

SECTION ONE

WEEK 1:

THE GOSPEL FOR THE SKEPTICAL

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:1-4

RELATED SCRIPTURE:

Colossians 4:14; 2 Timothy 4:11, 16; Isaiah 1:17-18;
2 Timothy 3:7; 1 Peter 3:15; Matthew 22:37

I humbly add I have spent more than 42 years as a defense trial lawyer appearing in many parts of the world and am still in active practice. I have been fortunate to secure a number of successes in jury trials and I say unequivocally the evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ is so overwhelming that it compels acceptance by proof which leaves absolutely no room for doubt.

- Sir Lionel Luckhoo

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Luke 1:1-4. What reasons does Luke give in these verses for why we should trust what he has to say about Jesus?

How do you think Luke would respond to the following statements:

- “Faith is just a blind leap. It’s just hoping something is true.”
- “The Bible is just fairy tales meant to be taken figuratively.”
- “Jesus was a teacher and guru who later became a legend and was turned into a deity by His followers.”
- “We should only believe what is testable and provable.”

Where do you stand in terms of “certainty concerning the things you have been taught” about Jesus and faith in what He taught and accomplished? What are the hardest things about Jesus’ teaching for you to believe? What are your biggest skepticisms? How do you respond when you are skeptical?

What factors (environmental, experiential, relational, logical or academic) have played into your faith and/or skepticism?

What are you hoping to learn and how are you hoping to grow through this study of Luke?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

In temperament, do you tend to be more skeptical or more naturally trusting? Where has skepticism played a role in your faith and/or doubt when it comes to Jesus?

If you are a Christian, how did you come to faith? If you aren't a Christian, what things present the biggest obstacles to you trusting Jesus and His teachings?

Our culture tends to treat religious thought as subjective and judge it based on the question, "Do I find this to be helpful?" Luke instead approaches Jesus' teaching as objectively true. What changes in how we approach Jesus if Luke is right? Where do you struggle to see the Bible and Jesus' teachings as objectively true? Why does it matter if Jesus' teachings are taken as objectively true or solely subjectively helpful?

In verse 1 Luke describes Jesus' life as "the things accomplished among us" or "the things fulfilled among us." What is he referring to here? What makes the gospel of Jesus unique among all teachings of religious teachers, political leaders and revolutionaries?

Where are you currently not believing the gospel of what Jesus has accomplished for us?

WEEK 2:

THE SKEPTICISM OF DISAPPOINTMENT

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 1:5-25, 1:57-64

RELATED SCRIPTURE:

Romans 8:18-26; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Genesis 50:15-21

If I find in myself desires which nothing in this world can satisfy,
the only logical explanation is that I was made for another world.

- C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

At some point, for all eternity, there will be no more unmerited suffering: this present darkness, 'the age of evil,' will eventually be remembered as a brief flicker at the beginning of human history. Every evil done by the wicked to the innocent will have been avenged, and every tear will have been wiped away.

- Peter van Inwagen

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Luke 1:5-8. Imagine what Elizabeth and Zechariah have experienced throughout their life. Have you personally known people who have longed for children or some other good thing and haven't received it over a long time?

Throughout your life, what have you really wanted God to give to you, but had to wait for a long time or have not yet received?

If you have not yet received these things, how have you responded? Logically, how have you processed this in your mind? Emotionally, what have you felt in your heart? Practically, what have you done in response?

Have you ever received one of these things only to find it not as satisfying as you hoped it would be? Why is the reality of the gifts we receive often lower than our expectations of those gifts?

Read Luke 1:8-20. Have you ever believed God was specifically and directly calling you to something? If so, how did you respond? If not, how do you think you would respond if this happened?

In verse 20, God disciplines Zechariah through his angel Gabriel for his lack of faith. (To study more on God's discipline, reference Hebrews 12, especially verses 5-11.) What is God's purpose in discipline? Why is it good for us and how is it different from punishment or retribution?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

Read Luke 1:5-7. What have been the biggest disappointments in your life? What is the longest season of disappointment you've walked through? What changes or insights have you noticed over time as the disappointment continues?

Are there any unmet desires or disappointments in your life currently? Which hopes and dreams for your life haven't yet come true? What do you think would change if they did?

Three common responses to disappointment:

1. Blame the thing we want (get mad and bitter at the thing. Resent and hate it. Move onto another version of it or move on to a new thing entirely).
2. Blame ourselves (depression, victimization and guilt complex).
3. Blame God.

Which of these responses have you seen throughout your life? How have you seen disappointment in your life or others lead to skepticism and doubt?

Read Luke 1:11-20 and Hebrews 12:5-11. Why does God discipline us? How do you tend to respond to God's discipline in your life?

Read Philippians 4:10-13 and John 6:26-35. How can our unmet desires actually point us toward Jesus instead of creating doubt and distance between us and Him?

WEEK 3:

PREPARE FOR A KING

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 3:1-20

RELATED SCRIPTURE:

Psalm 51; 1 John 3:4-10; Acts 3:14-20

The church is not a theological classroom. It is a conversion, confession, repentance, reconciliation, forgiveness and sanctification center, where flawed people place their faith in Christ, gather to know and love Him better, and learn to love others as He designed.

– Paul David Tripp, *Instruments in the Redeemer's Hands*

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Luke 3:1-6 and Luke 1:16-17. In chapter 1 Gabriel tells Zechariah that his son John would “make ready... a people prepared... for the Lord.” In chapter 3 John describes himself as a “voice crying, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord’”. What does it look like for a person’s heart to be prepared for Lord? If someone you respect a great deal or someone who has authority over you is coming to your house, how do you prepare for them?

Verse 3 says John proclaimed “a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.” What is repentance? What is the relationship between repentance and forgiveness?

Read Luke 3:7-20. Is it surprising to you that verse 18 calls John’s message good news? Why are his warnings, rebukes and instructions good news?

In verses 10-14, John gives instructions on how we should handle our possessions and our power. Verses 19-20 tell us that Herod imprisoned John for rebuking his sexual activity. Why are sex, power and possessions so difficult for us to surrender to Jesus’ commands? Are there any ways you need to repent in how you handle your possessions, your positions of power or your sex life?

In John’s baptisms, he replaced a custom of people baptizing themselves with people being baptized by someone else. What is the significance of this change? Are there any ways you are trying to save yourself instead of trusting Jesus to save you?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

Read Luke 3:4-6 and Isaiah 40:1-5. What does it look like for us to prepare our hearts for the Lord? If Jesus has done everything necessary for us to be forgiven in the cross, what roles do repentance and obedience play in our lives? What areas of your life are you wanting Jesus to “adapt to your roads” instead of adapting to His roads?

In inviting everyone to be baptized, John proclaimed that we are all sinners who cannot save ourselves – our morality, our heritage, our ethnicity, our education – none of these can save us. We all need Jesus. Have you been baptized since becoming a Christian? Why or why not?

Read Luke 3:7-9. What happens if we deal with the fruit of our actions but never deal with the root of our sin? What are the roots of your sinful thoughts, affections and actions? How does the gospel of Jesus’ grace put the axe to those roots?

Read Luke 3:10-20. Selfishness frequently shows itself in how we handle possessions, power and our sexual lives:

- Where do you have authority and power (work, family, community, etc.)? Are there ways you use your power to serve yourself instead of using it to serve others?
- Where are you believing money or possessions give you hope, peace or identity?
- Where are you most tempted to sin sexually?

WEEK 4:

HOW JESUS CHANGES PEOPLE

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE:

Luke 3:21-22, 4:1-13

RELATED SCRIPTURE:

James 4:1-3; Colossians 3

Sinful acts always have their origin in some form of unbelief. *Behind every sin is a lie.* The root of all our behavior and emotions is the heart – what it trusts and what it treasures... We sin because we believe the lie that we are better off without God, that His rule is oppressive, that we will be free without Him, that sin offers more than God.

- Tim Chester, *You Can Change*

PERSONAL STUDY:

Read Luke 3:21-22 and Matthew 3:13-17. Why do you think Jesus got baptized? What does Jesus mean in Matthew 3:15 when He says it is fitting for Him to get baptized “to fulfill all righteousness”?

Read Luke 4:1-13. How do verses 1-2 describe the setting for the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness? What was it like? What is Jesus’ condition? When have you been hungry, weak, isolated, and/or stuck in a desolate place or situation? How were you affected physically, emotionally and psychologically?

How does the devil tempt Jesus at a surface level? What specific things does he overtly offer and tempt Jesus with? How does the devil attack and tempt Jesus in more subversive ways? (Look at the implications of how he addresses Jesus in verse 3 and verse 9)

In Luke 3:22, what is the significance of the words God speaks over Jesus at His baptism? In what ways have you seen God’s words create, define and shape your identity?

Read Galatians 4:4-7, 1 Peter 2:9, Philippians 1:6, & 2 Corinthians 5:17. What statements of identity do these verses say we have received as Christians? What sort of impact would these truths have if you fully believed them?

Which of these are the most difficult for you to believe and live in light of?

SERMON NOTES:

LIFEGROUP DISCUSSION:

What are the best words you would use to describe yourself? What are the worst words you identify yourself with?

Read Luke 3:21-22. Why are the words God speaks over Jesus at His baptism important to us as believers? What truths from the Bible or specific verses are the most important for you in understanding your identity and positional status in Jesus?

Read Luke 4:1-13. How does the devil attack Jesus' identity in the wilderness? Where in your life do you experience direct and overt temptation? Where have you experienced more subversive and subtle forms of temptation?

Is the following statement true or false? Why?

“The devil never tempts a human to sin without in some manner attacking their identity.”

As a group, read the verses from the last two questions in the personal study. How do these statements of identity give freedom and life to your soul? Which of these are the hardest for you to believe? Why?