

The Gospel of Luke

Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you ... so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

Luke 1:2,3

Lesson 1: Luke the Man

Lesson 2: Luke and Songs

Lesson 3: The Culture

Lesson 4: The Women

Lesson 5: The Balance of Luke

Lesson 6: The Parables

Lesson 7: The Miracles

Lesson 8: Journey to Jerusalem

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The Gospel of Luke

Leader's Notes—Lesson 1: Luke the Man

1. What do we know about Luke?

- A Gentile, thought to be born in Antioch (of Syria)
- Highly educated man, a physician by profession (Col 4:14)
- Was not an eyewitness to the events about which he writes (Luke 1:1-4)
- He researched the information for his writings (Luke 1:1-3)
- Also wrote the book of Acts
- He was a companion of Paul on his missionary journeys. (Acts 16:10ff; 20:5ff; 27-28)
- Wrote for the people Paul reached on his missionary journeys, the Gentiles
- Tradition says he remained unmarried with no children, and is thought to have lived to be 84 years old
- He includes many more details than other New Testament writers
- More information about the birth and boyhood of Jesus than any other author
- He mentions thirteen women no other gospel writer names
- Mentions eight women by name and names two centurions
- Three sayings of Christ on the cross not included in other accounts
- He includes more parables than any other Gospel (15) (see list on pages 1578-9 of Concordia Self Study Bible)
- Writes with a heart that desires all, both Jew and Gentile, to know that Christ has won salvation for all. Luke uses the Greek "*oiangelidzo*" 11 times, meaning "to tell Good News" as in Luke 1:19.
- Shows a special concern for the role of women and stressed the family circle
- Frequently spoke of the Holy Spirit and is also reported to have written more pages of the New Testament than any other writer (56).

Share with the class: Unique trends or themes to the book of Luke include: a continuous pointing to Christ as Savior, a greater-than-average use of medical terms, the inclusion of many details, numerous visits to the temple, Jesus travels “to Jerusalem,” more parables (12) than any other gospel, a bridge between Gentile and Jew (heart for the underdog, as some would say), and a paralleling or balancing of references to the lives of both men and women.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 2: Luke and Songs

This lesson focuses on “Mary’s Song” from Luke 1:46-55 and “Zechariah’s Song,” found in Luke 1:67-79. Mary’s song will be compared and contrasted with the Old Testament song of Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

Glean reactions to “highlighting activity,” from Lesson 1. Have class comment regarding impressions, old and new, of the Gospel of Luke.

Review with the class: Unique trends or themes to the book of Luke include: medical terms, the inclusion of many details, numerous visits to the temple, Jesus travels “to Jerusalem,” more parables (12) than any other gospel, a bridge between Gentile and Jew (heart for the underdog, as some would say), and a paralleling or balancing of references to the lives of both men and women.

Mary’s Song and Zechariah’s Song are both included in Luke and no other. This fact reinforces for the reader several of Luke’s traits as a writer inspired by the Holy Spirit: The temple theme is found in Zechariah’s song. The fact that one song is by a man and the other a woman is evidence of Luke’s balancing the life and culture of men and women. Luke has a heart for a Jewish girl, perhaps as young as fourteen, who is unwed and pregnant. He has a heart for the man Zechariah who has trouble believing that he and his wife Elizabeth, both “well along in years,” (Luke 1:7) would have a child. (Note how Z. oh-so-politely describes *himself* as “old” and his *wife* “well along in years,” 1:18; he is well-trained!) Both songs point to the coming and arrival of the long-awaited Messiah.

Similarities between the songs of Mary and Hannah: Both praise God for the gift of salvation; both speak against the sin of pride and lift up humility; both speak of God’s mercy; both give God glory for filling the hungry, both physically and spiritually; both refer to the faith being shared with past and future generations; both are filled with joy in salvation alone, apart from any earthly riches or lack thereof.

A quote to share:

“Unbelief turns off the color and turns down the sound of life as it was meant to be lived. But, faith in Christ, and faith in the God who changes things, who interrupts our lives with the glorious news of salvation by repentance and faith in Jesus, turns on the sound, lights up the soul, and causes mute men to shout for joy!” — “Just ask Zechariah.” Michael Milton, “Advent: Zechariah’s Song” www.christianity.com.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 3: The Culture

Open with a discussion on Luke's gospel and the illustration of a musical. What story do you see unfolding in the "music"? Who are the main characters? Who has Luke cast in the starring role?

1. Our decisions today often contradict the general culture: who we vote for in an election, how we discipline children, our Sunday routine, our interactions with our neighbors, how we care for our bodies in regard to alcohol and illegal substances, etc. There is a different motivation in the heart of a Christian that the unbelieving heart cannot understand, often despises or will not acknowledge or possibly may not even notice.

2. Remember that "The Lost Son" (Luke 15: 11-31) is a parable, "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." The People's Bible on Luke suggests that a better title might be "The Parable of the Father's Love." Note the storyteller. Jesus often told such accounts to teach about heaven using cultural settings people at the time could relate to. A few settings and careers of Jesus' parables include wheat fields, farmers, vineyards, taxes and money in general.

There are several actions taken by the father and the son in this parable that are so powerfully filled with contradictions to the local culture at the time and open our eyes to a God that is so much more than an earthly father, beyond comprehension to many a Jew.

The class should list at least ten actions taken by the father and sons. The leader may then discuss the implications of the actions in the framework of the mindset of one living in the Jewish culture. Keep in mind throughout the discussion that pride framed a typical Jewish man's life and decisions.

Some of the actions by the men in the parable include:

Younger son asking for inheritance: The inheritance always went to the oldest son, no questions asked, as in, the younger son would never consider *asking* his father for money, it would be an insult meaning he no longer wished to obey his father or live in his house, and resulting in his father considering *him* dead. The community would have carried out a banishing ceremony; he would be dead to his family and the town.

Father dividing his property: The father would never consider complying with his son's request. In all likelihood he would strike him across the face and banish his disrespectful son from the family, which would result in the son's loss of all inheritance due him. The father is willing to endure the pain of rejected love.

Younger son loses everything: He lost everything twice: his family and his wealth

Son hiring himself out: Jewish sons worked in the family business. To set out for another country was not likely, nor was lowering themselves to common labor.

Son feeding pigs: Pigs were "unclean" animals according to Jewish law, those of the cloven foot forbidden for food by God. They were despised creatures, well beneath acknowledgement by a Jewish man, much less to be cared for. The thought of eating what the pigs were eating was about as low a food group choice as he could possibly consider.

No one gave him anything: He is totally rejected by the world.

"I will go back to my father": Returning home would likely never be a possibility since the son would have been banished from the family and expect never to be seen again. At the very least it would be extremely humiliating. It could never be done without returning the property he was given. He would have to admit having been wrong. He would face his father's lack of approval. He would endure his father's rage. Now he would surely be banished from the community if he had not been when he left.

His father saw him: In actuality, the father would have been so insulted by his son's actions, he would consider him forgotten and no longer part of the family. He would not spend time watching the horizon as this father must have done in order to see him coming off in the distance.

His father was filled with compassion: More likely, the father would not even acknowledge the son's presence and act as though he did not know him. It would not have occurred to him to have or display any feelings for his son, much less compassion.

The father ran to the son: Consider the dress of the day: long robes. In order to move quickly, the man would have to gather up his robes. Running was considered beneath a man and might even expose a bare leg, which was not done.

Father bringing the best robe, ring and sandals: He gives his son great honor, where in reality, he would not have even been welcomed back.

Father giving a feast: The attendees would have been the entire community, indicating forgiveness by the entire community, rather than a shunning.

Older brother getting angry: Showing anger toward his father would be highly insulting and not done. The son considers the property his, yet by Jewish law, the property stays in the father's ownership and he can do what he likes with it, including butcher a calf, until his death, when it passes into the hands of the oldest son. He has chosen the wrong time to speak; properly, he would have spoken up against his younger son and in support of the father when the younger son made his request. At that time, he chose to say nothing. Now he even assumes what his brother has been doing while he has been away when the parable does not say. As we look at our lives, we must avoid such behavior and repent of it when we are guilty.

The father in this parable often takes on what, in the Jewish culture, would have been considered feminine characteristics, another action which would be considered insulting and beneath him. In general, there were characteristics expected of the men and certain other characteristics the women lived out.

Male: rule, order, discipline, rationality, judgment, authority, power

Female: love, compassion, suffering, sensitivity to feelings, new birth, gentleness, kindness, patience, forgiveness, yearning for reconciliation, creativity in new relationships (Bailey, p. 115)

Credits: Bailey, Kenneth E. Finding the Lost Cultural Keys to Luke 15. St Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1992.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 4: The Women

Begin with a review of the feminine characteristics lived out by the father in the parable of “The Lost Son.” (Luke 15). (See Lesson 3 notes)

1. Some of the many ways women serve their Lord Jesus in and out of the church that might be mentioned: praying, leading Bible studies, organizing events and/or retreats, cooking and baking, making blankets, cards and gifts to babies, ill, and shut-ins, altar care, cleaning, keeping files, teaching children, caring for children, keeping financial records, and many more.
2. A listing of the women mentioned in Luke would include the following:
 - Luke 1-4: Elizabeth, wife of Zechariah (Luke 1); Mary the mother of Jesus (Luke 1-2)
 - Luke 5-8: Widow of Nain (Luke 7); sinful woman who anoints Jesus (Luke 7); Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, “many others” the women who travelled with Jesus and supported his ministry, including financially (Luke 8); Jairus’ daughter (Luke 8); woman bleeding 12 years (Luke 8)
 - Luke 9-12: Mary (Luke 10) Martha (Luke 10); woman shouting out in the crowd (Luke 11); Queen of the South (Sheba) (Luke 11)
 - Luke 13-17: crippled woman (Luke 13)
 - Luke 17-21: poor widow (Luke 21)
 - Luke 22-24: servant girl (Luke 22); daughters of Jerusalem (Luke 23); Mary the mother of James (Luke 24)
3. Women served their Lord as mothers (Elizabeth and Mary), servants to masters who hired them, disciples (believers) who traveled with Jesus, students of the Word (though this was hardly seen in Jewish culture), prophetesses such as Anna in the temple, worshippers, financial supporters, pray-ers , caregivers such as those anointing Jesus’ body with spices.

Women today serve their Lord in many of the same ways: mothers, hired help, traveling with ministries, students of the Word and prophetesses giving their lives to service in the church, worshippers, financial supporters and caregivers to those around them.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 5: The Balance

God calls us to respect others with whom we live and work. God's chosen people, the Jews, did not always respect the female gender as they should have. Jesus and Luke were amazing and unusual in their respect for women.

Many readers of the Gospel of Luke have noted a pattern the writer has of including the life-experiences of both men and women in what might be called a balanced or respectful approach. Luke also includes more of Jesus' parables that involve the life and culture of the day of both men and women and also relays miraculous healings of both men and women in a greater number than other gospel writers.

A listing of possible pairings of accounts is listed below. This is a suggested list, giving the reader a visual of Luke's balancing of events between men and women. One might also notice a balance between young and old, and rich and poor.

1. Angel speaks to Zechariah (1:5-20) and to Mary (1:26-38)
2. Mary sings a song (1:46-55) and so does Zechariah (1:68-69)
3. Simeon and Anna receive Jesus in the temple (2:34-38)
4. The woman of Zarephath and Naaman the leper are set forth as examples of faith in (4:24-27)
5. The parable of the mending of the garment (from the life experience of women) and the making of wine (from the experience of men) in 5:36-39
6. The raising of the dead: one young man (7:11-17) and one young woman (8:49-56)
7. Two texts demonstrate Jesus' concern for sinners in the face of the harsh rejection of the self-righteous. The first is the account of the woman in the house of Simon (7:36-50). The second is the parable of the publican and the Pharisee (18:9-14). In one case the rejected person is a woman and in the other case it is a man.
8. The band of disciples includes men and women (8:1-3). The band of disciples includes men and women. We know the names of the men from other places in the Bible and here we are given the names of some of the women.

9. Two people are told, “Your faith has saved you.” These are the woman with the flow of blood (8:43-48) and the blind man (18:35-42).
10. The gospel records two clear cases where Jesus becomes defiled with *madras* (contact) uncleanness (according to Jewish law): he allows the *woman* with the issue of blood to touch him (8:43-48) and he enters the house and spends the night with a *tax collector* (19:1-10).
11. Martha (10:41-42) and the ruler (18:22) each lack one thing.
12. Two parables on assurance of answer to prayer (the friend at midnight [11:5-8] and the unjust judge and the widow [18:1-8]). The main character in the first is a man, and in the second a woman takes the center stage.
13. The poem on the men of Nineveh and the queen of the South (11:29-32).
14. A concern for justice for men servants and women servants (12:45-46) in the interpretation of the parable of the master who comes home from the marriage feast.
15. Divisions in one house include divisions between men and divisions between women (12:51-53).
16. Two healings on the Sabbath occur in the center of the travel narrative. One is of a woman (13:10-16) and the other of a man (14:1-6). The example of the ox and the ass occurs in each. Other similarities between the two texts also occur.
17. The “daughter of Abraham” (13:16) and the “son of Abraham” (19:9).
18. Two brief parables appear in 13:18-21. One is from the life experience of men (the planting of a mustard seed) and the other from the world of women (the leaven in the meal).
19. Disciples of Jesus must demonstrate loyalty to him above loyalty to male and female family members (14:26-27).
20. The double parables of the lost sheep (15:4-7) and the lost coin (15:8-10).
21. The day of the Son of Man: two men in one bed (17:34) and two women grinding (17:35).
22. In debate with the Sadducees Jesus affirms equality between men and women in the resurrection (20:27-36).
23. A poor woman is made the hero of Jesus’ observations of gifts given to the treasury. The grammar allows the conclusion that the rich mentioned are men and women. However the Middle Eastern cultural assumption is that they were men (21:1-4).

24. Strangers who offer aid/support at the cross include Simon of Cyrene (23:26) and the women of Jerusalem (23:27).
25. His acquaintances, men and women, who followed him from Galilee, stand at a distance watching the crucifixion. The women are specifically mentioned (23:49).
26. Those present at his burial include Joseph of Arimathea and the women (23:50-56).
27. The empty tomb stories and the resurrection appearances are focused on the women and the disciples. The initial witness is from the *women* to the *men* (24:1-49).

We, as Christian women, need to repent of the lack of respect we often have for those around us. Jesus calls us to a greater standard and sends his Spirit to build us up in our weaknesses. We praise the Spirit for the gift of Jesus, in his example of respect for women and his redemption and forgiveness for our failures.

Bailey, Kenneth E. Finding the Lost Cultural Keys to Luke 15. St Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 1992, pp. 97-99.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 6: The Parables

1. Each woman may share what she or others believe to be her life's theme. It is often helpful to ask others what they see to be the theme of a life; they may see the Lord carrying out a thread we don't see ourselves. Others may see a woman with the gifts of leadership; she may feel insecure. God may have equipped someone with mercy; the person may not see the purpose or feel it a burden. Someone may always be the listener; God has given this as a gift and it can become a life of listening with purpose.
2. Unique trends or themes to the Gospel of Luke include: a continuous pointing to Christ as Savior, a greater-than-average use of medical terms, the inclusion of many details, numerous visits to the temple, Jesus travels "to Jerusalem," more parables (18) than any other gospel, a bridge between Gentile and Jew, and a paralleling or balancing of references to the lives of both men and women.
3. Discuss the parables and the main point of each.

	Title	Main Point
Luke 7:41-43	Money lender of our sin	Forgiveness in proportion to the size
Luke 10:29-37	Good Samaritan	Showing love to all
Luke 11:5-9	Prayer	Persistence in prayer
Luke 12:16-21	Rich fool	Work at what matters to God, not what matters to the world
Luke 13:6-9	Unfruitful fig tree	God has patience with his people, but we mustn't use this as an excuse to delay repentance
Luke 14:7-14	Lowest seat at banquet	Servant attitude, humility; it's God who lifts us up
Luke 14:15-24	Great banquet	All are invited to heaven, if someone isn't there he has only himself to blame
Luke 15:8-32	Lost coin/son	Heaven rejoices over believers

Luke 16:1-9	Shrewd manager	Be tough/creative to win others
Luke 16:19-31	Rich man and Lazarus	God's Word is sufficient
Luke 18:1-8	Persistent widow	Be persistent in prayer
Luke 18:10-14	Pharisee and the Tax Collector	God sees the heart

4. The religious climate at the time of the parables was one where the Jewish leaders had become self-righteous and Jesus was warning them of the coming judgment. Jesus pitted God's mercy and love against their hard-heartedness. Jesus wanted them to know that the lowly would be recipients of the Kingdom. Luke's heart for the lost is seen in his inclusion of these otherwise unknown parables. He clearly pursues those who do not yet know and believe the truth of their condition and the joy of the world to come.
5. Have the women tell or tell of each other, the actions seen in the lives of their spiritual sisters that carry out the theme mentioned in #1. For example, some may have a heart for mercy, seen in the sending of cards, making of phone calls, hospital visits or empathic ears.
6. If there is time, let others share how they have seen Jesus more clearly through a deeper study of the Gospel of Luke.

Credits:

Coulson, Gordon. "The Unique Parables of Luke." www.homechristians.net

"Life of Christ: Harmony of the Gospels" www.lifeofchrist.com

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 7: The Miracles

1. Begin by defining what a miracle is: an occurrence which can be explained only by God's power. Encourage the women to share times when God has shown his power in their lives or the lives of people in their world.
2. Refer to lesson 1 for the story of Luke's life.
3. Write each Scripture text with the account of a miracle on a card. As the class researches the miracle in Scripture, have them sort the miracles into those of healing, rising from the dead, casting out demons and demonstrating power. It will be obvious that there is an abundance of healing miracles recorded by Luke that would be of particular interest to our doctor friend.

"There are thirty-five separate miracles that were performed by Jesus as recorded in the gospels. Matthew records twenty; Mark mentions eighteen; Luke mentions twenty; and the book of John tells us about seven. However, these are not all of the miracles that Jesus performed. There are twelve occasions mentioned in Matthew when Jesus performed a number of wonderful works. As an example, check out Matthew 15:30, which says, "Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them." www.allaboutjesuschrist.org

Healing miracles

Peter's mother-in-law (4:38-39)
man with a skin disease (5:12-13)
paralyzed man (5:18-25)
man with paralyzed arm (6:6-10)
the centurion's servant (7:1-10)
woman with hemorrhage (8:43-48)
man with swollen limbs (14:1-4)
men with skin diseases (17:11-19)
sight to the blind beggar (18:35-43)
restore ear of the high priest's slave (22:50-51)

Raising people from the dead

widow's son (7:11-15)

Jarius' daughter (8:41-42, 49-56)

Casting out demons

man with an evil spirit at the synagogue (4:33-35)

man with demons at Gadara (8:27-35)

boy with epilepsy and demon (9:38-43)

dumb man with a demon (11:14)

crippled woman with an evil spirit (13:11-13)

Power

huge catch of fish (5:1-11)

stilling the storm (8:22-25)

feeding the 5000 (9:12-17)

Be sure to note the miracle of Jesus' birth and the miracle of his resurrection that was the completion of salvation for all.

If every gospel has a recording of miracles, why look specifically at the miracles of Luke?

Through his doctor's heart and mind, Luke records miracles with greater detail and includes several accounts not mentioned by the other gospel writers.

4. These are all miracles of healing.
5. Through the miracles in Luke we see that Luke believed in Jesus as: the Messiah, the Son of God, the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.
6. Someone may want to share how they have grown in their understanding of Jesus through Luke.

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Leader's Notes—Lesson 8: The Journey to Jerusalem

1. Encourage the women to talk about what they see as patterns in each other's lives. Some might always be baking or cooking for others, some send cards, others are great at encouraging. There might be women who visit others, or who lead studies, or who have insights into Scripture. Help them to see how God is using their gifts for the good of the kingdom.
2. Based on what we know of the patterns of Luke's life and writings, we might say "He always uses lots of details," or "He notes many healing miracles," or "He always comments on the ministry of both men and women."
3. We will see in today's lesson that Luke's narrative style has Jesus always, "On his way to Jerusalem." Some say Luke was confused about the geography of the land. Others think he simply reported the event out of order. One explanation is that he used the travelling image with purpose: to draw attention to the reason for which Jesus came to earth, to suffer, die and rise again, all in Jerusalem. Luke seems to indicate by his writing style that every event in Jesus' life was while he was "on his way to Jerusalem."
4. Luke writes in a style that portrays many events in Jesus' life happening while he was "on his way to Jerusalem." It appears to be simply that, a writing technique to draw the reader's attention to the immediate future in store for our Savior, that of the cross, accomplishing salvation for the world.

The ladies may want to look at a map to make the physical journey from Galilee to Jerusalem more understandable.

5. What a beautiful picture of our life with Christ! Amen!
6. In this last session, encourage women to share any new insights this study has brought.