

A Study of the Gospel of Luke

Journey into the
KINGDOM OF GOD

Jeremy C. Higle
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Tommy C. Higle

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Journey into the Kingdom of God (ESV® Edition)

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PREFACE

Dear fellow lovers and learners of God’s Word,

The publishing process of this book was truly an arduous journey. I began the writing process just before the beginning of the pandemic of 2020. Like many businesses, we rode the Covid-19 rollercoaster of multiple quarantines, paid furloughs for our team members, masks, social distancing, delays from shipping companies, and eventually vaccinations. Then, just when things seemed to approach normal, a two-week winter storm paralyzed our area. However, as this book is being released, we are finally beginning a “normal” summer. I know we will appreciate it like none before.

I must also celebrate that this book marks the completion of one of my late father’s life goals—to complete a “Journey” Bible study on every book in the New Testament. This only took forty years of diligent work!

As always, this book is a team project. Thanks to my mom (Virginia), a former English teacher and now administrator and editor-in-chief of *The Journey Series*®. Special thanks also goes to the efficient staff (and my wonderful friends) at the Journey House: Martha Greenwood, Carolyn Gordon, Patti Donaldson, Ashly Martin, and the Higle boys (Joseph and Titus) who do the proofreading, binding, packaging, order processing, shipping, answering of phones, and hundreds of other things.

A very special thanks goes to my wife Pamela, a high school English teacher and my loving partner for 24 years of adventures (and counting).

Most of all, I want to thank the Lord for giving me the wonderful privilege of teaching and preaching His inspired, written Word. Whatever comes in the next years, His Word and His Ways will always be true and faithful.

Peace and hope,

Jeremy Hagle

The Journey House
6/4/2021

SUGGESTIONS FOR YOUR JOURNEY

I. HELPFUL MATERIALS

1. A good study Bible and reliable Bible dictionary (Ask your pastor or teacher for help in this area.)
2. A lead pencil. Don't use ink because you may want to change your answers.

II. HINTS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

1. Pray for God's guidance before each session, that your mind and heart will be receptive to God's message for you.
2. Don't worry about scriptures you do not understand. Simply concentrate on what God reveals to you in His Word for now, and trust Him to make the vague things clearer as you continue to study.
3. Mark the Bible verses that really speak to you.
4. Read each lesson at least three times each week.

III. HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR CLASS TIME

1. Attend every class period.
2. Arrive at least 10 minutes early to look over the lesson, so you will have an idea of what will be covered during that session.
3. Write down things you want to remember, or you will probably forget them. You increase your retention by 300% if you take notes.
4. Pray for your teacher every day.

IV. HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THE LESSONS

1. Look up the scripture reference in your Bible. Usually the answer is very simple and clear in that reference. However, sometimes there are questions that require thought, so you must meditate over the verse or passage to find its meaning. Answering the questions will become easier as the Bible comes to life to you during the study.
2. Don't simply quote the scripture. Write it in your own words as briefly as possible.
3. Whenever possible, personalize the scripture by using pronouns such as "I," "me," "my," "mine," etc.

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SPIRITUAL PREPARATION FOR YOUR JOURNEY

To get the most from this “journey,” you must be spiritually prepared. The basic preparation is knowing Jesus Christ as Lord (boss) and Savior, so He can be your spiritual Guide on the journey. If you have never received Him, or if you are not sure, there are four things you must understand . . .

1. God loves you and wants you to have eternal life.

The Bible says, *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life* (John 3:16*). The Bible also says, *But God commendeth [proved] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8*).

2. You are sinful, and your sin separates you from God.

The Bible says, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23*). Sin separates us from God, for the Bible says, *But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you . . .* (Isaiah 59:2*).

3. Only in Jesus Christ can forgiveness of sin and salvation be yours.

Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6*). You must believe God loved us so much He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross to provide the way of salvation and that on the third day, God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9)

Right now you may be thinking, “I already believe these things.” Well, the Bible teaches it is not a matter of just believing, for *the devils also believe, and tremble* (James 2:19b*). Simply believing Adolf Hitler lived and died doesn’t make you a Nazi, and believing Jesus Christ lived and died doesn’t make you a Christian. You must act upon what you believe.

4. You must repent and receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

It is not enough to agree that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who died on the cross for your sins and rose again. You must repent of your sins. Jesus said to be saved you must *repent* and *believe the gospel* (Mark 1:15*). *Repent* means to turn away from your selfishness and sin and turn control of your life over to Jesus Christ. If you sense your need to repent of your sins and be saved, that is the Holy Spirit drawing you to Christ. Jesus said no one can come to Him unless the Father draws him (John 6:44*).

If you will pray the following prayer right now, or pray in your own words, telling God you are repenting of your sins and inviting Jesus Christ into your heart, you can receive Him today as your Lord and Savior. The words are not as important as what you mean in your heart. Jesus said a man at the temple simply prayed, *God be merciful to me a sinner* and went to his house *justified*, or saved (Luke 18:13-14*).

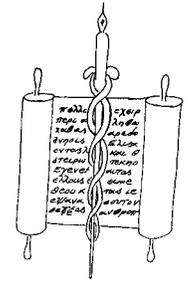
Dear Lord,

I know I have sinned. Right now, I repent of my sins and ask for Your forgiveness. I ask Jesus to be my Lord, to control my life, and to help me become the person You want me to be. Thank You, Jesus, for dying on the cross so I could be forgiven. Amen.

Now, share your decision with your pastor or teacher.

*Scriptures from KJV

LESSON 1 . . . Preparing the Way of the Lord (1:1-56)



NOTES

Luke was a Gentile—trained as a Roman physician, redeemed by Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and set apart for ministry. That is all we know because Luke did not write about himself. Instead, he focused on the Glory of God as revealed in history through the words and works of Jesus Christ. This is the “Gospel According to Luke.”

Luke meticulously authored a two-part history of the church. The first part, *The Gospel According to Luke*, describes the life of Jesus Christ. The second part, *The Acts of the Apostles*, records the early years of Christianity. Luke did careful research—interviewing disciples, meeting family members, and collecting firsthand testimonies of events. He also personally witnessed many of the things he recorded in *Acts*. He *followed all things closely* (Lk 1:3b). Why does Luke write so carefully (1:4)?

Luke’s carefully researched, historical books declare the kingdom of God has entered into human history. The phrase “kingdom of God” occurs more than thirty times in *Luke*, more than the other three gospels combined. Luke wants people to know God’s kingdom is for Jews and Gentiles alike. From where do the citizens of the kingdom of God come, according to Jesus (Luke 13:29)?

Jesus calls people from every direction. Everyone who responds to His call receives three wonderful blessings: forgiveness of every sin, eternal life in heaven, and a purpose for daily living. In this lesson, we see how to prepare the way of the Lord in our lives. First. . .

Be faithful in the daily ministry God gives us to do (1:5-25).

Herod the Great was the Roman-appointed ruler of Judea. When the Romans conquered a foreign country, they allowed their subjects to continue practicing their religious traditions. As long as the Jewish people submitted to the laws and taxes of the Romans, they were permitted to continue most religious traditions of the Old Testament. These traditions were administered by thousands of Levitical priests living throughout Israel. Luke’s record begins with events in the lives of one of these priestly families.

A certain priest named Zechariah and his wife Elisabeth are well-advanced in years and have no children. This reminds us of Abraham and Sarah in the Old Testament. Although their hope of having children has passed,

Zechariah and Elisabeth have continued to obey all the commandments and Jewish regulations. Luke describes them as *walking blamelessly* because they are **faithful in the daily ministry** God has given them (1:5-7).

As it happens, Zechariah is chosen by lot to burn incense in the temple as a representative of his priestly division. Out of the thousands of priests all over the country, only a few received this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. This would be the greatest honor of Zechariah's priestly career (1:8-9).

As Zechariah executes his priestly tasks, an angel of the Lord appears to him on the right side of the altar of incense. Fear overcomes Zechariah. But the angel tells him, "*Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard*" (1:13a). Like Abraham and Sarah from generations before, Zechariah and Elisabeth will have a son in their old age (1:13b).

The angel then announces a special name for their son: *John*. He will live a holy lifestyle—abstaining from alcohol and being filled with the Holy Spirit "*even from his mother's womb*" (1:13c-15). Then, in verses 16-17, the angel explains John's mission. John is the fulfillment of what prophecy in Malachi 3:1a?

Zechariah hesitates and then says to the angel: "*How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.*" (1:18). This reminds us of Moses' experience at the burning bush. Moses questions God's command and calling by saying: "*they will not believe me*" (Ex 4:1); "*I am slow of speech*" (Ex 4:10), and "*please send someone else*" (Ex 4:13). Zechariah and Moses hesitate because they think in terms of their limited human capabilities. However, God's plans are based on His divine, limitless capabilities.

When God calls us to follow Him, we should remember what truth expressed in Psalm 20:7?

God knows about Moses' and Zechariah' immature faith when He chooses them. So, He immediately begins working to develop their faith. God uses "different strokes for different folks." He brings Moses a helper to speak for him (Ex 4:14-15). However, God strikes Zechariah mute, so he cannot speak (1:20). Sometimes the Lord gives, and sometimes the Lord takes away. In each case, He knows the best means to bring about His good and perfect will, while strengthening the faith of His children.

While Zechariah encounters the angel, the people outside are wondering why he is taking so long to come out. When he finally exits the temple, he can't verbalize what has happened. So, Zechariah invents some sort of sign language to explain the angelic encounter in the temple (1:21-22). (I would love to have witnessed that game of charades!)

After his time of serving in the temple, Zechariah returns home, still unable to speak (1:23). Probably in a written note, he evidently communicates the angelic announcement to Elisabeth. If you were to tell a barren woman in her sixties she is going to have a baby, what would be her reaction? I imagine Elisabeth's response is a mixture of disbelief, fear, and joy. Like Abraham, Sarah, and Zechariah, Elisabeth has her reservations about God's miraculous promise. But she hears the Word, responds with imperfect faith, and God proves faithful (1:24-25).

Why is it so important, even though our faith is imperfect, to seek God through faithful obedience, according to Hebrews 11:6?

To prepare for the way of the Lord in our lives, **be faithful in the daily ministry God gives us to do**, and . . .

Be obedient when God calls us to something new (1:26-45).

In the sixth month of Elisabeth's pregnancy, God sends Gabriel to Nazareth to visit a young woman named Mary (1:26-29). If Gabriel's appearance scared a seasoned priest like Zechariah, trained in reading the holy scriptures and experienced in the temple rituals, it must have absolutely terrified a simple, uneducated village girl!



Gabriel comforts Mary (1:30) and tells her: . . . *“you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High . . . and of his kingdom there will be no end”* (1:31-33). Mary must have become as confused as she was terrified. Just like Moses and Zechariah, Mary questions God's pronouncement: *“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”* (1:34b).

This does not make any human sense. Mary's mind, body, and emotions all tell her one thing—this is impossible. Gabriel gives her some details and then makes a final statement. What does Gabriel tell her in 1:37?

Mary replies by saying she is the Lord's *servant* (1:38a). The word translated *servant* is δούλη (doo'-lay), which literally means "slave." Though she is afraid and confused, Mary is **obedient when God calls her to something new**.

After the angel departs, Mary thinks of the one person who can empathize with her amazing and confusing experience—her older cousin Elisabeth. So, Mary goes *with haste* to the home of Elisabeth and Zechariah (1:39-40). What three things happen when Elisabeth hears the sound of Mary's voice (1:41-42)?

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
-

To prepare the way for the Lord in our lives, **be faithful in the daily ministry God gives us to do, be obedient when God calls us to something new, and . . .**

Be thankful God is working in our lives (1:46-56).

Mary responds to Elisabeth by praising God's favor on her and her people. Later church tradition would name this prayer "The Magnificat" after the first words of the prayer when translated into Latin. Write down the English translation of what Mary says in verse 46a on the line below:

These passages demonstrate that God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect work. As we prepare for the way of the Lord in our lives, we don't have to be perfect, but we must:

**Be faithful in the daily ministry God gives us to do;
Be obedient when God calls us to something new; and
Be thankful God is working in our lives.**

