



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LUKE

LESSON 1 - STUDY QUESTIONS LUKE 1:1-80

DAY ONE

NOTE: According to tradition The Gospel According to Luke and Acts of the Apostles were both written by Luke, a gentile convert and physician. Luke has sometimes been called "the scribe of the gentleness of Christ."

1. The Gospel According to Luke is dedicated to Theophilus, a person whose identity has never been established, but whose name means "friend of God" or "beloved by God." Some scholars believe that this title was chosen to include all those who love God and believe in Jesus Christ. Think of yourself as a person "beloved by God" and write a short prayer asking the Holy Spirit to guide you as you begin this study.

Read Luke 1:1-7

2a. Luke began his gospel by writing a prologue. His use of this formal literary device and the refinement of his writing indicate he is well educated. Record these passages which mention Luke, and briefly note what they may tell us about him.

Philemon 1:24

Colossians 4:14

b. Luke began by establishing that others have written accounts of "the events that have been fulfilled among us." From verses 1-3, how did he establish the credibility of his own narrative?

3. In verse 3 Luke continued to explain how carefully he investigated everything in order to write an orderly account. According to verse 4, what reason did Luke give to Theophilus for his efforts?

4. Luke began his narration of the birth of John the Baptist by establishing the time and place of that event. He wrote that in the time of King Herod of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah. What else can we learn about Zechariah from verse 5?

NOTE: Aaron, an ancestor of both Zechariah and Elizabeth, was described in Exodus as the first high priest of Israel (and Moses' brother). The priestly order of Abijah was one of 24 divisions of priests set up by King David to rotate through service at the temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Chronicles 24:1-19).

5. Verse 6 goes on to explain that Zechariah and Elizabeth were "righteous before God", following all the commandments and living blamelessly, and yet they lacked something. According to verse 7, what was it and why was this of concern to them?

6. **CONNECTION:** Luke began his book by establishing his credibility, the time and place of the events that he planned to describe, the lineage of the first of his many "characters," and even a hint of what this gospel is going to be about. The word "gospel" itself comes from the Old English "God Spell", loosely translated as "Good News" or "Good Message", and applied to the first 4 books of the New Testament, which record the life of Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah. What do the words "Good News" mean to you when you hear them in relationship to the Bible?

Read and record Mark 16:15 and begin your prayer today thanking God for the gift of His "GOOD NEWS"!

DAY TWO

Read Luke 1:8-25

7a. Today's lesson continues with Zechariah, a priest of the Temple at Jerusalem, entering the sanctuary to offer incense while the assembly of people were praying outside. According to verses 11-12, what happened next and what was Zechariah's reaction?

NOTE: The burning of sacred incense accompanied the daily offering on the altar of a sacrificial lamb. Having the opportunity to burn the incense on the altar was a rare and highly prized privilege.

8a. The angel told Zechariah not to be afraid, because his prayer had been answered. His wife Elizabeth was to bear a son and his name was to be John. He also gave Zechariah specific command that his son, John, was never to drink wine or strong drink. What else do we learn about John (verses 14-15)?

9a. The angel continued, telling Zechariah that John would turn many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God, and that the spirit and power of Elijah would go before him to make ready the people for the Lord. Like Elijah, John was to be a great prophet who called fearlessly for Israel's repentance. Read Malachi 4:5-6 and briefly comment on how you think this verse relates to the coming of the Messiah.

b. Zechariah asked how he would know that the angel's words were true, for he was very old, as was his wife. According to verse 19, what was the angel's answer?

10. Because Zechariah had doubted his words, the angel Gabriel told Zechariah that he would be unable to speak until the day the predictions would occur (verse 20). Meanwhile, the people wondered why Zechariah didn't come out of the sanctuary. According to verse 22, what happened when he finally came out?

11. When Zechariah's time of service at the Temple was ended he went home, after which his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she remained in seclusion. Record Elizabeth's words from verse 25.

12. CONNECTION: Zechariah and Elizabeth did not have children, a fact that would have been very difficult in their time. Many would have considered this a stigma, or even a sign of divine disfavor, and yet God turned their particular sorrow into a blessing for them and for all mankind - they were to be parents of John the Baptist. Have you or someone you know experienced or felt some sort of "social stigma", rejection or isolation as measured by today's society? How did you (or they) react, and what did you do to overcome this with the Lord's help?

Read and record Psalms 56:11 and begin your prayer today asking God for faith to trust that what God sends you will bring you closer to Him.

DAY THREE

Read Luke 1:26-38

13a. Today's lesson begins with the beautiful narrative concerning the birth of Jesus. "In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David (verses 26-27). The virgin's

name was Mary." Read and record the following Old Testament prophecy regarding God's covenant with the descendants of King David:

2 Samuel 7:12-13

b. Read and record the following prophecy which tradition relates to Mary:

Isaiah 7:14

14a. The angel greeted Mary and told her the Lord was with her. Mary was perplexed and wondered what sort of a greeting this might be. Record the angel's announcement from verses 30 and 31.

b. In verse 32 the angel told Mary that Jesus would be called the Son of the Most High, and that the Lord God would give to him the throne of His ancestor David. According to verse 33, what was Jesus prophesied to do?

15. Mary questioned the angel as to how this could be, since she was a virgin. What was the angel's reply according to verse 35?

16. The angel's proclamation turned to Mary's cousin Elizabeth. He told Mary that Elizabeth had conceived a son in her old age. Two impossibilities become possible! The previously barren Elizabeth is expecting a son and Mary is to be the mother of the Son of God. Record the wonderful words of verse 37 (Good memory verse).

17a. Try to imagine how overwhelmed Mary must have been, and yet, with utmost faith and humility, she declared herself the servant of the Lord, after which the angel departed. Record and consider her words from verse 38.

b. In some translations we read that Mary called herself the "handmaid" of the Lord. Look up and record a definition of "handmaid" that would best apply to this verse.

18. CONNECTION: The angel's greeting "Hail Mary, full of grace" traces back to St. Jerome's translation in the Latin Vulgate. Though not as familiar, our NRSV translation "Hail Mary, favored one" also conveys God's designation of Mary as His chosen vessel for His only Son. Today's passage, often referred to as "the Annunciation narrative," helps us to understand our

Church's reverence for Mary and her lifelong holiness. Consider her humility and acceptance of God's will. How has the Blessed Mother been a role model for you in your own life?

Read and record Mary's words from John 2:5 and write a prayer today asking that you, like Mary, will have the grace to say "Yes" to God.

DAY FOUR

Read Luke 1:39-56

19. As today's lesson begins, Mary set out to visit her relative, Elizabeth. This is referred to as "The Visitation." Her journey on foot was around 80 miles. Think of some reasons that Mary might have gone to see Elizabeth, who (according to the angel) was in her sixth month of pregnancy.

20. Verse 41 tells us that when Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting as she entered the house, "the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit." Read and record Elizabeth's salutation in verse 42.

21a. In verse 43 we read that Elizabeth said "And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me?" According to verse 44, who else responded with joy when Elizabeth first heard Mary's voice and what is the significance?

b. Once again Mary is referred to as "blessed," as Elizabeth continued with her joyful greeting in this account of the Visitation (the second Joyful Mystery of the Rosary). For what reason does Elizabeth say that Mary is blessed in verse 45?

22a. Verses 46 through 55 are referred to as "The Canticle of Mary" or "the Magnificat." Today read this beautiful hymn of praise out loud, and then select one or two of your favorite verses to record. If there is a special reason that you love these verses, add a note to that effect.

b. Mary's song echoes an earlier hymn. Refer to Hannah's (the mother of Samuel) hymn of praise at the time of her son's birth in 1 Samuel 2:2-10 and select a verse or two that most reminds you of Mary's hymn.

23. Today's lesson ends with verse 56. How long did Mary remain with Elizabeth before she returned home?

24. CONNECTION: Mary, the blessed mother of God, "sings" a hymn of praise to the Lord in the beautiful words of the Magnificat, which is often divided into three parts: The first (46-50) is a praise to the Lord for making her the mother of His Son, our Savior. The second (51-53) praises the strength of the Lord and the value of humility and acceptance, and the third (54-55) tells us that our God is merciful to those who fear Him, and that we can be thankful that He keeps His promises to His people, Israel, and that promise will be fulfilled through her Son. Write your own prayer of praise, humility and thanksgiving to God for all that He has done for you (try to follow Mary's model in some way).

Go back to the Magnificat and select a verse upon which to meditate regarding Mary's humility, joy, acceptance and thankfulness.

DAY FIVE

Read Luke 1:57-66

25. As today's lesson begins, Luke once again turns his attention back to Elizabeth and the birth of John the Baptist. Verse 57 tells us that Elizabeth's "time" came and as Zechariah was promised by the angel of God, she bore a son. What was the reaction of her neighbors and relatives when they heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy to her (verse 58)?

26. According to the law of Moses, each Jewish boy was to be circumcised and to receive his name on the 8th day after his birth (Genesis 17:12). When Elizabeth was told that her son was to be called Zechariah, she said "No, he is to be called John." According to verse 61, for what reason did the people question this name?

27. In the culture of that day, it would be unusual for the mother to name a child, so those who were attending the circumcision motioned to his father to see what name HE wanted to give him (remember that the angel had made Zechariah mute when he doubted his words). Zechariah wrote "HIS NAME IS JOHN" on a tablet. What was the reaction of the people?

28. In Luke 1:13 Zechariah had been commanded by the angel to name his son John. What happened to Zechariah immediately after he wrote John's name on the tablet and what did he then do (verse 64)?

29a. "Fear came over all their neighbors, and all these things were talked about throughout the entire hill country of Judea", and "all who heard them pondered them ..." List the unexpected things that they would have been talking about and pondering.

b. What question did they ask (verse 66) and what conclusion did Luke reach?

30. CONNECTION: "What then will this child become?" Perhaps many of us have asked ourselves the same thing when looking at the miracle of birth ... a newborn child. Whether that child is blessed with good health and loving parents or with health issues, or in a treacherous home situation or whose family struggles with poverty, each child is known by the Lord, and there is a plan. Think of a time when you have watched a particular child grow to adulthood, and have seen unfold the plan the Lord has for him. Share some aspect of that child's special story with your small group.

Read and record Jeremiah 1:5. How well the words of the prophet Jeremiah apply to the birth of John the Baptist! As you begin your prayer today, consider with awe and wonder the miracle of God's hand in creation.

DAY SIX

Read Luke 1:67-80

NOTE: Today's lesson begins with another beautiful prayer, "The canticle of Zechariah," also called the Benedictus (Latin for "blessed"), part of the Morning Prayer said daily in the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office).

31a. Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and began a prophecy with a profession of faith and praise. For what reason is Zechariah blessing God in verse 68?

b. We most often think of God blessing us ... and yet in this prayer Zechariah is blessing God. For us to bless God is to offer Him praise and thanksgiving. Write a short prayer in the format of verse 68, including at least one reason to praise Him today.

32. In verses 69-71, Zechariah praised God for raising up a mighty savior from the house of David, who was to save them from their enemies and who was promised through the holy prophets. Who is the Savior to whom Zechariah is referring?

33. In verses 72-75 Zechariah continued to praise God for fulfilling his covenant with their ancestor, Abraham, that having been rescued, Israel might serve God in holiness and righteousness. What did God tell Abraham in Genesis 17:7?

34a. Zechariah describes his son John the Baptist's role in preparing the way for the Messiah. What will John give the people according to verse 77?

b. The beautiful poetry regarding light and dark (good and evil) in verses 78-79 relate back to the prophecies in Isaiah concerning the Messiah's coming. Read and record the familiar words from Isaiah 9:2.

35. Today's lesson ends with a description of John's youth, "The child grew and became strong in spirit." Where does Luke leave John?

36. CONNECTION: As the first chapter of Luke closes, we are left with a sense of peace, promise and joy. The new dawn that is breaking will give light to those who sit in darkness and "guide our feet into the way of peace." The word peace here is the Greek word "eirene", which can be translated as quietness, harmony, calmness, wellbeing, or an absence of strife. Think of some ways in which you "walked in peace" during your day today as you did your regular tasks. For example, did you spend two minutes with the Lord before you started your day, or did you silently offer praise when you raised your fork to your lips? Share some thoughts with your small group.

Read and record Isaiah 26:3 and begin your prayer today asking Our Lord Jesus Christ to guide our feet in the way of peace.

After completing this lesson, read pages 9-16 in the *The Gospel According to Luke* by Michael F. Patella, O.S.B. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Copyright © 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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