

# Gospel of Luke

## INVESTIGATING JESUS



**LUKE, A PHYSICIAN AND RESEARCHER, GETS TO THE BOTTOM OF THE QUESTION WE'VE ALL BEEN ASKING. WHO IS JESUS?**

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled[a] among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses

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## LUKE 01/04: **INVESTIGATION**

When I was a child, I considered talk radio the most boring thing on the airwaves. Are you familiar with talk radio? People with oddly loud mouth noises would talk nonsense for hours while my mom hung on to every single word. As far as I was concerned, it was torture. However, in recent years, talk radio shows have experienced a major glow-up. Producers took them off the radio, added a few extra voices, and rebranded them. We now call them podcasts.

When exploring the podcast charts, one genre reigns supreme. True crime podcasts. Statistics prove the immense popularity of these podcasts. In 2021, a survey revealed that a staggering 72% of podcast listeners had tuned in to a true crime podcast at some point, marking a significant slice of the podcasting pie. From dark tales of infamous killers to riveting investigations into unsolved cold cases, these podcasts have become a staple for many people's commute, workout, and listening routine.

We must ask the question, though. Why? With all the other topics out there, why do investigations capture our imaginations? I think it's because everyone adores searching for answers, solving puzzles, and coming to a conclusion with the information provided. These podcasts allow us to become a detective from our driver's seat or armchair. We get to delve into horrendous crimes from the comfort of the coziest corner of our homes. It scratches our itch for investigation and our need for comfort at the same time. Everyone loves to solve a puzzle. That's why everyone loves investigations.

Today, we're going to step into an investigation of our own. The suspect was charged and executed for crimes He claims He didn't commit. This man was accused of treason, but He was innocent. This man was accused of blasphemy, but He was Divinity. This man was accused of starting riots but was called the Prince of Peace. In true crime podcast format, we will investigate Jesus Christ of Nazareth with the help of the Apostle Luke. Take out your notebook because we are about to investigate the greatest story ever told.

### **READ: Luke 1:1-4**

"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 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, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”

Let's meet our chief investigator. His name is Luke. By trade, he was a doctor. However, Luke had a real knack for storytelling and journalism, too. In the opening of his extremely detailed book, Luke flat out tells us why he is writing it. He was asked to do it. Honestly, he was likely paid to. Theophilus, a wealthy Christian in the first century, requested that Luke do some digging, check some facts, and put all the records together to create a complete account of the gospel story from birth to death to ascension to Pentecost to the spread of the Christian movement.

While most people think the Apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament, that is only true by number of books. If we count words, Luke is the winner. He composed the majority of the words that make up the second half of the Bible. Luke, the writer of Luke and Acts, penned only two books. However, they are two notoriously long-winded accounts. Why are they so long? Because he wanted his readers to investigate the authenticity, legitimacy, and divinity of Jesus.

How did he do it? **He presented the evidence of an event that sparked a movement.** This single sentence served as the driving force behind Luke's thoughtful thesis. As we survey each section, keep this fact in mind. When Luke tells us the exact places the disciples traveled, he's building the case for Christ. When he speaks of people spreading the message to their cities, he's building an argument for a miracle. When he writes in detail about a healed man jumping for joy, he's presenting evidence of an event. What is the event? The life, ministry, and (most importantly) the resurrection of Jesus. He's presenting evidence of an event that sparked a movement. Let's break that down phrase by phrase.

### **Luke Presented Evidence...**

Luke and Theophilus cherished two things—Jesus and the truth. So, Dr. Luke put together a masterful collection of writing that is part journalistic endeavor, part research paper, and part love letter. If he were doing ministry today, he may have even launched a podcast. He interviewed the healed. He spoke to the dumfounded disciples. He

visited the captivated cities. He followed every single thread, story, and rumor to get to the bottom of the greatest story ever told.

Luke wasn't trying to collect urban legends. He wasn't content with vague accounts with sketchy details, either. He wanted his readers to feel like news cameras were on the scene. His writings aren't just the summary of events but the stories, just like those you'd read in the paper. He invited every single reader into the moment by detailing the events.

### **...of an Event...**

What was Luke telling us about? In both Luke and Acts, we are invited on a journey with Jesus. The event that changed the world was the life, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus. Calling this an event feels like a weak word choice, though. This event was a shift in the cosmos, a tear in the universe, and the moment God invaded the Earth. Luke wants his readers to see the reality and authenticity of Jesus. He wrote these books in 60 AD, and they managed to endure all the persecution, aggression, and censorship of Rome. Now, we are studying them all these years later. That fact gives me a huge burst of confidence.

One of the reasons I love Luke is that his writing gives me assurance in my Jesus. People often ask me, "Why do you trust the Bible?" Which I completely do, beyond a shadow of a doubt. However, I think they need to tweak their question. I believe the question should be, "Do you trust the message of the Bible?" You had better believe I trust Luke. While God inspired him through the Holy Spirit, he wrote a rock-solid account that provides us with assurance and resilience.

The people of the first century eagerly passed Luke's book around like notes in class because it contained a story they wanted to share. In fact, for many of them, it likely contained a story witnessed by someone they knew. I imagine them secretly handing someone a copy in the darkness of night. "You have to read this," they'd whisper before carrying on with something like, "My dad was at Pentecost," or "My brother saw that boy raised from the dead," or "I saw Jesus after Rome killed him, and so did 400 other people. Check this out!" These stories were personal. That's why it led people to get moving.

### **...That Sparked a Movement.**

These moments ultimately sparked a movement. Luke's investigation zooms into a key topic—expansion. In fact, his investigation is ultimately about expansion. He wants you to see how the story of Jesus spread from city to city. He wants you to see more than moments; he wants you to see the movement. From Palestine to Pentecost to Golgotha to Galilee, the message of Jesus moved rapidly and unstoppably. When people encountered it, they spread it.

When you hear good news, you go. When we read Luke's account of the early church, it's like tracking the gold rush fever of the 19th century. "Gold in the Hills" was a message plastered all over the papers in the early 1900s. Prospectors had discovered extremely valuable gold glimmering in streams around the Sierra Nevada mountains. In a frenzy, crowds flocked to the middle of nowhere, hoping to strike it rich. Within weeks, makeshift boomtowns sprang up overnight. The once silent valleys now echoed with the clinking of pickaxes, the arguments of prospectors, and the commotion of a few thousand additional residents. The Gold Rush had started.

Luke's news is so much greater than a few gold nuggets. He's reporting on Jesus, the Son of God. He's presenting the information, but it's attached to an invitation. When the first-century believers heard it, they got moving. The information led to action.

Both in this Bible study and in your own quiet time, please allow your investigation of God's work in your life to propel you into action. Luke wasn't just writing a historical account; he was documenting a movement rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. So, we have the information. Let that be a spark of inspiration that ultimately leads to action. The treasure of knowing Jesus isn't meant to be hoarded; it's meant to be shared, lived, and proclaimed. Luke maps out a movement. Let your life look the same. It's time to take the information you have and turn it into action.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: If you had to start a podcast today, what topic would it be about? Why is that?

Q2: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q3: What did you learn about Luke? How do you think that impacted the way he wrote about the life of Jesus?

Q4: Luke says he wrote his account so that Theophilus would know "the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:3-4). Why do you think "certainty" was important to Luke? How does it apply to us today?

Q5: What does it look like for a Christian to put their faith into action?

Application: What small action can you take this week to share the information you've learned about Jesus?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Luke 1

Luke 2

Luke 3-4

Luke 5

Luke 6

Luke 7

Luke 8

Do the following with each passage:

ASK- God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ- the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT- on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND- to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## LUKE 02/04: **ORIENTATION**

Luke was a journalist trying to solve and build a case. Sometimes in life, you may find yourself having to do the same. Occasionally, life sends us unexpected moments, and we have to put on our detective hats.

That happened to a Kentucky man who was the victim of a quirky crime. In rural Kentucky, a homeowner named Charles had his lawnmower moved in the middle of the night. Proud of his new ride, he was furious and wanted to get to the bottom of it. He pointed his finger at his neighbor Gary for borrowing his lawnmower. But Charles wasn't exactly Sherlock Holmes; he had no evidence outside of a suspicious vibe and possibly a grudge. What was Charles to do? He went all high-tech and fancy and set up a lawn-surveillance system to catch Gary in the act.

Eventually, his lawnmower was again moved overnight, and Charles was ready to catch Gary green-handed. He excitedly hit play on the tape, and his eyebrow raised. He saw his criminal, but it wasn't Gary. Nope, it was a goat from his neighbor's yard. The goat was sneaking onto the lawnmower, turning it on, and riding around before poorly parking it and running off into the night. Talk about unexpected!

Luke loved unexpected characters and details. Whether it's a true crime podcast or a written story, the characters are crucial for understanding. If Charles had never set up a camera, he would've never known to expect goats. Charles needed that information to come to a conclusion. Information is what helps us come to solutions, and that's especially true with background information. A person's background helps us know what motivated them, formed them, and shaped them.

That's why Luke wanted to give us background information on the characters in the life of Christ. These details provide us with the context for everything. Luke was obsessed with some unexpected suspects in the life of Jesus, too. From family to followers to friends, these characters could easily slip into the background. Luke refuses to let that happen in his writing.

In true crime format, Luke opens his book with an orientation. Just like college kicks off with new student orientation, Luke begins with Jesus orientation. His research proved to be robust, too. He reports on the extended family of Jesus, the birth of some family members, the story of the Nativity, the prophecies of the Old Testament, and the early

life of Jesus. Then, knowing that orientation is key to comprehension, he begins to break down the key characters in the ministry of Jesus.

Yes, we are about to meet the disciples. However, this account is not just character development. Luke wants you to see Jesus's overall strategy. This is His method for sparking His movement. What was His method? Let's break it down. We can see two movement-building steps when Jesus forms his team. Let's take a look at Luke 5.

**READ: Luke 5:1-11**

“One day as Jesus was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret, the people were crowding around him and listening to the word of God. He saw at the water's edge two boats, left there by the fishermen, who were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little from shore. Then he sat down and taught the people from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch.’ Simon answered, ‘Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught anything. But because you say so, I will let down the nets.’ When they had done so, they caught such a large number of fish that their nets began to break. So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them, and they came and filled both boats so full that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’ For he and all his companions were astonished at the catch of fish they had taken, and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners. Then Jesus said to Simon, ‘Don't be afraid; from now on you will fish for people.’ So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him.”

**Step 1: Jesus Picked the Perfectly Imperfect People**

What was the first thing Jesus did when it was time for his movement to spark? He built a team. He didn't go to Indeed or the local temples to find the best of the best of the best. Jesus went to a dock packed with smelly fishermen. This would be like trying to build an NBA team by going to the local playground for recruitment. It's not very reasonable or logical. This is sort of like a recruitment scene in a superhero movie...except nobody is very powerful at all. As a matter of fact, all these newly-appointed disciples are quite wimpy. However, Jesus showed them that significance was not found in their power but in His. Jesus picked the perfectly imperfect people to help spark His movement.



Do you notice how much detail Luke uses? The other Gospel authors also tell the story of the recruitment of the disciples, but Luke wants you to know who was there, who saw it, and what proof there was. Why did he do that? Because he's an investigator. Keep in mind that Luke's essay was being read not too long after the death of Jesus. Thus, a sizable chunk of these people were still alive. He is basically challenging the readers to fact-check him. These perfectly imperfect men witnessed it all—the miracles, the teachings, and the spark of a universal movement. Luke documented it, they experienced it, and it turned the world upside down.

Jesus is God in the flesh. Even He, with all that power pumping through his veins, felt the need to build a team before starting His ministry. He sought out disciples, friends, and companions for His journey. If Jesus needs community, imagine how much you need it!

Be sure to prioritize picking the right people for your journey. They will push you forward, keep you grounded, and help you every step of the way. Jesus understood something crucial. If you surround yourself with good people, they will help you go far. Also, these disciples weren't just companions but witnesses to the power of God in action in their little town. Let's dive back into the story. Jesus had assembled His people; now, it was time to put on a display of power.

## **Step 2: Jesus Proved the Power of God**

This story is not just about recruitment; it's about astonishment. Luke recounts that Jesus proved God's power to show the disciples that walking with Him was walking in power. While teaching on the shore, Jesus noticed some weary fishermen by the dock. After days of struggling, their nets remained empty, which meant their bellies and bank accounts were the same. Then, Jesus showed up and offered some advice. He told them to go to a part of the lake they had fished all day. With exasperation, they explained they had fished there all day and hadn't even caught a goldfish cracker. Jesus insisted, and they cast their nets again. What did they have to lose? They gave it a shot.

Within seconds, their boat was supernaturally filled with fish. A recognizably salty and fishy smell wafted through the air as the not-yet-disciples shouted in excitement. Look

at all these fish! They'd be eating fish tacos for months, right? To modern ears, Luke's story seems like it's about seafood. However, remember that they lived in a society that largely practiced bartering. When they caught so many fish that their boat sank, it was the ancient equivalent of hitting the jackpot on a slot machine. Those catfish may as well have been cash fish. Jesus proved his power and His provision in mere moments. These scruffy fishermen noticed it, marveled at it, and were never the same.

As a person who loves details, I love the Gospel of Luke. As we study, you will see that he squeezed every possible detail into his accounts. Why? Because he truly believed in the power of God, but he wanted to invite people to investigate it for themselves. He dropped names. He mentioned locations. He gave scrupulous details. Luke didn't just know about the power of Jesus. He believed it was provable.

Of all the Bible authors, Luke teaches us the most about the disciples by far. He was likely friends with many of them due to his mission work with Paul and had gotten to know the others through his investigation process. While Luke does not shy away from their shortcomings, he would want you to know that the disciples are not just sidekicks but part of the bigger picture. These fishermen were average people, just like you and me. They had doubts, made mistakes, and were far from qualified to help start a worldwide religion. While everything in their life was ordinary, they had just discovered something extraordinary. Jesus stepped into their boat, and they stepped out as different people.

They "left everything and followed Him." They dropped their tackle boxes and nets. They might have even put their boats on Craigslist. They were ready to give everything to this radical rabbi from Nazareth. Their lives and the entire world turned upside down when Jesus walked up to their little camp on the shore. Ultimately, a worldwide movement was sparked, with these men as the pioneers and Jesus as their purpose. For them, everything started on a boat, and they left everything on that boat.

The example of the disciples begs the question: if you want to see a movement spark, who do you need with you, and what do you need to leave behind? The disciples dropped their nets, which represented what they held dearly, because they met someone who meant much more to them than material things.

What do you need to walk away from to follow Jesus with everything? Is it an unhealthy routine, a harmful friendship, a purposeless path, or even a career you know isn't right for you? Whatever it is, leave it. Jesus has the power to provide. Jesus has the power to take care of you. Jesus has the power to come through for you. He proved it to the disciples, and I know He has also proved it to you. Leave what you need to and follow Him. He will take care of the rest.

As we conclude the first part of our investigation into the extraordinary life of Jesus Christ, we discover that even in the most unlikely circumstances, God's power prevails. Just as Jesus chose perfectly imperfect fishermen to be the pioneers of His movement, so must we choose our companions wisely. Ridding ourselves of distractions and surrounding ourselves with individuals who uplift us is the key to unlocking our greatest potential for the gospel.

We should all follow the example of those humble fishermen. Let us cast aside the nets that bind us to mediocrity and embrace the adventure of following Jesus. Leave behind the doubts, fears, and comfort zones that hinder your progress, for in His presence, you will discover a power that defies explanation.

In the end, it's not about where you've been or what you've left behind. It's about the journey of a lifetime, guided by the Savior who can turn your ordinary existence into an extraordinary adventure. Allow your investigation to motivate you to step out in faith. Every major movement was sparked by a moment of obedience.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: Have you ever had something really strange or unexplainable happen to you? Tell the group about it.

Q2: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q3: What do you find interesting about the miracle of Jesus calling the disciples? What do you think it taught the disciples?

Q4: Like Jesus chose the fishermen as His disciples, how can we ensure we select the best companions in our journey with Jesus?

Q5: What are some "nets" in your life that you might need to leave behind to fully follow Jesus? Reflect on a specific "net" in your life that you feel hesitant to leave behind. What steps can you take to overcome this hesitation and fully embrace following Jesus?

Application: When the disciples investigated Jesus and saw his power, they left into action. What action do you think Jesus would like you to take today?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Luke 8

Luke 9

Luke 10

Luke 11

Luke 12

Luke 13

Luke 14

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## LUKE 03/04: **CELEBRATION**

“Everybody pause for a moment of silence.”

Suddenly, an eerie stillness swept over the school. The cafeteria was quiet. The hallways were hushed. You couldn't hear the squeaks of shoes on the basketball courts, students chattering about their weekend, or a couple having their third fight of the day before lunch. The whole school swept into silence. It was September 14th, 2001. President Bush had declared it a national day of prayer and silence. So, every school, store, and workplace went completely quiet for five minutes at noon.

Why were we doing this? We were mourning the tragedy that had upheaved the United States just three days before. Despite being in elementary school, I can still remember the scene like it was yesterday. Even now, I am getting queasy writing this. On a clear, crisp September morning in New York City, everything seemed perfectly normal and beautiful. Everyone I know who lived in the city back then noted the sky was particularly blue that day. The beauty was interrupted by tragedy, though.

Little did we know that this event would be forever burned into our collective memory. Terrorist attacks on American soil specifically targeted innocent civilians in the middle of our most populated city. Using a stolen airplane as a bomb, they flew a speeding jet into the Twin Towers in downtown Manhattan. As fire poured from the building with the baby blue sky as a canvas, the nation stopped to watch in terror.

Since the news was still unfolding, the teachers rolled a television into my classroom. Suddenly, another plane struck the second tower. The explosion caused both towers to collapse 1,400 feet to the pavement while filled with innocent fathers, mothers, children, and spouses. All my classmates watched in horror as thousands of people tragically died before our eyes at the hands of pure evil.

September 11th was a chilling and unforgettable day. While it's just a date, when you mention it to someone, they react. For those who were alive and watched it on television, you can see the emotions and memories shimmer in their eyes. For those who live in New York, you can see palpable pain consume their complexion. If someone lost a loved one, you will likely get tears or even anger. However, if you were not alive in 2001, you have only read about these events in textbooks. Your reaction is likely far more intellectual than emotional. You are simply reading reports, not experiencing a visceral reaction to a real memory.

This goes to show a fact of life. The closer you are to a moment, the more meaningful it becomes. The shockwaves of that day still reverberate through our lives, leaving behind scars of sorrow and even courage. As we continue our investigative journey through the dense pages of Luke's Gospel, we're about to explore one of Luke's favorite topics. We're about to explore a realm of resurrections, miracles, and the unexplainable moves of God. Amazingly, most of these take place on the tail end of tragedy.

Luke, a meticulous documenter due to his medical background, collected stories to build an airtight case for Christ. In chapter seven of his Gospel, he took an intriguing departure from his narrative flow to highlight a series of supernatural healing and resurrection stories. Why, you ask? Because it's pretty hard to argue with someone who was once sick or even dead. This astounding account will teach us three powerful lessons about God's power playing out in our lives.

**READ: Luke 7:11-17**

“Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him. As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her. When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, ‘Don’t cry.’ Then he went up and touched the bier they were carrying him on, and the bearers stood still. He said, ‘Young man, I say to you, get up!’ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother. They were all filled with awe and praised God. ‘A great prophet has appeared among us,’ they said. ‘God has come to help his people.’ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country.”

**It's Hard to Disprove a Move of God**

During His ministry, Jesus was known for being a lot of things. He was renowned for His wisdom, kindness, compassion, and miracle-working power. Of all the things people might say about Him, rude would not be one of them. However, at the beginning of this story, Jesus did something that some may consider rude. At least, it seems rude at first glance. Jesus interrupted a funeral for a child.

Yet again, let's look at all the details Luke gives here. Why does he share all of this? He knows it's hard to disprove a move of God, especially one like this. The boy was dead and on his way to his funeral. Jesus stopped that. People could go out and find this young man. They could interview him. They could visit Nain themselves to ask around town. Inevitably, everyone would know about the day Jesus canceled a funeral.

### **God's Biggest Moves Happen After Life's Biggest Letdowns**

Everything seemed lost for this woman. She was a widow, and now she had just lost her son. Visualize the scene. A sorrowful funeral procession was winding its way through the city gate of Nain. A grieving widow, her heart heavy with the weight of her loss, walked alongside her son's lifeless body. This was an era before caskets, so the body was likely being carried on a makeshift stretcher covered in flowers and fragrant spices.

Jesus called out to the woman, sobbing in agony, to say, "Don't cry." The audacity! Can't He see her son is dead? Jesus had a plan, though. Calmly, He touched the corpse and spoke words of life, and the young man began to breathe. He tossed the flowers off his body like a bouquet at a wedding and embraced his mother.

Please understand that these are not just some dusty stories from ancient scrolls. God has moved supernaturally in your life, too. Can you recall moments when you thought all hope was lost, but then God stepped in? Moments when healing happened, relationships were restored, and dreams were resurrected? Jesus is moving in your life. These moves often happen when life seems most difficult, too. When things seem hard, just hold onto hope. Maybe Jesus is about to interrupt and give you a reason to celebrate.

### **Your Investigation Should End With Celebration**

Luke writes that, as the young man sat up and began to speak, "They were all filled with awe and praised God" (Luke 7:16). Picture the scene: the crowd, the gasps, the joyful tears, and the overwhelming sense of wonder. I imagine there was even some dancing and jumping. A dead child was breathing. He would be able to go to school, start a career, share meals with his mother, and start his own family. Thanks to Jesus, the funeral didn't even make it to the graveside.

God did a similar work for you, too. He canceled your own funeral. Like this boy, you were on your way to death, and Jesus interrupted it. That is a reason to celebrate. That is a reason to praise. That is a reason to be filled with awe like the onlooking crowd.

When God does a miracle in your life, do you respond with the same sense of wonder and praise? Luke explains that the news spread through Nain and revival spread as a result. God had stepped down into Judea. Remember that we said being close to a moment makes it much more meaningful? Imagine this experience for the mother or even the formerly dead boy. Their proximity set them up for praise. All the miracles in your life are as close as humanly possible. Thus, they're more meaningful. When something is meaningful to you, what do you do? You prioritize, protect, and pronounce it. You share what you care about. Be sure to celebrate all that God is doing within and around you. It will help others as they are investigating Jesus for themselves.

As we conclude this leg of our journey through Luke's Gospel, let's be encouraged to see God's work around us, truly investigate it, and then tell others about it. The closer we are to these miraculous moments, the more meaningful they become. Every miracle demands our marvel. When God moves, let's respond with praise and proclamation.



## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: Put yourself in the shoes of the people witnessing the resurrection of the widow's son. How do you think you would have reacted? What emotions would you have felt?

Q3: Please share a personal experience when you saw God's power or intervention in your life. How did it impact your faith?

Q4: Do you think you have ever missed a move of God? How can you prevent yourself from overlooking God's work in the future?

Q5: Reflect on your response to God's work in your life. Do you celebrate and share these moments of wonder with others, or do you keep them to yourself?

Q6: How might celebrating God's work inspire others in their faith journey?

Application: How can you notice and celebrate God's work in your life this week?

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Luke 15

Luke 16

Luke 17

Luke 18

Luke 19:1-27

Luke 19:28-48

Luke 20:1-20

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.

## LUKE 04/04: **INVITATION**

As we conclude our investigative expedition through the Gospel of Luke, we should talk about journalism. While Luke was not writing for a newspaper between doctor visits and patient check-ups, his work is quite similar to a journalistic piece, which is distinct from the more personal works of authors like Paul and John we find in much of the New Testament. Luke gives us a different take. He's approaching his 57,800-word thesis with robust research, interview notes, thorough examination, and more details than we need. Why did he do this? I believe it's because he wanted people to fact-check him, which is very important in the realm of news. Historically, and even presently, fake news has proven to be a problem.

We shouldn't believe everything we read. In 1835, *The New York Sun* published a series of articles that suggested humans had discovered life on the moon. There were even depictions of these demon-looking creatures with horns and pointy tails floating around the moon. These critters appeared right beneath the headline: "Life Discovered on the Moon." The nation freaked out. "We are about to be invaded by space devils!" people thought. These articles, falsely attributed to Sir John Herschel, a renowned astronomer, sent waves of panic through the country—for a week. However, they were quickly debunked and forgotten when someone just called up John to ask if the story was legit. Once he confirmed it was a hoax, the articles disappeared faster than free samples at Costco.

Now, let's pivot our attention to Luke's pursuit of truth about Jesus. While a moon hoax was debunked in the blink of an eye, Christianity is still going strong all these centuries later. While the sheer sustainability of our faith is interesting, that's not proof in itself. Numerous ancient religions, many older than ours, persist long after their founder left the scene.

The fact that the gospel spread within a few weeks of the death of Jesus remains a resolute reason I am so dedicated to this message. Any other possibility would be a logical fallacy or impossibility. Rome really enjoyed making a display of their criminals' corpses, so they must have spent a fortune looking for Christ's body. It was never uncovered. All of the Roman Empire, the most powerful kingdom of the time, was on the case, and no one could find the body or prove the whole resurrection rumor a hoax. I cannot help but think that's interesting.

What's more, every disciple except for one was arrested, tortured, and murdered for Jesus. All they had to do was admit it was a lie and they'd be free, but they didn't. Who on earth would die for a lie? Luke thinks the same thing, which is why he also focused on martyr stories in Acts. Luke's conclusion is the same as mine. Any investigation into the spread of Christianity suggests the resurrection was indeed a reality.

This wasn't a mere collection of stories; it was a relentless quest for truth. In an era when debunking this would be as effortless as disproving moon life, Luke remained an unwavering believer. His Gospel and Acts serve as the evidence binder you'd find on a detective's desk. Simply put, Christianity isn't a cold case. The fire that burned then is still burning now.

But let's pump the breaks. The disciples, some of Luke's dear friends, didn't know that Jesus truly rose from the dead. They likely thought he was talking abstractly or it was some kind of parable. Although they saw him raise people from the dead, the thought that He could do that to Himself—that was unimaginable. Unfortunately, their worst nightmare became a reality. Jesus was murdered in the middle of Jerusalem. Rome scoffed, and everyone taunted them. Their beloved rabbi was wrapped up in fabric in a tomb He didn't even own due to his poverty. Rome won. Jesus lost.

However, everything changed after a walk down the road to Emmaus. In the very last chapter of his investigative gospel, Luke shares a head-scratching story that gives us three practical principles about our personal journeys with Jesus.

**READ: Luke 24:14-23; 30-33**

“They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, ‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’ They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, ‘Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?’ ‘What things?’ he asked. ‘About Jesus of Nazareth,’ they replied. ‘He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more,

it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive.' [...] When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?' They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, 'It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.'"

### **Be in the Word**

Imagine a dusty road in the tranquil Judean countryside, with the setting sun casting a warm glow. Two travelers, sad and heartbroken, embarked on a trek down this slightly dangerous path. To pass the time, they were discussing recent events: specifically, the crucifixion and the strange stories of an empty tomb as reported by Mary. Out of the blue, a stranger started walking with them. As they spoke, they told Him what had been going on. What they didn't realize was that this stranger was actually Jesus, risen from the dead.

Jesus, whom they didn't recognize yet, started explaining the scriptures to them and connecting ancient prophecies with recent events. With every word, their minds raced. This random fellow was oddly wise. How did He know so much about the prophecies and the Messiah? Finally, with aching feet, they arrived at their destination. "Welcome to Emmaus," read the sign as they crossed into town. Famished, they sat down to eat some food. With the breaking of bread, which Jesus asked his disciples to do in remembrance of Him, they finally saw Him for who He truly was—their best friend, savior, and mentor. Jesus, whom they saw get brutally murdered, had been with them all along.

"Then their eyes were opened." I adore that line in Luke's closing chapter. They were talking about the Word, the prophecies, and Jesus. Next thing you know, Jesus was walking right there alongside them. He was there all along, but their eyes were not opened until they began really wrestling with the Word. If you want to really expand your mind in faith, you must devote yourself to the Word of God. Read it daily. Meditate

on it often. Investigate it like Luke would. Your investigation will lead to greater devotion.

### **Be a Worshipper**

The two men led Jesus all the way to Emmaus. Upon their arrival to the city, the sun sank into the horizon. Tired, the two men invited Jesus to join them for supper with eleven other disciples. While enjoying some well-earned food, the men recognized Jesus after a moment that felt oddly reminiscent of their last supper in the upper room. They transitioned from bewildered uncertainty to full-fledged worship. Luke 24 paints a picture of worship, awe, and reverence. They were talking about Jesus, being present with Jesus, and worshipping Jesus in the same story.

These two fringe followers go on to find the eleven core disciples to confirm that they met Jesus. Worship broke out as a result. The last verse of Luke explains, “Then they worshipped Him.” He closes his book with a call to worship. Investigation prepares us for adoration.

When you explore the depths of Jesus’s true identity, your worship becomes a symphony of love and wonder. It’s like listening to music with a surround sound system instead of your iPhone speaker. Sure, they both make the same sound, but one does it way better. Reading these stories in Luke is one thing, but experiencing the power of Jesus is completely different. It entrances you, consumes you, and captivates you. Worship and wonder are natural byproducts.

Investigation is often the key that unlocks the door to a richer, more vibrant worship experience. Study, often seen as separate from worship, directly correlates to worship. The deeper we delve into knowing Jesus, the more our hearts are drawn towards Him. Honestly, investigation doesn’t hinder our worship; it fuels it. While worship is wonderful, God has something else in store for us and for his disciples. Every worshipper is also called to be a witness. This brings us to the closing point of our investigation into Jesus.

### **Be a Witness**

Worship was their initial response. Sequentially, the disciples transformed into witnesses. As we have alluded, Luke’s work is actually two books in our Bibles—Luke

and Acts. These same men went on to lead the revival at Pentecost, where thousands came to know Jesus. Notice that Luke specifically wants us to know that the disciples worshipped on their way to Jerusalem. What were they doing heading there? It was ground zero for the execution of their Messiah, after all. Honestly, it was a dangerous place for them to visit.

That didn't stop them. They knew every single word from the mouth of their Lord was true. So, they headed right into dangerous territory without a single worry. Within a few weeks, the Christian faith developed from nearly a thousand followers to somewhere close to ten thousand, and that number kept climbing by the thousands. Today, the same still unfolds all over the world.

Your investigation ends with an invitation. Jesus is calling out to you. He wants you to follow Him, be His witness, and spread His message. He sets people free. He heals. He saves. He changes lives. This is the gospel, the good news, that we get to bring to the world. The disciples experienced it and then advanced it. Do the same. There is no greater act of love than helping someone see the truth that there is a real God who really loves them and wants the best for them. So, get out there and be a witness. Spread His love. Share His message. Shout His praise. Jesus will be glorified, and people's lives will be eternally changed because of it. Be a witness. Be an evangelist. Be like the disciples. Your boldness to share may change the census of heaven.

Way to go! You should be proud of yourself. Like a good detective, you have examined all the evidence, looked at the research, and followed the logical flow. Now, it's my hope you see that Jesus is who He claimed to be. Jesus is a resurrector, miracle worker, brilliant teacher, healer, and savior. At face value, this is just information. But because we are talking about God, this information cultivates transformation. What should you do with all this transformative information? Tell someone about it. Be a witness.

Investigation leads to an invitation. The disciples' Bible study and worship on the road to Jerusalem was the prelude to their mission. In the same way, our worship is not an endpoint but a launching pad. Now, let your witness become a source of inspiration and transformation for others. Be like Luke—tell people about what you've investigated. Your testimony may change eternity.

## TALK IT OUT

*Go through these questions with your circle. Be honest. Be open. Talk through the tough stuff.*

Ice Breaker: Go around your circle and share this week's highs and lows. What was the best part of your week and what was the lowest part of your week?

Q1: What's one thing that stood out to you from today's message?

Q2: Why do you think Luke chose to write his Gospel in such a detailed and investigative style?

Q3: Discuss how worship and investigation can go hand in hand in your faith journey.

Q4: How does a deeper study of God's Word lead to more profound worship experiences?

Application: What are some ways you can live out the invitation to be a witness for Jesus in your daily life? How can you share the message of love, healing, and salvation with those around you? Share specific ideas and steps you can take.

## READING PLAN

*READ THESE PASSAGES IN ORDER EVERY DAY*

Luke 20:27-47

Luke 21

Luke 22:1-38

Luke 22:39-71

Luke 23

Luke 24

Psalm 45

Do the following with each passage:

ASK– God to connect with you here. In prayer, start by slowing down and inviting God to be present. Begin with focus and openness to see what God has for you today.

READ– the selected section of Scripture slowly. Take note of the words and phrases that intrigue you, reading them a second time if necessary.

REFLECT– on what grabs you. How does this passage personally relate to your own life and experiences?

RESPOND– to the Scripture. Speak directly to God about what's on your mind and heart. Look for ways to live out what you've uncovered.