

w e e k 2

NOTE: Dr. Jack Chichen of African Bible College is preaching on Sunday morning, September 20. This means that Phillip will preach on the next section (Luke 10:1-24) in the *Jesus Unplugged* on September 27. For this week, we'll look at the very beginning of Luke's gospel to consider something of the "big picture."

Scripture to Read

Luke 1:1-4

Sermon text: *See the note above.*

Summary of Luke 1:1-4

Luke intends to provide Theophilus with a reliable and trustworthy narrative about who Jesus is. But Luke is also giving him a message which is directly relevant to Theophilus' condition, answering his biggest questions and speaking to his soul's deepest needs.

Scripture for Memorization and Meditation

"...that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." Luke 1:4

Questions for Personal Study and/or Group Discussion

- Was Luke an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus? How did he obtain his information? What do you think Luke means when he writes that he has "followed all things closely for some time past" in v.3?
- For Luke to undertake his investigation, one would expect that he would need to be freed up financially to conduct his study and interviews? What role might Theophilus have played in this? *Note: Theophilus' title "most excellent," a title of nobility in*

Luke's day, likely indicates that he was a successful business and/or political leader.

- Read Acts 1:1-5. How does this introduction shed light on what Luke is setting out to do? Is Luke implying that others have done such a poor job that he needs to correct what they have written?
- What does the short introduction to Luke suggest about Luke's relationship to the early Christian communities? Is he on the "inside" or on the "outside" of them?
- Has Theophilus received information about Christian doctrine prior to Luke's writing? What does Luke's introduction suggest?
- The Christian faith spread through the activity and testimony of people who were with Jesus from the beginning. They spoke about what they had seen and heard and then they began to write about him. Read 1 John 1:1-3 and 2 Peter 1:16 and Acts 26:16 and 1 Corinthians 15:3-11. Summarize the role that eyewitnesses played in establishing the claims and teaching of the Apostles.

Tips for Parents with Young Children

Monday: Spend a few minutes remembering anything you can from Sunday's sermon from Luke 9:51-62 about opposition and hesitation in discipleship. Remember that you can download FPC sermons from www.fpckosciusko.org or by free subscription from iTunes. They are usually posted by Monday evening.

Tuesday: Read Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-3 to your children. Ask your child what he/she would do if he had to write about an important person whom he/she had never met. Using what you've gained from the study questions, explain to your child how Luke must have gone about writing about the life and ministry of Jesus. Thank God for Luke and for all the human authors of the Bible.

Wednesday: Review what your children learned in Wednesday Night Connection. Spend some time together praying for FPC, its leaders, and your friends at church.

Thursday: Luke wants Theophilus and many other people to believe in Jesus. Think together with your child about the ways our church reaches other people so that they might believe in Jesus. Pray for these ministries. Pray for people your family knows who are not Christians.

Friday: Luke wrote the fullest account we have of the birth of Jesus. You can read “the Christmas story” from Luke 2 and thank God for the amazing gift of his Son.

Saturday: Quiz your children on Catechism questions or Bible memory verses they are learning. Pray for **Dr. Jack Chinchen**, who will preach in Morning Worship. Dr. Chinchen and his wife Nell founded **African Bible College** in the 1970’s. Locate **Liberia, Malawi, and Uganda** on a map of Africa. You can find much more information at africanbiblecolleges.org . Also, pray for the Sunday School teachers and for Grant Carroll, who will preach in Evening Worship.

Sunday: Before you leave for church, explain to your children that their ministry at church is to welcome new children, help their teacher, serve others, and worship God in the service. After church, discuss with your children what they learned and what you learned.

Notes and thoughts...

Luke is the longest book in the New Testament with 1,151 verses (586 of which contain words of Christ) compared to 1,071 verses in Matthew, 678 in Mark, and 869 in John. This makes preaching through the entire book quite a daunting task. Even John Calvin never preached consecutively, verse by verse, through the Gospel of Luke. Still, between 1559 and 1564, Calvin did preach sixty-five sermons on the harmony of the Gospels. Some contemporary pastors who have preached

through Luke in its entirety have taken anywhere from over one hundred to nearly three hundred sermons.

Theophilus was probably some sort of governmental official. His title of “most excellent” is used for governors in other places in Acts (cf. Felix and Festus in Acts 23:26; 24:2; 26:25). Luke was from Antioch, but traveled with Paul all over modern-day Southern Europe and the Middle East. The title “most excellent Theophilus” would suggest that the Gospel was sent to some Roman center of government like Rome or Antioch.

Moreover, the emphasis Luke places on relationships between Jews and Greeks, rich and poor, and so on, makes the diverse population of Antioch as likely a candidate as any. Darrell Bock explains:

It is unlikely that Theophilus is only interested in becoming a Christian or is a Roman official who needs Christianity explained to him in order to accept it as a legitimate religion...Luke 1:3–4 suggest that Theophilus had received some instruction. The amount of detail in Luke-Acts devoted to faithfulness, Jewish-Gentile relations and clinging to the hope of Jesus’ return suggests a Gentile who was experiencing doubt about his association with the new community of Christians. This setting is also suggested in the controversy over table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, the issue of Gentile inclusion in the worship of God and community of God’s people, the detailed examples of how rejection was faced in the early church by both Jews and Gentiles for converting to the worship of Jesus as God, and the amount of attention devoted to ethical exhortation. Theophilus appears to be a man of rank (1:3). Having associated himself with the church, he is undergoing doubt whether in fact he really belongs in this racially

mixed and heavily persecuted community. The Gospel openly includes Theophilus in the new community, calling him to remain faithful, committed and expectant, even in the midst of intense Jewish rejection.¹

Throughout church history, some have speculated that because Theophilus means “love of God” that in dedicating both Luke and Acts to the man bearing that name that the secondary audience for Luke’s writing is anyone who loves God. Indeed, if you want to love God, or grow in your love for God, then reading Luke prayerfully, carefully, and repeatedly is essential. Before you read, it would be wise first to humbly pray and ask that the Holy Spirit (who inspired the Scriptures) would illuminate your understanding of them. As you read, feel free to mark up your Bible, noting things that God impresses upon you. The average person can read the entire book of Luke in about two hours.

¹ Darrell L. Bock, “Gospel of Luke,” in Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall, *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 495.