

# The Good News of Jesus According to Luke's Gospel

This 6 session online study will be looking at the life of Jesus through the lens of Luke's Gospel. We will look at the context of Luke's writing on Jesus as well as his focus. We will take practical steps from Luke's Gospel on what it looks like to live like Jesus. I'm glad you're diving in for this 6 session study to learn, reflect and practice. I encourage you to share this study with others and hold conversation around how the life of Jesus impacts you and how you live your life.

The study has been written by Pastor Bryan Rezen and Pastor Cathy McIntire. I'm so glad you're joining us for this journey through the Luke's Gospel of Jesus.

I want to begin by saying Luke is my favorite Gospel because every Christmas growing up before we opened presents on Christmas morning my dad would read the story of Jesus' birth from Luke's Gospel. It would start with the words...from Luke 2: verse 1..."In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus..." from there Luke would weave a beautiful story of the nature of Jesus' birth including all the main characters that we know and love today. Everytime I hear those words I'm reminded of my dad's love for me and also how much Jesus loves me. Even when I feel like an outsider or left out I know Jesus dearly loves me and came to earth for me. That's the Good News I wish I could remember everyday.

Luke has a way of including everyone in his writing. He sets up his Gospel with a goal stated in verse 1 of chapter 1...I have listened to all the accounts of Jesus' life and the events around it and I also have decided to write an accurate account for you.

Imagine that Luke is writing this to you, that he wants to include you and he wants you to know over 2,000 years later what Jesus was like so that you too could believe. Pretty powerful stuff in just the first verse of his Gospel.



# The Good News of Jesus According to Luke's Gospel

Before we get too deep into the writing let's begin by looking at the background of who Luke was. Luke was a doctor, well educated in Greek, with an organized mind and literary flair. He was close friends with the Apostle Paul...yes that famous Apostle Paul. Unlike Paul who was Jewish, Luke was a Gentile...they were in all accounts unlikely friends only because of the life of Christ working in both of their lives. Jews and Gentiles historically did not get along. It was the peace of Christ in their hearts that drew them together just like Christ does even today.

Because of Luke's standing as a Gentile...as an outsider he has a soft heart for the poor and marginalized within society.

In this session we'll summarize the first two chapters of Luke. Really you could call these first two chapters the origin story of Jesus, giving us a full background of his birth narrative and all the important characters.

I encourage you to read on your own these first two chapters of Luke's Gospel so you have a full understanding of why Luke writes the way he does.

## **Session 1 - Pastor Bryan Rezen** **The Birth of a Savior (Luke 1-2)**

Luke 1 begins with the angel Gabriel appearing to Zechariah, a priest, announcing that his wife, Elizabeth, will give birth to a son, John the Baptist, who will prepare the way for Jesus. Because Zechariah doubts this will happen, he is struck mute until the child is born. Soon after, Gabriel appears to Mary, a young virgin in Nazareth, telling her that she will miraculously conceive the Son of God, Jesus. Mary humbly accepts God's plan, and she visits Elizabeth, who confirms Mary's divine calling. Zechariah regains his speech after John's birth and praises God in a prophecy about the coming Messiah.



# The Good News of Jesus According to Luke's Gospel

Luke 2 describes the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem, where Mary and Joseph travel due to a census from Caesar Augustus. Jesus is born in a humble manger because there is no room in the inn. Angels announce His birth to shepherds in the fields, who then visit and spread the good news. Later, Jesus is presented at the temple, where Simeon and Anna, two devout believers, recognize Him as the promised Savior. The chapter ends with Jesus as a 12-year-old in the temple, amazing the teachers with His wisdom and showing an early awareness of His mission.

These chapters highlight God's divine plan, fulfilled prophecies, and the humble yet powerful arrival of Jesus, the Savior of the world.

Within the first two Chapters Luke includes 4 hymns...yes hymns that were most likely sung but hold a tremendous amount of story and theology within their words. The first is the Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) or what's known as the song of Mary. It's a beautiful hymn of divine praise, and is very likely a Jewish Christian community hymn. This hymn highlights Mary's deep love for God and her heart for the poor and lowly.

Luke also includes the Benedictus (1:68-79), this hymn was sung by Zechariah after he got his voice back and proclaims praise to the God of Israel as well as a prophetic word about his son John the Baptist.

The third hymn (Luke 2:14) is much shorter but probably the most well known. It's the hymn the shepherds heard sung by the vast host of angels, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." This hymn being sung to the shepherds is another inclusive story. Shepherds were the disgrace of the community and anyone would have been embarrassed to be seen with one. But here Luke includes the story of angels appearing to them singing praises to God.



# The Good News of Jesus According to Luke's Gospel

The last hymn Luke includes is known as the Nunc Dimittis (Luke 2:28-32), sung by Simeon in the temple when Jesus is brought there by Mary and Joseph to fulfill the law requiring a sacrifice for their son Jesus. Simeon had been given a vision that he would not die until he saw the savior of the world. The day Jesus was brought to the temple Simeon sings, "Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace, as you have promised. I have seen your salvation, which you prepared for all people. He is the light to reveal God to the nations, and he is the glory of your people Israel."

The first two chapters of Luke's Gospel present us with a very inclusive story of the nature of the birth of Jesus. It gives us a good foundation of love, peace, and salvation from Jesus that includes all people.

## Thoughts for Reflection:

- What is your origin story? Who are the characters in your life's story? How have those characters in your story shaped you? How has God used your origin story to help you share the power of Jesus in your life with others?
- Paul and Luke were close friends but nevertheless unlikely friends due to their race classification. Who in your life is an unlikely friend and how is it that they have helped you grow in your love of God and neighbor?
- Luke included 4 hymns in the first two chapters of his Gospel. Music has been a powerful tool for helping us connect with and understand the depth of God's love for us. In what way has music shaped your understanding of God?
- Luke's Gospel has long been known as the Good News to the marginalized, the down and outers and the poor. Have you ever felt that way? How does knowing that the life and work of Christ includes everyone change the way you think about your neighbor? In what way may God be calling you to reach out to someone who feels left out and marginalized in our society?

