

YOU ARE WITNESSES

As a result of this study, we hope the participants will

[Learning Objectives]

- grasp the overall flow of the gospel of Luke by through-reading it and locating turning points in the story
- be overwhelmed by the personality and power of Jesus Christ as depicted in the gospel
- be able to articulate remaining questions about Jesus' identity and mission and have a pretty good idea of how to get those questions answered
- discover themselves to be witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and realize its implications for their lives
- believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior

[Process Objectives]

- work together according to their gifts to explore the lesson's questions and themes
- collaborate to synthesize their learning into a collection of the key events of Jesus life

[Relational Objectives]

- appreciate the deep bonds of fellowship that have been forged in this group
- commit themselves to pray for one another according to the resolutions made at the end of the study

NOTES RELATED TO THE PERSONAL STUDY QUESTIONS (PAGES 60-63)

The questions in this section are intended to guide the reading and pondering of the gospel as a whole. The experience of doing so is documented through the questions and observations at the end, and obviously everybody will be processing this differently.

Scholars generally identify the following events or passages as “turning points” in the story of Jesus' life and ministry:

Turning point 1: Between Luke 2 and Luke 3, the narrative jumps from early childhood to the public ministry of John the Baptist, perhaps a 30-year “fast-forward.” This section depicts the coming-of-age of Jesus in preparation for his ministry.

Turning point 2: At Luke 4:14, in Nazareth, Jesus comes out at the one fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy. This is huge, based on the various reactions of those present. Jesus begins the work by calling his disciples, setting the parameters of his ministry and message, and announcing the good news of the Kingdom of God in the region of Galilee.

2 — Understanding Jesus in the World of Luke

Turning point 3: At Luke 9, Jesus is developing his disciples by sending them out on various assignments to minister and to get feedback on Jesus' impact. Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah occurs here, as does the Transfiguration.

Turning point 4: One of the most significant transition points in the gospel, is found in 9:51 as Luke observes, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem." The rest of the story records the events occurring in this light—Jesus is preparing for the confrontation in Jerusalem that will lead to his execution. What follows in the gospel story is an intensified schedule of teaching opportunities, conflicts with the religious leaders, and ministry triumphs, all as he gets closer and closer to the capital city.

Turning point 5: Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at 19:28, beginning the last week of his life, full of challenge, poignancy, betrayal, trial, suffering, humiliation and death.

Turning point 6 : The ultimate! Jesus is resurrected from the dead in Luke 24 and the following narrative processes this amazing turn of events from different perspectives.

The significance of the resurrection story is that some people get it and others are confused. The women who came to finish the burial rites recognized what had happened immediately and were entrusted with the task of telling the others. The men had to see for themselves, of course, because they were set up culturally to doubt the testimony of women. But the women's witness was verified and the news began to spread.

The two walking on the road to Emmaus were still puzzled by the meaning of everything, and it took Jesus *in cognito* to sort everything out for them by "opening the Scriptures." What finally opened their eyes, however, was his breaking bread with them. The rest of the disciples are graced with Jesus' appearance, at which he "opened their minds" to the meaning of what had taken place.

To this day, the ministry of Christ's followers, in the power of the Holy Spirit, has been to open the Scriptures, open people's eyes and open their minds to the events that changed the world and the hope for human beings.

PAGE 62 & 63 NOTES:

The answers to these questions will reflect the perspective of each participant, but they can be gleaned from the through-reading of the gospel.

My list of nouns or titles to describe Jesus' identity:

1. Son of the Most High (1:32)
2. Son of God (1:35, 3:22)

3. Savior (2:11a)
4. Christ the Lord (2:11b)
5. Joseph's son (4:22)
6. The Holy One of God (4:34)
7. Healer and Forgiver of Sin (5:20-24)
8. Son of Man and Lord of the Sabbath (6:5)
9. A great prophet (7:16)
10. Lord over nature (8:25)
11. Teacher (9:38)
12. God—"I am" (22:70)

The adjectives are a bit more subjective, but are attainable by picturing Jesus in various settings throughout the gospel and asking the question, what kind of person would act this way?

The point of the exercise on page 63 is to feel the impact of realizing that Jesus was raised from the dead. Since none of us have actually had this experience, we have to use our imagination and the data we glean from Luke 24 about what that must have felt like.

NOTES RELATED TO THE GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (PAGES 64 & 65)

Open your meeting with prayer for openness: that God would open your eyes and your minds and open up his Scripture so that you can comprehend what he is trying to teach you.

PAGE 64 NOTES:

You might be helped by having a white-board or a flip chart to record the elements the group brings out in Jesus' story.

The questions at the bottom of the page are meant to explore a "what if," namely, what if Jesus had never been raised from the dead. This is the question Paul raises in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, and the group should read this passage in order to discover the centrality of this event in Christian belief.

PAGE 65 NOTES:

At the simplest level, the idea that Jesus is alive today means that he exists and presumably is listening to our prayers and interceding for us at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34). Jesus made this known to us while walking on this earth, and we now can live in the reality that he is with us.

The last question is the ultimate application question. “Now that you know what Jesus is like, in what ways do you want and need to be like him?” The more concrete people can get in answering this question, the more powerful your prayers for each other will become.

CLOSING PRAYER TIME

This is your last prayer time together, so make the most of it! You have learned a lot about each other and your spiritual aspirations. Take these matters to the Lord in heartfelt prayer, inviting every person to pray (even more than once!) to cover the needs thoroughly and faithfully.

Plant the seed that knowing Christ imparts an obligation to make him known. Support one another as you make new commitments to do so, for the sake of others—the lost and needy and invisible people.