

CELEBRATING JESUS: STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Baptism: Jesus Goes Public

THEME: The next six weeks will focus on the Gospel of Luke. Because the Good News of what God is doing to heal his world focuses on the person of Jesus Christ, the purpose of the studies is to remind us of the central themes of his life and ministry – as related by Luke. Interestingly, the Gospel of Mark says the “beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ” was with John the Baptist (Mark 1:1). Luke sees things the same way and begins his story of Jesus with John’s ministry that prepared the way for the Son of God.

ICE BREAKER

1. Take a few minutes to remind yourselves about past experiences with the Gospel of Luke. A sermon series? A Bible class?
2. Luke is the only non-Jewish author of any material in our New Testament. Do you see any significance to seeing the Jewish Savior through Gentile eyes? That is, what special concerns might Luke have had in writing?
3. What impressions do you have of the Gospel of Luke? How is it similar to or different from any of the other Gospels?
4. Do you have a favorite verse or section in Luke?
5. Are there any goals your study group desires to set for your time together in this “Celebrating Jesus” series?

THINK

1. Trick Question: *Who wrote more of the New Testament than anyone else?* Don’t feel bad if your answer was Paul. But the correct answer is Luke.
2. Explaining the “trick question.” Paul is the author of 13 epistles – Romans through Philemon. By actual word count, however, Luke wrote more of the New Testament than any other author – Luke and Acts.
3. What background information do you have on Luke? In particular, what was his relationship to Paul?
4. What information do you have on the date and circumstances for writing this Gospel?
5. What is there about Jesus that would have attracted a non-Jew to follow Jesus in the first-century world?

EXAMINE

Read [Luke 3:1-23](#) to answer the following questions:

1. Contrast the personalities and methods of John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth.
2. John’s message seems to have centered on *repentance*. What is repentance? How did he personalize the call to repentance for different persons in his audience?

3. Many of John's disciples wondered if he might be Israel's messiah. How did John handle their speculation. (Note: Also see John 3:27-30.)
4. Under what circumstances did John's ministry come to an end?
5. How did baptism figure into the ministry of John?

Read [Romans 6:1-11](#) as background for the following questions:

1. What was the purpose of John's baptism?
2. How is Christian baptism similar to John's? How different?
3. Reflect for a few minutes on the memory of your baptism. What caused you to see the importance and need of baptism? What changed for you at the time you were baptized?
4. In what sense did Jesus "go public" with his baptism? Is there a sense in which we "go public" when we are baptized? Explain.
5. In light of Romans 6, why is it important to preserve the form of baptism as a burial (i.e., immersion) in water?
6. Did Sunday's sermon give you any new insight into baptism? How our baptism connects to John's baptism of Jesus? How it identifies us with the mission of God in human history?

THIS WEEK: Did you pick up this week's information sheet about International Missions? Please read it carefully and let it remind you to pray – both about the workers we support and your participation in the special offering to be taken on March 29.