

THIS IS OUR GOD

LUKE 1-5

STUDIES

Name:



What is God really like? And how do we know?

The opening chapters of Luke's Gospel in the New Testament help us to answer these questions. Luke shows us that if we want to know what God is like, we will find those answers in the person of Jesus.

These Bible studies have been written to help you engage with this sermon series either in a small group, or on your own. My hope and prayer is that they encourage you in your knowledge and love of God, and your desire to please him in all that you do.

Luke Thomson
Senior Minister





THE GOD WHO YOU CAN KNOW

Luke 1:1-4

share

What is one of your favourite stories? (Such as a movie, a book, an event, truth or fiction)

Have you ever heard someone dismiss the Bible and say that it is not worth reading?
What reasons did they give?

explore

Read Luke 1:1-4

Luke begins his book by acknowledging that many others have also attempted to record the events surrounding Jesus life, death and resurrection (vv. 1-2). What reasons do we have to trust Luke's account of Jesus? (v. 3)

What does Luke want to give us *certainty* in? (v. 4)

Compare this passage with Luke's second volume in **Acts 1:1-2**.

What do we learn about the contents of each of these two books?



TALKING POINT

“The Bible is like a set of instructions, or a map, that guides our life.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How do the opening verses of Luke help us understand what kind of document he is writing?

live

What do *you* find difficult about trusting the Bible?

What do *you* find difficult about knowing God?

How does Luke 1:1-4 give us confidence to trust the rest of what Luke writes about Jesus?

FUN FACT

Luke writes to *Theophilus*, which literally means ‘friend of God’. We know nothing else about him. Although Luke writes specifically to Theophilus, no doubt he intended many others to read his work, also.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



THE GOD WHO CHANGES HISTORY

Luke 1:5-38

share

If you could learn one thing about the future, what would you most like to know?

explore

Read Luke 1:5-25

What do you notice about Luke's attention to historical detail? (vv. 5-7)

How might this help us have confidence in the truthfulness of what Luke writes?

How do you think Zechariah would have felt in the time between this encounter with Gabriel and the birth of John? (vv. 20-22, also vv. 59-64)

Read Luke 1:26-38

What is common between the angel Gabriel's visit to Zechariah (vv. 11-13) and his visit to Mary? (vv. 28-31)

What is common between John's role (vv. 14-17) and Jesus' role (vv. 32-33)?

What is different?



TALKING POINT

This passages shows God's remarkable intervention in shaping and changing history in seemingly impossible circumstances. Elizabeth and Mary both conceive and give birth to sons, despite human wisdom suggesting this would be impossible for either at the time.

Take a moment to consider times in your life where God has clearly been at work to do things that would otherwise not be possible, or where God has clearly answered a prayer that has caused significant change in your life.

Share these stories with the group, giving thanks to God.

live

When does it most feel like God is not in control of your life?

When are you most likely or most tempted to doubt God's goodness in your life?

Why is it good news for us that God always keeps his promises? How should this change the way we live?

FUN FACT

Gabriel's announcement about Jesus (Luke 1:32-33) draws from the promises God had made to David around 1000 years earlier, back in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



THE GOD WHO COMES TO HIS PEOPLE

Luke 2:1-21

share

Would you prefer camping in a tent or staying in a five star hotel? Why?

If you were planning for a king to come and stay at your home, how would you prepare?

explore

Read Luke 2:1-21

What do you notice about Luke's attention to historical detail? (vv. 1-4)

Each time Luke records an angel appearing, those who see the angel are said to be very frightened (1:12, 29-30, 2:9). Why do you think this might be?

Why do you think Jesus came into the world in this simple, quiet way, instead of making a grand entrance that was visible to many?



TALKING POINT

There are many traditions associated with retelling the Christmas story which do not find their origins in the Bible. How many common elements in a traditional nativity scene or a retelling of the story can you think of that aren't contained here in Luke's account? (You might also like to compare your list with Matthew's account in Matthew 1:18-2:12.)

Why do you think the Christmas story only appears in Matthew and Luke (and not Mark or John)?

live

The angel brings an announcement about Jesus, that he will be both a Saviour and the Lord (ie. King) (v. 11). Which of these do you find it easier to think of Jesus as? Why?

Why is it important to remember Jesus is *both* Saviour and Lord? What would happen if we only emphasised one?

What do the shepherds do in response to the angel's message? (vv. 15-20). How are they an example for us?

FUN FACT

Christ (Greek) and Messiah (Hebrew) are the same word in different languages. The word simply means 'God's anointed one', and in the New Testament it typically refers to Jesus as God's chosen king.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



THE GOD WHO KEEPS HIS PROMISES

Luke 2:22-40

share

What do you most dislike about having to wait for something?

explore

Read Luke 2:22-40

Why do you think Luke records the details of the sacrificial offering? (vv. 22-24, 39)

How do you think Simeon would have felt when he was first promised he would see God's king? (v. 26) How do you think he felt while he waited for this to be fulfilled?

What does Simeon's response tell us about what Jesus will accomplish? (vv. 29-35)

Although Luke contains the longest account of Jesus' early years of life (chapters 1-2), most of it is concerned with the responses of other people to the declaration and fulfilment of God's promises. Why do you think Luke would focus on these aspects in particular?



TALKING POINT

The passage shows us two people, Simeon and Anna, who are greatly devoted to God, and have expressed this in their lives over a long period of time.

Are there people today who you would clearly describe as being 'devoted to God'?

To what extent should this be a description of all of God's people? Are Simeon and Anna extreme examples?

What does devotion to God look like in our context?

live

When do you find it most difficult to wait for God to answer prayer or keep his promises?

How important is it for Christians to be known to keep their promises as a reflection of God's character?

What is one habit you could develop to remind yourself of God's faithfulness in keeping his promises?

FUN FACT

According to Leviticus 12, a year old lamb was to be sacrificed after childbirth. However, if a lamb could not be afforded (as appears to be the case here), a pair of doves or pigeons could be substituted.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



THE GOD WHO YOU CAN'T IGNORE

Luke 3:1-20

share

Have you ever turned up to something greatly unprepared? What happened?

explore

Read Luke 3:1-20

John was tasked with preparing people for the coming of Jesus. How does baptising and calling people to repent (which means changing their mind and actions) help people prepare?

In what ways might we be tempted to assume God's favour on us? (See v. 8)

Why is it so important for Christians to live God's way? (vv. 8-9)

What is the different between John's ministry and that of Jesus? (vv. 16-17)



TALKING POINT

John offers a vivid picture of what Jesus will do to those who are not prepared to meet him (v. 17). To what extent do you think fear of God's judgement should be used to motivate people to follow Jesus? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How does God's grace and mercy motivate people to follow Jesus?

live

*"The religious only repent of sins. The irreligious don't repent at all. Christians, however, repent of both their sins and of their self-righteousness."*¹

How do you make repentance a habit in your life?

John provides very practical examples to those who ask him how they should change (vv. 10-14). What do you think John might have said to *you*?

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?

FUN FACT

Rulers and governors often overlapped in the time of their reign. As such, Luke 3:1 does not provide us with a precise date, but helps us see that these events are grounded in world history.

¹Timothy Keller, *Gospel in Life Study Book* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 15.



THE GOD WHO FIXES OUR PAST

Luke 3:21-38

share

What is one thing you wish you could have a second chance at from the past week?

What is a unique quirk about your family?

explore

Read Luke 3:21-22

Why do you think Jesus needed to be baptised by John?

The voice from heaven makes two statements about Jesus (v. 22). How do these truths enable Jesus to fulfil his role as Saviour and Lord?

What has Jesus done that is pleasing to God, or deserving of his love, at this point in his life?

Read Luke 3:23-38

How many names do you recognise in this list? What does this list tell us about God's promises?



TALKING POINT

“Most people believe they are good enough to be accepted by God.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How well do you think humanity collectively represents God’s character and desires?

live

How easy do you think it is for people to admit they are not up to God’s standards of living?

How do people typically admit their mistakes?

How does Jesus change the way we admit and confess our sin?

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?

FUN FACT

Jewish family trees are more concerned with establishing a true line of descent than with including every generation along the way. In the original language, Luke 3 does not contain the phrase ‘the son’, but simply ‘of Levi’, etc. which could also mean ‘grandson’ or even ‘descendant’.





THE GOD WHO NEVER FAILS

Luke 4:1-13

share

Would you rather go without food for a week or go without shelter?

Who is someone that inspires you with their ability to be self-controlled in tempting situations?

explore

Read Luke 4:1-13

This story of Jesus contrasts with the experience of the Israelites escaping Egypt and wandering in the wilderness for 40 years because they failed to trust God (see also Numbers 14:32-34). Why is it important that Jesus resists each of these temptations?

How will resisting temptation set Jesus apart from all of humanity? (see Luke 3:23-38)

What does the devil want Jesus to prove? (vv. 3, 9)

What is Jesus more interested in doing? (vv. 4, 8, 12; See also Deuteronomy 8:2-3)



TALKING POINT

In the third temptation, the devil quotes the Bible to persuade Jesus (vv. 10-11).
How can we know when people are misusing the Bible or twisting its meaning?

How can we ensure that we are not misled by false teaching about God?

live

"All three temptations sought to entice him to assert his own authority; what was rightfully his but in ways that were not according to his Father's will."¹

What do you find difficult about living according to God's will?

How does it encourage us to know that Jesus understands the struggles of human temptation?

(See also Hebrews 4:15)

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?

FUN FACT

The devil is given many different names in the Bible (eg. Satan, Beelzebub, ruler of the world, prince of the air, etc.). Typically, the name or title used is to emphasise a particular aspect of his work.

¹James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World* (New York: Oxford, 2010), 189.



THE GOD WHO RESCUES

Luke 4:14-30

share

If you had to escape out of your house with only two items, what would you take?

explore

Read Luke 4:14-30

How does Jesus' experience in the wilderness (vv. 1-13) prepare him for his teaching ministry?

Why do you think Jesus chose to read this particular passage from Isaiah? (vv. 17-19)

In what way is the passage in Isaiah 'fulfilled' by Jesus? (v. 21)

Why do you think the crowd turned against Jesus? (vv. 28-29)



TALKING POINT

In the passage, Jesus says that no prophet is accepted in his home town (v. 24). Have you personally seen this to be true in some way?

In what ways might we dismiss a message because of whom or how it was communicated?

How might this hinder our ability to grow in following Jesus?

live

To what extent do you think the people in our city would consider Luke 4:18-19 a message of good news? How might someone understand this passage if they knew very little about Jesus?

Have you ever heard someone say “I would never follow God if he would forgive someone like...”? Why is it often hard for people to accept that God brings good news to our enemies?

FUN FACT

Isaiah is the second most quoted Old Testament book in the New Testament, after Psalms.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?





THE GOD WHO BRINGS GOOD NEWS

Luke 4:31-44

share

Have you ever heard someone give a particularly powerful speech? What was it?

explore

Read Luke 4:31-44

How many times in this passage can you identify that Jesus defies the expectations of others?

Why do you think the first story happens in a synagogue (a Jewish religious meeting place)? What does it teach us about Jesus' authority? (vv. 32, 36)

How do Jesus' many healings of people help us to better know and understand God and what he is like?

In what ways could healing people be a distraction from Jesus main task? (vv. 42-44)



TALKING POINT

“Preach the gospel; if necessary, use words.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How does Jesus’ own life and ministry help us think about this idea?

live

In what ways can worthwhile programs or activities (inside or outside the church) support the work of Christians in sharing the good news of Jesus? In what ways could they be a distraction?

How has Jesus been good news for you personally?

Who has been significant in helping you understand the good news that Jesus brings? What was especially helpful in the way they shared with you?

FUN FACT

Kingdom of God is a short-hand way of speaking about living under God’s rule, both now and for eternity.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



THE GOD WHO WANTS YOU

Luke 5:1-11

share

Who are some leaders that you look up to? (eg. world, sport, business, Christian)

What do you think are the most important characteristics for leaders to have?

explore

Read Luke 5:1-11

What do you find most unusual about this story?

What causes Simon to put his nets out after working all night for nothing? (v. 5)

Why do you think Simon tells Jesus to leave him alone? (v. 8)

What does it tell us about Simon's understanding of Jesus?

Why do you think Jesus chose fishermen to be his first disciples?



TALKING POINT

“To follow Jesus is to love what he loves, desire what he desires,
and live for what he lives for”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

“What would Jesus do?” has often been a question people have asked when making decisions? In what ways is this question helpful or unhelpful?

live

What do you think makes it hard or unappealing to follow Jesus?

When talking to others about following Jesus, do you tend to focus on the good parts or the difficult parts? Why?

Why do you think God chooses to use people as the means to achieve his plans?

FUN FACT

Chapter 5 begins a new section in Luke’s Gospel, where Jesus begins his ministry and mission in the area of Galilee.

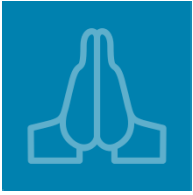
Each of us have our own personal passions and abilities. In what ways do you think God has shaped you to be used by him?

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?





THE GOD WHO FORGIVES

Luke 5:12-32

share

Which of these do you find easier to say and why:

“I’ll think about it” **or** “I’ll do it”

“Thanks” **or** “Sorry”

“Can you help me?” **or** “Can I help you?”

explore

Read Luke 5:12-16

Why do you think Jesus tells the man to keep this a secret? (v. 14)

Why do you think Jesus regularly withdrew from healing the crowds? (v. 16. See also Luke 4:42-43)

Read Luke 5:17-32

What do you expect the man would have wanted to first hear from Jesus? (v. 20)

What is the answer to Jesus question? (v. 23)

Why do you think Jesus forgives the man *before* he heals him?



TALKING POINT

“Church is not a museum for the good people, it’s a hospital for the broken.”

To what extent do you agree with this statement? (1 = not at all; 10 = completely)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

How should Jesus own ministry among the outcasts of society influence the ministry and activities of our church?

live

Jesus and his disciples were challenged by the Pharisees (religious leaders) because of the people they ate with (v. 30). Would the Pharisee’s be able to raise a similar charge against you? Should they be able to?

When do you find yourself judging others by who they spend time with?

What opportunities do you have to engage with people who don’t know Jesus?

FUN FACT

In the Bible, leprosy is used to refer to a variety of skin diseases. Likely, this man had not felt the touch of another human in quite some time.

pray

Reflecting on the passage:

- What does it lead us to praise God for?
- What can we thank God for?
- What should we ask God for?



notes



