

The
New
Testament
in a Year

Week 1
Luke 1-5

*This week's reflector is
Greg Smith-Young.
He is on the Ministry team at
Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge, and
is a Toronto Raptors fan.*

General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

Luke 1

Luke tells Theophilus (= Friend of God) that his book's purpose is to tell the truth about what happened concerning Jesus. It has many features of a biography of that period.

After the introduction, Luke plunges us into the parallel events surrounding the origins of Jesus and John. In both cases, a messenger (angel) announces an impossible conception, and is met with disbelief. No wonder!

This chapter feels very "Old Testament." Zechariah and Elizabeth remind me of Abraham and Sarah. Both couples stood at the beginning something very new. The songs of Mary and Zechariah evoke the style and promises of the prophets. John will be like the prophet Elijah (see Malachi 4). And Jesus will be the long-awaited successor to David (the Messiah, the Christ.)

Why do you think the angel dealt Zechariah's doubt differently than with Mary's?

Looking at Mary and Zechariah's songs, which promises are especially important to you?

In praying a song of praise to God, what would you include?

Tuesday

Luke 2

This chapter is very familiar!

Episode 1: After setting us in the world of caesars and governors, Luke zooms us in on a tiny town in occupied Israel, a far-from-home couple, disreputable shepherds, and yes, a Baby who is the Saviour, Christ the Lord.

Episode 2: Faithfully Jewish, Joseph and Mary bring Jesus for circumcision. The aged patriarch Simeon and matriarch Anna rejoice in him, for he is the salvation of God's people.

Episode 3: Jump ahead 12 years, when Jesus is on the verge of manhood. What will he be like? Seemingly not always obedient to the expectations of his parents! Yet strangely at home in the Temple-House of his Father.

Why does Luke mention Augustus and Quirinius, and then leave them behind to talk about the birth of Jesus?

When has God brought along an "Anna" or "Simeon" to confirm something in your life?

Amid all that is memorable in these events, what do we learn about Jesus?

Wednesday

Luke 3

As with chapter 2, this chapter begins with a list of very important people... whom Luke then ignores.

Often a concert starts with a lesser-known band that gets the audience pumped up before the main act comes on. John gets us ready for Jesus. What an intro! I would never call John “seeker-friendly.” Yet many came to him. His message is one of God’s justice (finally here!) and the resulting upheaval. Which side are you on? Notice the strong theme of economic righteousness.

What in John’s message is most challenging to you?

Given the commotion of John, it seems like Jesus slips in, unnoticed. Luke barely mentions his baptism, almost as an aside. The focus is on God’s affirmation of the Son, the Beloved.

What does your baptism mean to you?

Finally, Luke gives us a version of Jesus’ family tree. Does Luke want us to know that Jesus didn’t just come out of nowhere? He is the culmination of a long line of God’s work. Yet he is also a new Adam, a new beginning.

Thursday

Luke 4

Jesus’ mission begins.

He starts with temptations, at the devil’s hands but seemingly with the Spirit involved too. The question before Jesus is what sort of saviour will he be. He passes this first test.

Then he is tested again, this time by his own kin and neighbours. They go nuts over him, until they realize that his Good News goes far beyond what they imagined. Then they want to get rid of him, permanently.

After this, he heads to the big city, Capernaum. There he battles with more demons, releasing people from their power. All of this is part of the “good news of the kingdom of God.” Jesus’ gospel is to be done (acts of power) and proclaimed (words of power).

Through this, chapter, I get a picture of battle and struggle. When God’s Kingdom comes, other kingdoms are threatened, and fight back.

How is the battle between Jesus’ Way of the Kingdom and other ways being waged in your life these days? How is Jesus working in you, and delivering you? What deliverance do you pray for?

Friday

Luke 5

Some things I notice in this chapter:

– Jesus is building a movement. He is not simply some wisdom teacher travelling around doing amazing things. He is calling followers and forming community.

– Jesus continues to heal people with a variety of conditions. Modern attempts to explain these away in psychological terms, or to drive a wedge between healing (social-spiritual) and curing (physical) simply don’t work. Jesus’s salvation includes the body and the soul.

Have you had experiences of physical healing? Why do you think that was an important emphasis in Jesus’s early work?

– An issue in all this is “Who does this guy think he is?” Forgiving *all* a person’s sins, outside official channels! Socializing with the wrong people! Spending too much time at parties!

Based on Luke 1-5, how would you start to answer the question, “Who is Jesus?” Through all this, the sense I get is that something astonishingly, powerfully new is happening, that touches all parts of life. And at its heart is Jesus.