

Lesson
1 - 4

Luke

Study Book / Demo-Version



COMMUNITY BIBLE STUDY
SWITZERLAND

More than a Bible Study...

CBS exists to make disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ in our communities, through in-depth, caring Bible Studies available to all.

The success of CBS lies in its **five-way approach** that allows God to transform lives.

1. Home Study

Each week there are study questions, which members complete at home. Most answers can be found in the passage being studied. This helps people get used to using the Bible when answering questions.

2. Group Discussion

The group discusses the answers they have to the questions. A leader facilitates, moving the discussion along. Large groups should split into smaller groups for discussion.

3. The talk

After the discussion a leader gives a talk on the passage studied, using testimony and personal application. The talk can be anything from a five minute wrap-up to a half hour long lecture.

4. Commentary

When leaving, the members are given a Commentary on the lesson they have just studied as well as the questions for next week. They are encouraged to read this Commentary at home.

5. Caring

CBS is a Team Ministry and should be initially run by two or three leaders. As classes grow a larger Leadership Team can be built up. They should care and pray for those attending.

God's Amazing Book

Luke Lesson 1

Good News for the Whole World

The Gospel of Luke tells the story of Jesus. It begins before the announcement of His birth and ends with His majestic ascension to heaven. It tells of God's forgiveness of sins for all people from every nation. God wants everyone in the world to hear and receive His good news.

Themes in Luke

Luke's main focus is Jesus as the Savior for all people, "*for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10). Throughout this book, we see Jesus searching out people whom the world had overlooked—and bringing God's redemption and kingdom into their lives. When you have lost your way, you need someone to seek you out and help you. Luke's Gospel shows us that "someone" is Jesus!

The book of Luke emphasizes how Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection fulfilled prophecies to Abraham, David, Isaiah, and Malachi centuries before. From the first chapter to the last, Luke's Gospel shows that God is faithful to His promises. In Jesus, He fulfilled promises that His people had been awaiting for generations.



Think about God's promises. The book of Luke reveals that God always fulfills the promises He makes—even if it takes a long time for things to happen. God gave the first promise about Jesus to Adam and Eve, millennia before He arrived (Genesis 3:15). Other promises God made through Israel's prophets also took hundreds of years to come true. But Jesus did come, and He brought those promises to life. We can be confident in the truth of the promises that God hasn't fulfilled yet. No matter how long it takes, we can trust God to do what He has said He will do.

The book of Luke also gives us a picture of God's compassion for the poor and rejected. God's kingdom came to people whom the world did not value. Jesus entered the world in a humble, dirty place. Angels announced his birth to social outcasts. His forerunner was a man from the wilderness who ate locusts and wild honey. He declared that the last would be first in God's kingdom. Throughout His ministry, He sought out people whom society scorned. He invited sinners, lepers, foreigners, women, and children to know and believe Him. And He took time to care for their needs.

Luke also shows Jesus' commitment to prayer. The book records Jesus spending time with His Father at every major point in His life. He prayed at His baptism, before He chose His disciples, while preaching and healing, and after great miracles. Jesus gave His disciples an example of how to pray to His Father in heaven. He cried out to His Father before His crucifixion and while He was on the cross.



Think about Jesus' example of prayer. Jesus brought His Father into every part of His life—when things were going well, when He was making decisions, when He was tired, discouraged, or fearful, when He was struggling to obey, and when He was suffering. God wants us to come to Him not only in times of crisis, but also in the everyday aspects of our lives. What does the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, felt such a need for prayer suggest to you about our need to talk to God?

Throughout the book of Luke, the Holy Spirit is an important part of every significant event. The book opens with Jesus being conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. It closes with His promise that the Holy Spirit will clothe His disciples with power from God in heaven. From the first chapter to the last, the Holy Spirit shows up everywhere. Look for Him as you read.

What Do We Know About Luke?

It is generally accepted that Luke wrote this book as well as the book of Acts. Both books are addressed to the "*most excellent Theophilus*" (1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2). Scholars estimate Luke wrote his Gospel around AD 60. He was a doctor and a historian. Under the Holy Spirit's guidance, he did careful research and included many details in his account. He spoke to eyewitnesses and compiled their stories.

Luke was not one of Jesus' 12 disciples. But he knew Peter, Andrew, John, and other disciples. He also knew Jesus' relative, James, who later served as leader of the Jerusalem church. Luke may have heard of Jesus' encounters with Herod from a follower of Jesus named Joanna. Her husband, Chuza, managed Herod's household (8:3; 24:1-10). Many scholars believe Jesus' mother, Mary, was among those who gave Luke information. She could have told him about Gabriel's announcement, Jesus' birth, and His visit to the temple.

Luke may have had access to Mark's Gospel (written earlier), and to one of Matthew's sources. Some events he recorded appear in Matthew, Mark or both. But others are found nowhere else. He included many parables, miracles, and people not mentioned in the other Gospels—about 20 of Jesus' parables are only in Luke.

Luke was a travel companion of the apostle Paul. Passages in Acts reveal that Luke joined Paul on his second missionary journey, as well as part of his third missionary journey. Together, they shared Jesus' truth and visited churches across much of the known world.

Luke was also a loyal friend. Luke was with Paul during his shipwreck and voyage to Rome (Acts 27–28). When Paul wrote his second letter to Timothy from prison in Rome, he said that only Luke was with him (2 Timothy 4:11). In one of his letters, Paul described Luke as "*the beloved physician*" (Colossians 4:14).

Luke had access to firsthand accounts of Jesus' time on earth. As a doctor, he had influence. He could emphasize Jesus' power to bring real healing and comfort to our real pain. And as a Greek who believed in Jesus, he was able to explain that Jesus had come to bring salvation and freedom for everyone in the world.

Luke's Audience

Luke stated that he wrote specifically to convince Theophilus of the truth about Jesus. Since Luke addressed this man as "*most excellent Theophilus*," he was likely a distinguished official. Since Romans highly respected physicians, Luke had an opportunity to reach those in political power.

The ancient Greeks pursued excellence and discussed ideals of the "perfect man." So Luke introduced Jesus as the truly perfect man—both the Son of Man and the Son of God. He highlighted Jesus' humanity. He traced Jesus' human genealogy all the way back to the beginning of creation (3:23-38). He wrote in excellent Greek. And his Gospel has more details about Jesus' earthly life than any of the others.

Luke was a *Gentile*—meaning *not a Jew*—who was writing to Gentiles, so he made his account easy for Gentile readers to understand. For those who were unfamiliar with Israel's traditions and geography, he explained Jewish customs and described the places where events occurred.

As a Greek who believed in Jesus, Luke knew firsthand that God's incredible love and His good news of the gospel extended to the whole world. In Jesus, God welcomed people from all nations into His family and His promises. His light dawned on outsiders who had been lost in spiritual darkness. He showed mercy to the helpless and rejected, and He chose these people to be a part of His amazing story of redemption. Jesus brought God's kingdom on earth, for people from every language and nation. God's grace was available not only for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles.



Personalize the TRUTH!

A poor, unwed teenage mother and lowly shepherds were the first to receive and share the good news about Jesus. God included the poor and the outcasts as Jesus brought His kingdom on earth. But He also called people of privilege and status, like Luke, to spread His Gospel. As a skilled doctor, Luke was probably highly respected, influential, and wealthy. Whatever your situation and experiences, God has a way for you to share His story with other people. How could you share what you know about Him with someone else?

Luke Lesson 2—Luke 1:1–38

God's Good News



Memorize the TRUTH!

“For nothing will be impossible with God.” Luke 1:37

DAY 1: LUKE 1:1-7—Introduction

1. How did Luke gather the information for this Gospel?
2. Why did he write it?
3. What stands out to you from Luke's description of Zechariah and Elizabeth?



Learn the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Elizabeth had been praying for a child for years. Even though God didn't answer their prayers right away, He had heard them. And in His sovereign will and perfect timing, He gave them the miracle they had asked for. What are some things you have been praying about for a long time? Renew your commitment to pray for those things this week. If there's something you would like others to pray with you about, plan to share it with your small group.

DAY 2: LUKE 1:8-17—A Birth Foretold

4. What was Zechariah doing when the angel appeared?
5. How long do you think Zechariah and Elizabeth had been praying for a child? What does the angel tell Zechariah about his prayer, and how could this encourage you?
6. What does the angel tell Zechariah that his son will do? What do you think this would have meant to him?

DAY 3: LUKE 1:18-25—A Promise Fulfilled

7. From verse 18, what did Zechariah ask for?
8. How did the angel identify and describe himself?
9. Why did the angel tell Zechariah that he would be unable to speak until these words were fulfilled?

10. Have you ever found it difficult to believe God’s word to you? How does Zechariah’s story challenge you?

DAY 4: LUKE 1:26-34—Another Birth Foretold

11. How did Gabriel describe Mary when he greeted her?

12. How did Gabriel describe the child Mary would conceive? What do you think this would have meant to her?

13. How was Mary’s reaction similar to Zechariah’s? How was it different?

DAY 5: LUKE 1:35-38—Mary’s Response

14. How was Mary’s conception of this child different from every other human conception?

15. What information did Gabriel give Mary about her relative? If you had been Mary, how do you think this news would have affected you?

16. What do you admire about Mary from your study of verses 26-38?



Apply the TRUTH!

God gave Mary a special calling. Mary’s obedience brought her great blessing and joy—but it also came with a cost. Has God ever asked anything of you that was hard? What do you learn from Mary’s attitude? Plan to share with your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class

Lesson 2 Commentary

God's Good News

Luke 1:1-38

Luke wrote an “*orderly account*” for Theophilus, so he would know that what he had been taught was true. Luke began his account “*in the days of Herod.*” Though the Greeks and Romans to whom Luke wrote did not believe in angels, he opened his Gospel with two messages from the angel Gabriel (see Daniel 8:16; 9:21).

For Israel, these times were dark and discouraging. The Roman Empire had conquered their land. In the Roman province of Judea, Herod the Great ruled with a cruel hand, taxing the people to pay for his building projects and corrupting God's worship with pagan practices. Spiritually, it was also a dark time. Israel's people had not heard from God since Malachi's prophecy 400 years earlier. Yet despite this oppression and turmoil, God chose this time and place to fulfill His promise and bring His kingdom. He sent the angel Gabriel to announce good news to a man named Zechariah.

Messages From God

Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth, were “*righteous.*” They followed all God's commandments, and He was pleased with their love for Him. But Elizabeth was barren, and they were old. Though they had hoped to have children, it seemed too late for that to happen. People in their culture considered barrenness a sign of God's disfavor on a person's life—especially for those who were descended from a priestly line, as Zechariah was.



Think about God's favor. Zechariah and Elizabeth lived righteously. But they didn't escape sadness, misunderstanding, and disappointment. It's a mistake to believe that we can earn God's favor. It's also a mistake to believe that suffering means God does not love us. God's favor is based on His perfect purposes for us and His kingdom—not on what we do or don't do. But He loves us always, regardless of our circumstances and regardless of our actions.

Zechariah was also a priest. He was one of Aaron's descendants from the tribe God had called to serve Him (see Exodus 28:1-3; 40:12-16). At this time, priests were in charge of Israel's special offerings (Numbers 18:8) and burning incense on God's altar (Exodus 30:7-8). This incense symbolized prayer rising to God. It was a special privilege to offer it, chosen by the casting of lots. The lot fell to Zechariah, and he entered God's temple to burn incense. A “*multitude*” of worshipers were praying outside at this set “*hour of incense.*”



Think about the importance of both corporate and private prayer. During the hour of incense, people saw the incense smoke ascending and gathered in the temple courtyard to pray. Although Zechariah appeared before God on their behalf, these worshipers did not rely solely on his prayers. Instead, they joined him. At this time of prayer, God sent “*good news*”: He would send someone who would turn people's hearts back to Him and prepare the way for their Messiah to come. God answered not only Zechariah's prayer, but prayers that all Israel had been praying for generations.

As Zechariah offered incense, Gabriel appeared next to the altar. Zechariah was terrified at this unexpected sight. But Gabriel told Zechariah not to be afraid. God had heard his prayer. Elizabeth would bear a son, and they would name him John. God would give them joy and gladness. People would rejoice at their son's birth.

John's life would fulfill prophecies God gave His people hundreds of years earlier. God had promised He would send a “*messenger*” to “*prepare the way*” before Him (Malachi 3:1). And Isaiah had declared that a voice would come, calling, “*In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God*” (Isaiah 40:3; see also Matthew 3:1-3).

Even before he was born, John would be filled with the Holy Spirit. He would come “*in the spirit and power of Elijah*” to announce Jesus' arrival and the coming of God's kingdom. Like the Old Testament prophet, he

would turn the people of Israel back to God. He would turn fathers' hearts to their children (see also Malachi 4:5-6). And he would make people ready for Jesus.

Zechariah asked Gabriel how he could know this would happen, since he and his wife were old. Gabriel answered that he had come from God's very presence to bring this "good news." His words, he told Zechariah, would indeed come true. But because Zechariah had not believed him, he would be "mute" until these events occurred.

Six months later, God sent Gabriel to Mary, a young virgin woman living in the Galilean village of Nazareth. The Pharisees and rabbis thought of Galileans as uncultured peasants. But God had promised to shine a glorious light in Galilee, "the land beyond the Jordan" (Isaiah 9:1-2). He would give a child, the Prince of Peace and Mighty God, who would establish David's throne and bring a kingdom of justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus, Savior of the world, would come from this simple place.

Mary was a relative of Elizabeth. Mary was engaged to a man named Joseph, and they were both descended from David's line. Their year-long betrothal period was as sacred and binding as marriage and could be ended only by divorce. A physical relationship with someone else was considered adultery.

Gabriel greeted Mary as a "favored one," saying the Lord was with her. Like Zechariah, Mary was perplexed and "troubled" by the angel's visit. But Gabriel told her not to fear. She had found favor with God. She would conceive God's Son and call Him Jesus. He would receive David's throne. He would reign forever over the house of Jacob. And His kingdom would be never-ending.

Mary asked, "How will this be?" Her question was similar to Zechariah's, but with an important distinction. She assumed that what the angel had said was true. For obvious reasons, she just wanted to know how. Gabriel did not give the details. But he made it clear that neither Joseph nor any other human would father this special child. His father would be God Himself. This is why the virgin birth was so miraculous.

Gabriel told Mary more astonishing news. Her aging relative Elizabeth had also conceived a son, and she was now six months pregnant. Imagine Mary's awe. But as Gabriel assured her, nothing is impossible with God.

Mary no doubt knew that carrying the Son of God would not be easy. She would face rumor, ridicule, and humiliation. Joseph would be troubled when he heard of her condition. Villagers would surely gossip about her pre-wedding pregnancy. It would be hard for her to explain, and many would not believe her. Possibly someone would even accuse her of adultery and try to have her killed (see Deuteronomy 22:23). Yet Mary answered Gabriel with faith, describing herself as a servant of God. "Let it be to me according to your word," she said.



Personalize the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Mary both asked questions when God spoke to them through Gabriel. The difference was that Zechariah asked with doubt, while Mary asked with trust. What is something you are concerned about? Try this simple exercise: think of a question about your concern that is based on doubt, then think of a question based on trust. Write them down so you can look at them closely. What's the difference between these two questions? Ask God to give you a heart that believes in Him and trusts Him, like Mary did.

Luke Lesson 3—Luke 1:39–80

God Fulfills His Promises



Memorize the TRUTH!

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior.” Luke 1:46-47

DAY 1: LUKE 1:39-45—Mary Visits Elizabeth

1. Why do you think Mary went to visit Elizabeth?
2. How did Elizabeth’s greeting show that she knew who Mary’s special baby was?
3. Why did Elizabeth say Mary was blessed?



Learn the TRUTH!

Elizabeth rejoiced in what God was doing in Mary’s life. Who can you affirm and bless because of God’s work in his or her life? Try it this week, and plan to share about your experience with your small group.

DAY 2: LUKE 1:46-56—Mary’s Song of Praise

4. In Mary’s praise, what did she say about God? List everything you can find.
5. How do you think she knew these things about God? How can you learn more about what God is like?
6. Which of these things about God is most meaningful to you now, and why?

DAY 3: LUKE 1:57-66—John the Baptist Is Born

7. Review Luke 1:14. How was Gabriel’s prophecy fulfilled? How do you help to celebrate God’s mercy in your friends’ and neighbors’ lives?
8. How did their friends and neighbors react to the name they chose for the baby?
9. If you had been unable to speak for nine months, what would your first words be after your speech was restored? What did Zechariah’s first words show about his heart and attitude?

10. Why do you think these events brought fear to their neighbors?

DAY 4: LUKE 1:67-75—Zechariah’s Song of Praise

11. Review Luke 1:55 and read Genesis 12:2-3. Both Mary and Zechariah praise God for fulfilling His promise to Abraham. What was this promise?

12. Read 2 Samuel 7:16. How would Jesus fulfill God’s promises to David?

13. Zechariah declared that God shows mercy to His people, saves them from their enemies, and keeps His promises. How do these attributes encourage you?

DAY 5: LUKE 1:76-79—The Song Continues

14. What is the connection between Zechariah’s son’s title and his special calling?

15. What are some ways you could “*give knowledge of salvation*” to someone you know?

16. From verses 78-79, what does God want to do for people who don’t know Him?



Apply the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Mary had a deep understanding of Scripture. They knew God’s character and His promises. So they were able to recognize Him at work in their lives. When we read and think about God’s Word to us, we get to know Him better. Then, it’s easier for us to notice what He is doing in our lives and in our world. You can start today. As you study Luke, write or memorize a verse from each lesson that impacts your life in a special way. Pick one this week and plan to share your verse with your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class

Lesson 3 Commentary

God Fulfills His Promises

Luke 1:39-80

Mary Visits Elizabeth

Mary had received incredible news—God had chosen her to bring His Son into the world. As soon as she received this news, she traveled to see Zechariah and Elizabeth, who lived in a Judean town in the hill country. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s voice, her baby jumped in her womb. Filled with the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth greeted Mary as “*the mother of my Lord.*” She recognized that God had done a miracle for Mary, just as He had done for her.



Think about Mary and Elizabeth’s examples of humility. God’s messenger, Gabriel, had told Mary about Elizabeth’s miraculous pregnancy, so she went to celebrate with her relative and share her own amazing news. Mary respected Elizabeth by taking a journey to visit her and confide in her. When Mary arrived, Elizabeth instantly acknowledged that Mary was carrying the Savior of the world. Even though Jewish tradition called for younger people to defer to the elderly, Elizabeth considered Mary’s visit to be an honor.

The two relatives shared a joyful time together. Elizabeth blessed Mary for believing that God’s words to her were true. Mary responded with praise to God. Both women realized that through their children, God would fulfill ancient promises to Israel and bring His salvation to all people.

Mary worshiped God for His power, holiness, and mercy. He had seen her “*humble estate*” and chosen her to participate in the birth of His Son. He had done “*great things*” for her—and for His people through all generations. She recognized that His name is holy. His arm is strong. He scatters the proud. He brings down the mighty and raises those who are low. He feeds the hungry and sends the rich away empty. In His mercy, He had remembered His promises to Israel. And He had fulfilled those promises in Jesus.

God had sent the Messiah His people had been awaiting for centuries. Through Him, the entire world would be blessed. Mary recognized that the Savior coming soon—her Son—was the One God promised to Abraham centuries before (Genesis 22:17-18; Galatians 3:6-9). Her words showed her knowledge of these promises.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months. By the time she returned home, she would have been obviously pregnant. We can imagine that she faced much speculation and gossip from her friends and neighbors.

John the Baptist is Born

Elizabeth gave birth to a son, just as God had said she would, and everyone rejoiced. When baby boys were circumcised, they were also named (1:59; Genesis 21:3-4). In Jewish culture, parents frequently named the first son after his father. But Elizabeth insisted on calling her baby John, even though none of his relatives had that name. The name John means “God is gracious” or “God’s gift.”

Thinking this name was Elizabeth’s idea, her relatives and friends asked Zechariah what he wanted to name his son. Still unable to speak, he wrote, “*His name is John*” (1:63). At that moment, he regained his ability to speak, as Gabriel had promised.

Zechariah and Elizabeth’s friends and neighbors were awestruck. Throughout “*all the hill country of Judea,*” people discussed these events and wondered about John’s special calling. They could clearly see that God had an important plan and purpose for this child.

As soon as Zechariah showed his faith in God’s message to him through Gabriel, he was able to speak again. The Holy Spirit filled him, and he declared God’s goodness. His words, like Mary’s, reveal a knowledge of Old Testament Scripture, especially the prophecies of Israel’s Messiah.

Zechariah worshiped God because He had visited and redeemed His people. He called the soon-coming Savior “*a horn of salvation*” (1:69), which symbolized power and victory. The Messiah would be a powerful deliverer from David’s line (Psalm 132:17-18). He would save His people from their enemies and fulfill God’s covenant promises to His people in a way that included the whole world.



Think about Jesus defeating our greatest enemies—sin and the death it brings. Zechariah and his fellow Jews lived under the oppressive rule of the Roman Empire. He may have expected that God’s deliverance “from the hand of our enemies” would include liberation from Roman tyranny. But the kingdom Jesus came to bring was “not of this world” (John 18:36). Those who were looking for a military Messiah would not recognize his arrival. They would fail to see that Jesus was God Himself walking among them. Rather than leading Israel to victory over Rome, Jesus would allow Himself to be crucified under Roman law. But He would win the greatest victory of all, because He would conquer sin and death forever.

As Mary had, Zechariah also recalled God’s promises to Abraham. Because of Jesus, all people and nations would be blessed with salvation. They would be able to come freely to God, clothed in Jesus’ righteousness. Through His death and resurrection, sin’s power would be broken. And they would be able to “*serve Him without fear.*”

Zechariah rejoiced, knowing that God had chosen his son to prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:1-5; Malachi 3:1; John 1:23, 29). He declared that John would be “*the prophet of the Most High.*” John would give his people knowledge of God’s salvation. He would point them to Jesus and His power to forgive their sins.

In Jesus, God would make His mercy known to the whole world. Jesus would be a “*sunrise*” dawning on people lost in the darkness of sin and death. He would bring spiritual light and life, just as the prophecies in Isaiah had promised (Isaiah 9:1-7; Isaiah 60:1-2). He would guide their feet “*into the way of peace.*”

Luke ends this chapter by saying that John grew physically and spiritually. John was probably an adult when he moved to the wilderness. There, he waited until the time “*of his public appearance to Israel*” began. Then he would begin to preach repentance and prepare people for Jesus.



Personalize the TRUTH!

Zechariah and Mary worshiped God for the wonderful things He had done in Israel’s history and in their own lives. They rejoiced in His mercy and power. They declared that His faithfulness was timeless and generational. And they looked forward to the salvation and peace He would bring to the world through Jesus. What attributes of God cause your heart to overflow? Express your own song of praise to Him and possibly share it with others.

Luke Lesson 4—Luke 2

Jesus' Birth and Childhood



Memorize the TRUTH!

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." Luke 2:11

DAY 1: LUKE 2:1-7—Jesus Is Born

1. The distance from Nazareth to Bethlehem is more than 100 kilometers. Why did Joseph take Mary on this difficult journey so near to her time of giving birth? What does this say about Joseph's character?
2. This baby born in Bethlehem was Jesus, God's Son. How did the place of His birth fulfill the prophecy of Micah 5:2?
3. If you were God, what kind of family and setting would you choose for your son to be born into? Does anything surprise you about the setting God chose for His Son to be born into? Explain.

DAY 2: LUKE 2:8-18—Jesus' Birth Is Announced

4. To whom did an angel of the Lord appear? What social standing do you think these people had?
5. Why do you think God chose to have His Son's birth announced to shepherds instead of wealthy, powerful, or influential people?
6. What was the good news the angel brought? Why would this news cause "*great joy for all people*"?
7. What did the shepherds do after they heard the announcement from the angel?



Learn the TRUTH!

As soon as the shepherds had seen Jesus, they wanted to tell everyone about Him! Who would you like to tell about Jesus this week? Ask God to give you an opportunity, then share about your experience in your small group.

DAY 3: LUKE 2:19-20—People Respond to the Good News

8. How did Mary respond to all these things that happened? What do you think this means?
9. How did the shepherds respond to what they had heard and seen?

10. How do you respond when God does something amazing in your life?

DAY 4: LUKE 2:21-38—Jesus Presented to the Lord

11. Why did Joseph and Mary bring Jesus to Jerusalem?

12. What does Luke tell us about Simeon?

13. What did Simeon say about Jesus in his blessing? What do you think he meant?

14. What does Luke tell us about Anna? Is there anything you admire about her relationship with God? What?

DAY 5: LUKE 2:39-52—The Boy Jesus at the Temple

15. Where was Jesus when his parents could not find Him?

16. Why were people amazed by Jesus?

17. How did Jesus' answer to His concerned parents show that He understood His true identity?



Apply the TRUTH!

We can learn a lot from older people who are following God. Both Simeon and Anna were advanced in years. Simeon was full of godly wisdom and faith. Anna was a worshiper and intercessor. Is there an elderly believer you could learn from? Plan to have a conversation with an older man or woman this week. Learn everything you can from that person, especially about his or her life experiences with God. Plan to share about your experience with your small group.

DAY 6: Participate in Class

Lesson 4 Commentary

Jesus' Birth and Childhood

Luke 2

Jesus Is Born

Luke records the Savior's birth in vivid detail and reveals that the good news about Jesus is "*for all people*" (2:10). Matthew also included an account of Jesus' birth in his Gospel, found in Matthew 1:18-25.

At the time of Jesus' birth, Caesar Augustus ruled as emperor of the Roman Empire, which included the entire civilized world. Caesar ordered a census of all the regions under his control. For tax purposes, this census required people to register in the town of their ancestors. Joseph and Mary, both of King David's lineage, were required to travel to the small town of Bethlehem. Here, in "*the city of David,*" their baby, the Savior of the world, would be born. God fulfilled His promise, given 650 years earlier, that in Bethlehem He would send the "*one who is to be ruler in Israel,*" and this long-awaited Messiah would be His people's peace (Micah 5:2-5).

Bethlehem was more than 100 kilometers away from Nazareth. Joseph was a just and merciful man (see Matthew 1:19), and he knew that the long journey would be very difficult for Mary, who was heavily pregnant. But Joseph was committed to obeying both God and human authorities, so he resolved to obey the law even though it was hard.

When they arrived in Bethlehem, "*there was no place for them in the inn*" (2:7). So the newborn baby Jesus had to sleep in a feeding trough for livestock. We can be sure that the stable or cave where Jesus was born was dark and dirty. To a world that was darkened and broken by sin, He would bring His light and salvation.

Meanwhile, not far from Bethlehem, shepherds were out in the fields watching their sheep. Suddenly an angel in bright glory startled them. The world's most powerful and wealthy people were not the first to receive the greatest news in all of history. No, God sent the angel to poor shepherds. The Judaic culture considered shepherds unclean and treated them as outcasts. But they were the first to hear that the long-awaited Messiah had come.

The angel called the newborn child *Savior*, *Christ* (Messiah), and *Lord*. These names all have special meaning. Jesus is the one who saves us. He is the one God sent to redeem mankind from the brokenness of sin. He is the one to whom we owe our loyalty and obedience.

After the angel told the shepherds where they would find Jesus, many other angels joined him. Together, they worshiped God and blessed people. Realizing the angel's amazing news was from God Himself, the shepherds went immediately to Bethlehem to see the newborn king. After seeing Him, the shepherds shared the good news with others, who were amazed. Filled with joy, the shepherds returned to their flocks, praising God for all they had seen and heard. Mary's response to these incredible events was quiet reflection. She "*treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.*"

Observing Jewish law, when Mary's baby was eight days old, she and Joseph circumcised Him (see Leviticus 12:2-3). They named Him Jesus, as Gabriel had instructed (1:31). A few weeks later, after Mary's purification had been completed (see Leviticus 12:4-8), Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice and dedicate Jesus to God. Simeon and Anna, two elderly and devout Jews, were at the temple when this special family arrived.

Simeon obviously walked closely with God. The Holy Spirit had personally revealed to him that he would not die before seeing the Lord's Christ, the Messiah. He immediately recognized baby Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise. As he took Jesus in his arms to bless Him, he declared Him to be God's salvation for "*all peoples.*" He would be glory for God's people, the Jews, but also "*a light of revelation to the Gentiles.*" Simeon prophesied that Jesus was not just a Savior for the Jews, but for everyone.

Simeon also said that Jesus would cause the fall and rising of many in Israel and would reveal the thoughts of many hearts. In other words, Jesus would cause people's true motives to be exposed. Some people would respond positively to Him and be saved. Others would reject Him and miss out on God's gift of salvation. Simeon told Mary that because of Jesus, a sword would pierce her soul. This blessed gift from God would bring joy and salvation, but also pain and sorrow.

Luke describes Anna, an elderly widow, as a prophetess who worshiped, prayed, and fasted constantly in the temple. When she saw Jesus, she thanked God and talked about Him with all who were waiting for the Messiah to come and redeem Jerusalem (2:38).



Think about the people God uses in His plans. Jesus was born to a poor, young couple. His birth was announced to lowly shepherds. The first people to pronounce blessing on Him were very elderly people. No matter what the world may think, God considers all people important and valuable. He doesn't need people with wealth, power, and education to accomplish His purposes. He uses humble, everyday people whose hearts are open to Him.

Jesus' Childhood

While they were in Bethlehem, an angel of the Lord instructed Joseph to take Jesus and Mary to Egypt to avoid the massacre of all male infants in Bethlehem, ordered by Herod the Great (Matthew 2:13-23). Eventually, Herod died, and it was safe for the young family to return to Nazareth in Galilee.

Luke says that Jesus grew, became strong, was filled with wisdom, and that *“the favor of God was upon Him.”* He tells of an incident in the temple while celebrating the Passover when Jesus was 12. Jesus was approaching the age in Jewish culture of spiritual accountability.



Think about what maturity means. Growth involves more than just our physical bodies or mental abilities. Jesus grew physically, mentally, *and* spiritually, emotionally, and relationally. Each of these areas is important for us, too. We want to become everything God designed us to be! Do you focus on one area of growth but neglect others? In what way would you like to grow more mature this year?

How could Joseph and Mary not have missed Jesus on the journey home? In that day men and women, even husbands and wives, were not allowed to be together in public. Mary would have walked with other women in the caravan as Joseph moved along with the men. Each might have thought that Jesus was with the other. Imagine their concern when they came together that night and realized that Jesus was missing!

Three days later, Joseph and Mary finally found Jesus. He had stayed, asking rabbis questions and responding to theirs. He had amazed these religious leaders with His divine understanding of the Scriptures. He seemed surprised that His parents had worried. *“Why were you looking for Me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?”* But they did not understand Him. Like other things she did not understand, Luke says that Mary *“treasured up all these things in her heart.”*

Jesus returned to Nazareth with His parents and submitted to them. Luke again comments on Jesus' development. He says that *“Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man”* (2:52).



Personalize the TRUTH!

Mary spent a lot of time in reflection. When something wonderful, perplexing, or overwhelming happened to her, she pondered it. She spent quiet time with God about it. She stored it up in her heart, trusting that God would bring the peace and understanding she needed. Think about something wonderful, perplexing, or overwhelming in your life right now. Set aside 15 minutes to quietly talk to God about it. Sit silently before Him. Let Him bring peace and understanding to you. If you still don't understand, that's okay. Simply release it to Him. Say, *“I don't understand this, Father, but I trust You, so all will be well.”*

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