth, baptism, ministry and resurrection. As the perfect example for us, Jesus lived dependent on the Holy Spirit and on the Father through prayer. This Gospel emphasizes Jesus's prayer life more than any other Gospel. Luke also writes so his readers know that the Holy Spirit was sent by God the Father to believers as confirmation of Jesus' authority.

The Gospel of Luke reveals the Son of Man who redeemed mankind and provides a record of God's redeeming work through Jesus.

BIBLE STUDY SPECIFICS: HOW TO APPROACH THE BOOK OF LUKE

Observation

- Author's aim: Luke tells you his purpose in 1:1–4 — to give readers *certainty* about Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and promises.
- Audience: Primarily Gentile readers; Luke often explains Jewish customs and highlights outsiders (women, Samaritans, the poor, Gentiles).
- Luke is carefully organized: look for transitions ("After this...", "On the way to Jerusalem...") that show shifts in Jesus' ministry.
- Trace the journey motif — especially Jesus' movement toward Jerusalem (9:51 is a turning point).

Interpretation

- Luke wrote "so that you may have certainty about the things you've been taught" (1:4). Ask, *How does this passage strengthen my confidence in Jesus—His identity, mission, and promises?* Luke isn't just telling stories—he's building trust in the truth of the gospel.
- Luke highlights how God's promises in the Old Testament come true in Jesus (e.g. 4:21; 24:44). Ask, *What Old Testament promise or prophecy is being fulfilled here?* Luke wants readers to see that God is faithful and His plan is unfolding exactly as promised.
- Luke often explains Jewish customs and emphasizes outsiders—Gentiles, women, the poor, sinners, Samaritans. Ask, *What does this teach about God's heart for all people?* This helps you see the gospel's universal reach.
- Luke highlights the Spirit's activity more than any other Gospel (from John the Baptist's birth to Pentecost in Acts). Ask, *How is the Spirit at work in this scene? What does that show about God's power and presence?*

Application

- Luke wrote so readers would *know for sure* what's true about Jesus (Luke 1:4). *What truth about Jesus do I need to rest in today?* Maybe it's His compassion, His authority, His forgiveness, or His faithfulness. Application isn't always *doing*—sometimes it's *trusting*.
- From shepherds to Simeon to the apostles, Luke shows people seeing Jesus and telling others. *How can I be a faithful witness of what Jesus has done in my life?* This could mean sharing your story, inviting someone to church, or simply living with joyful confidence.
- Luke spotlights Jesus' care for outsiders—the poor, women, sinners, and Gentiles. *Who around me might feel unseen or unworthy of grace? How can I reflect Jesus' heart toward them?* Application often means crossing social boundaries with love.

Prayer

- Jesus took some of His disciples with Him up on top of a mountain to pray, to show them who He was (Luke 9:28).
 - Pray asking God to show you who you are in Him.
- Jesus used a parable to teach His disciples to be persistent in prayer (Luke 18:1-6).
 - Do you keep your requests continually before God as you live for Him daily, believing He will answer, or do you easily give up?
- Jesus told the parable of two men who prayed to teach the danger of self-righteousness (Luke 18:9-14).
 - Do you receive the mercy and grace of God with thanksgiving, seeking to show mercy and grace to others?

CHURCH HISTORY: WHAT DOES HISTORY HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THE GOSPEL OF LUKE?

“And to prove that this is true, it is written in the Gospel by Luke as follows: ‘And in the fifteenth year, in the reign of Tiberius Caesar, the word of the Lord came to John, the son of Zacharias.’” - Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 1.21

(This is Clement's appeal to Luke as authoritative and ascribing the Gospel to him.)

“Luke's Gospel devotes greater attention to describing the events of Christ's life than formulating precepts.” - Ambrose of Milan, *Expositio on Luke* (Prologue 7)

