

The Beginning: Luke 1:1-4

Approaching Our Faith with Intentionality

Study Summary and Learning Objectives

This study is an introduction to Luke. Rather than spending a lot of time talking about the contents of Luke itself, this study looks at who Luke was, his approach to writing, and the circumstances that prompted him to write this Gospel.

Objectives

- What we read in the Gospel of Luke is reliable.
- Our approach to knowing Jesus should mirror Luke's. Luke makes a scholarly and intentional investigation into the claims he (and other new Christians) had heard about Christ. We should approach our faith with the same sort of intentionality.

Steps to Prepare (For Leaders)

- Bring ¼ sheets of scrap paper and writing utensils for the group activity.
- Read the additional passages to familiarize yourself with who Luke was: Acts 1:1-2; Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11; and Philemon 1:24

Group Activity: Telephone Pictionary

Read Out Loud: We're going to play telephone pictionary. For those of you who haven't played this before, we're going to give each of you a stack of paper. Write down something from your childhood **that will be relatively simple to draw** (for example: What did you want be when you grew up? What was your favorite sport or activity? Did you have an unusual pet? etc). After you are done writing, you're going to pass your entire stack of paper to the person on your right. On the next sheet of paper, that person is going to do their best to draw the activity you've written down in 45 seconds or so and put your first piece of paper at the back of the stack. Then they will pass the stack of paper (with their drawing on top) to the person to their right. That person will write down what they think the drawing is on the next piece of paper in the stack and pass the stack to the person on the right and so on and so on. *Leaders Note: Don't forget to grab supplies for this activity. Decide beforehand how much time you want to spend on this activity. Depending on the size of your group, you may not be able to complete the game, and you might have to limit the exchanges. Just make sure you allot enough time to actually distort the original words.*

? Was this an effective way to learn something about your group members' childhoods?

? If you really wanted to learn something about each other's past, what would have been a better way to do it?

Possible Answer: The goal of this activity is to show that talking directly to each other, so that you can ask questions, dialogue, and interact, is a better way to learn about each other.

Optional Transition: This group activity illustrates that without talking and interacting with each other, it's difficult to get to know each other's stories (in this case something about our childhoods). If you relied on this game alone to understand someone's childhood, you would have a severely incomplete picture of that person's life. In this study we'll see how Luke approached relaying Jesus' life through the writing of the Gospel. Knowing that information can be distorted as it is passed along early Christians, such as Theophilus, wanted an accurate and reliable account of what happened while Jesus was on earth so they could know what was true and what was not.

Exploring Luke

Read Out Loud: Luke 1:1-4 (NIV)

¹ Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, ² just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. ³ With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, ⁴ so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Read Out Loud: Even though this passage is short, it provides significant background information about the Gospel of Luke. Looking at these four verses alone (don't look at your Bible's "Intro to Luke" just yet), what do we know about:



The point in history and the development of the Church when Luke is writing?

Possible Answer: He was not an eyewitness to Jesus' life, so he must have written this sometime after Jesus' death and resurrection. The Church was relatively young yet they already had some written accounts of Christ's life ("I too decided to write"). These accounts needed clarification and/or confirmation of the history that was handed down to them.



Luke's audience?

Possible Answer: Luke is writing directly to Theophilus. Based on Theophilus' title, he was probably in a position of authority over Luke (likely he paid Luke to research and write this account). Theophilus could have been a stand-in for any Christian in the early Church, though. Luke likely wrote this with the understanding that Theophilus would share it with his local church and maybe to other churches in other regions.



Luke's purpose and approach in writing this account?

Possible Answer: Luke says he is writing this so that Theophilus can have certainty of the things he had been taught. He is making an orderly account and notes his careful investigation. Luke is assuring Theophilus that his account is accurate and reliable and that he did not approach this flippantly.

Optional Transition: We find additional information about Luke elsewhere in the New Testament.

Read Out Loud: Acts 1:1-2 (NIV)

¹ In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach ² until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.

Read Out Loud: Colossians 4:14 (NIV)

[Paul, at the end of his letter to the Colossians, sends greetings from many of those he is ministering with, including Luke:]

¹⁴ Our dear friend Luke, the doctor, and Demas send greetings.

Read Out Loud: Portions of 2 Timothy 4:6-11 (NIV)

⁶ For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

⁹ Do your best to come to me quickly, ¹⁰ for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and has gone to Thessalonica ... ¹¹ Only Luke is with me...

Read Out Loud: Philemon 1:24 (NIV)

²³ Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, sends you greetings. ²⁴ And so do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke, my fellow workers.



What do these passages tell us about who Luke was?

Possible Answers: Luke was a doctor, an educated person. He travelled with Paul on his missions and did ministry with Gentiles - so he was probably a Gentile too. Paul was surrounded by a strong community of believers. Luke also wrote the book of Acts, so his account in Luke was likely written with the aim of establishing a foundation for the early church.

Read Out Loud: Let's take a couple of minutes to fill out the chart in your handout, summarizing some key things to keep in mind as we study this book. You can even take a look at that "Intro. to Luke" portion of your Bible now, and share any extra tidbits with the group. As we continue learning about Luke, feel free to add more information.

Leaders Note: Limit this activity to 3-5 minutes.

Luke Summary	
Context:	Audience:
Purpose/Approach:	Author:

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? We learn in Colossians that Luke was a doctor. As someone who was likely educated and scholarly, how might this have influenced his approach to writing his Gospel account?

Possible Answer: Luke needed to make sure what he was writing was true and accurate. He probably got accounts from several different eyewitnesses to make sure future believers like Theophilus would not question the certainty that Christ was fully God and fully man.

? How might Luke's travelling and ministering with Paul have influenced his writing?

Possible Answer: He probably met several of the other Apostles who knew Jesus during his ministry, who learned directly from him, and witnessed the miracles he performed. Luke also probably encountered several false prophets and witnesses in his travels.

? What has shaped your context for viewing the Gospel?

Leaders Note: You may wish to reframe this to "one or two things that have shaped..." based on how the willingness of your group to share.

? What does Luke's approach to writing an account of Jesus' life teach us about how we approach Jesus?

Possible Answers: Luke took a lot of time and effort to write this Gospel. It was a lifelong endeavor and could not have been easy to get multiple eyewitness accounts. Our faith journey/Christian walk/relationship with Jesus is also a difficult lifelong refining process, but the end result is worth it. We should also endeavor to seek out answers to our questions about our faith with the perseverance and fervor of Luke.

For Discussion and Accountability

? How can you approach your faith in a way that assures you of "the certainty of the things [we] have been taught"?

Possible Answers: Read the Bible to learn Scripture firsthand. Surround yourself with a strong, reliable community who can help you discern truth and will tell you truth. Spend time in prayer.