



# Luke

GUT-LEVEL  
COMPASSION

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE + STREAMING VIDEO

EIGHT SESSIONS

LISA HARPER

*Luke Beautiful Word Bible Study*

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# WELCOME



# Luke

## GUT-LEVEL COMPASSION

SOMETIMES the Bible can seem overwhelming. Where do you go for words of comfort when you're feeling discouraged, lost, or frustrated in life? What book of the Bible do you turn to for wisdom about the situation you find yourself in?

*The Beautiful Word Bible Studies* series makes the Bible come alive in such a way that you know where to turn no matter where you find yourself on your spiritual journey.

Of the 66 books in our canonized Bible, all were written by Jewish authors or they're anonymous, except for the duo written by Luke—the Gospel of Luke, and its sequel, the Book of Acts.

Written around 60 A.D., Luke crafted a two-volume, structured account of the life of Jesus and the growth of the early church. The Gospel begins with the birth of Jesus in the context of Roman history and rule, then follows Jesus as he travels from Galilee through Samaria and Judea to Jerusalem.

As a non-Jew and outsider, we should not be surprised that Luke writes to highlight those seen as outliers and outcasts, those deemed misfits and unfit. Time and time again, Luke takes conventional thinking and just flips it on its head. He takes the least of these, the unlovely, the impoverished, the invisible, and he brings all of them to Jesus, who embraces them with a deep, visceral, active compassion that changes their lives forever.

If you have ever struggled with feeling like you aren't quite good enough or maybe you don't fit in, then this beautiful book is for you! You're invited to run into the arms of Jesus and experience the fullness of his gut-level compassion unlike any other love you will ever know.



Time and time again, Luke takes conventional thinking and just flips it on its head.

# HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

## GROUP INFORMATION AND SIZE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Beautiful Word *Luke* video study is designed to be experienced in a group setting such as a Bible study, small group, or other Sunday school class. Of course, you can always work through the material and watch the videos on your own if a group is unavailable. Maybe call a few friends or neighbors and start your own!

After opening with a short activity, you will watch each video session and participate in a time of group discussion and reflection on what you're learning both from the video teaching and the personal Bible study between meetings. This content is rich and takes you through the entire Gospel, so be prepared for a full experience of the depth of Scripture.

If you have a larger group (more than twelve people), consider breaking up into smaller groups during the discussion time. It is important that members of the group can ask questions, share ideas and experiences, as well as feel heard and seen—no matter their background or circumstance.

## MATERIALS NEEDED AND LEADING A GROUP

Each participant should have his or her own study guide. Each study guide comes with individual streaming video access (instructions found on the inside front cover). Every member of your group has full access to watch videos from the convenience of their chosen devices at any time—for missed group meetings, for rewatching, for sharing teaching with others, or watching videos individually and then meeting if your group is short on meeting time and that makes the group experience doable and more realistic. We have worked very hard to make gathering around the Word of God and studying accessible and simple.

This study guide includes video outline notes, group discussion questions, a personal Bible study section for between group meetings, Beautiful Word coloring pages, and Scripture memory cards to deepen learning between sessions.

There is a Leader's Guide in the back of each study guide so anyone can lead a group through this study. A lot of thought has been put into making the *Beautiful Word Bible Studies* series available to all—which includes making it easy to lead, no matter your experience or acumen!

## TIMING

The timing notations—for example, 20 minutes—indicate the length of the video segments and the suggested times for each activity or discussion. Within your allotted group meeting time, you may not get to all the discussion questions. Remember that the *quantity* of questions addressed isn't as important as the *quality* of the discussion.

Using the Leader's Guide in the back of the guide to review the content overview of each session and the group discussion questions in advance will give you a good idea of which questions you will want to focus on as a leader or group facilitator.

## FACILITATION

Each group should appoint a facilitator who is responsible for starting the video and keeping track of time during the activities and discussion. Facilitators may also read questions aloud, monitor discussions, prompt participants to respond, and ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate.

## OPENING GROUP ACTIVITY

Depending on the amount of time you meet and the resources available, you'll want to begin the session with the group activity. You will find these activities on the group page that begins each session. The interactive icebreaker is designed to be a catalyst for group engagement and help participants prepare and transition to the ideas explored in the video teaching.

The leader or facilitator will want to read ahead to the following week's activity to see what will be needed and how participants may be able to contribute by bringing supplies or refreshments.



OUTLIERS, OUTCASTS,  
AND THE  
OUTRAGEOUS  
**MERCY OF GOD**

*Luke*

## Opening Group Activity (10-15 MINUTES)

### WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

One sheet of blank paper for each person  
Pens, markers, and/or colored pencils

1. Use the paper and drawing/writing tools to write the words, “I Am Seen, Accepted, Included, and Deeply Loved” on the top of the page. Then Circle  the phrase that’s easiest for you to believe and underline that one that’s the most challenging for you.

2. Share your words or phrases with each other as you discuss the following questions:

Which phrase or word is easiest for you to believe? Why?

Which phrase or word is hardest for you to believe? Why?

Reflecting on those words or phrases and any others that come to mind, what do you hope to get out of this study?

## Watch Session One Video (21 MINUTES)

**Leader,** stream the video (streaming instructions can be found inside the front cover from this guide) or play the DVD.

**As you watch, take notes while thinking through:**

WHAT CAUGHT YOUR ATTENTION?

WHAT SURPRISED YOU?

WHAT MADE YOU REFLECT?

 Those closest to Jesus were a motley crew

 The big riff between Samaritans and Jews

 Tax collectors and sinners

 Women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna

 The poor: Lazarus

 The Gospel isn't a Cinderella story

# SCRIPTURE COVERED IN THIS SESSION:

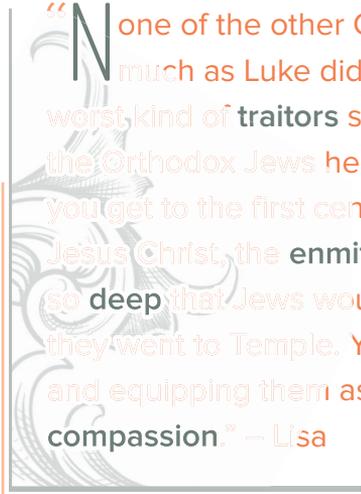
LUKE 8:1-3, LUKE 16:19-31, LUKE 18:9-14

## Group Discussion Questions (30-45 MINUTES)

**Leader,** read each numbered prompt and question to the group and select volunteers for Scripture reading.

1. We begin our study of the Gospel of Luke in an overview. This allows us to understand the magnitude of context in this book and in each of the Gospel accounts. Lisa said, “Luke is the only known Gentile or non–Jewish author of Scripture. In that era, to have a non–Jew write a religious book, especially one of the Gospels, was like having a barbecue truck at a vegan festival. That’s just a big deal. Because Luke probably felt like an outsider, he gears his writing to show how Jesus reached out to the outliers and outcasts like the Samaritans, the tax collectors and sinners, the women, and the poor.”

Describe a time when a person went out of their way to reach out and make you feel seen, included, and loved. How did the encounter impact you?



“None of the other Gospel writers include Samaritans as much as Luke did. They were considered outliers—the worst kind of traitors since they had chucked everything the Orthodox Jews held sacred to the curb. By the time you get to the first century and the early life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the enmity between Jews and Samaritans ran so deep that Jews would pray curses on Samaritans when they went to Temple. Yet Jesus seeking out the Samaritans and equipping them as evangelists demonstrates His deep compassion.” — Lisa

What kinds of people do you tend to judge, hold at arm's length, or look down on?

Why does Jesus make a beeline toward the Samaritans and extend unconditional love?

Who do you relate to more in this scenario? The Samaritans or the Orthodox Jews? Have you considered your relationship with each?

Who do you see as having more contempt for the other? If the Jews knew of the Messiah and his value, why do you think they would have not wanted to share him with those who did not? Have you ever been there? Holding onto something as if it were only yours and others were not worthy of it too?

2. Select a few volunteers to split reading the passage Luke 16:19–31. Ask the following questions regarding the passage:

How does the wealthy man treat the beggar?

How does Jesus show compassion toward the beggar?

How does Jesus challenge the wealthy man to consider his sinful posture?

How does Jesus equally love all sinners?

Samaritans  
were considered  
outliers

—the worst  
kind of

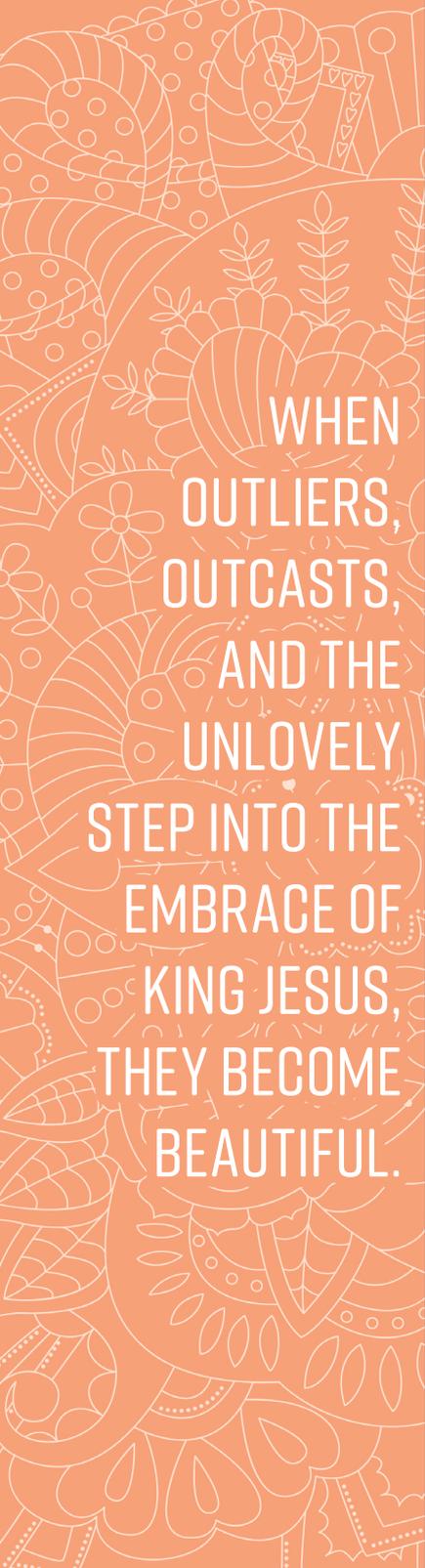
traitors

since they had  
chucked

everything the  
Orthodox

Jews held  
sacred

to the curb.



WHEN  
OUTLIERS,  
OUTCASTS,  
AND THE  
UNLOVELY  
STEP INTO THE  
EMBRACE OF  
KING JESUS,  
THEY BECOME  
BEAUTIFUL.

3. Go around the group answering a selection of the following questions:

Take a moment to consider the invisible people in your daily life—those you pass by and subtly overlook or simply don't consider. Who are they?

What changes do you need to make to truly see and engage them?

## Close in Prayer

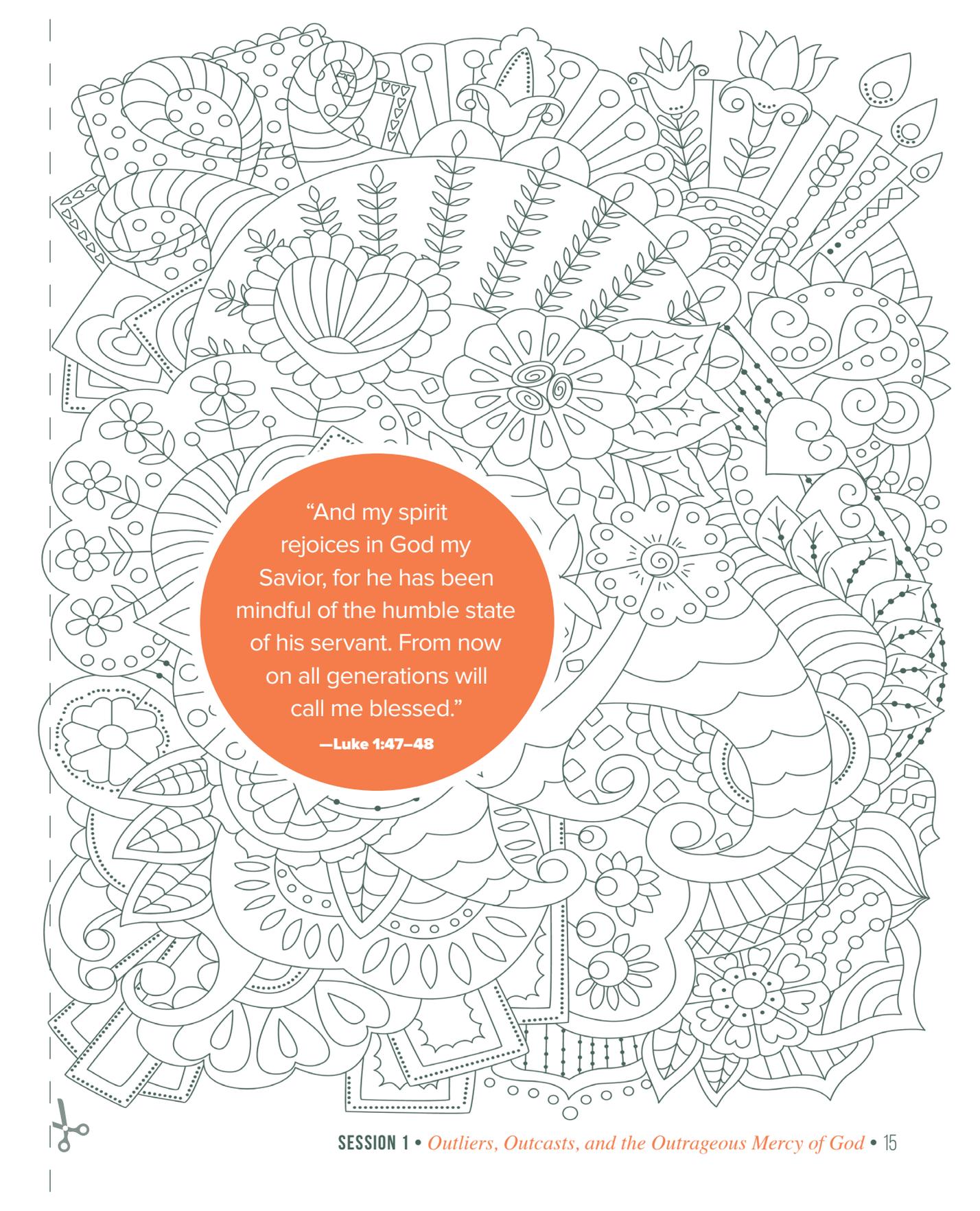
Consider the following prompts as you pray together for:

- Eyes to see Jesus' acknowledgment of the likes of me
- Ears to hear the response to my unspoken needs
- Opportunities to engage outliers and outcasts just like Jesus

## Preparation

To prepare for the next group session:

1. **Read Luke 1–2.**
2. Tackle the three days of the Session One Personal Study.
3. Memorize this week's passage using the Beautiful Word Scripture memory coloring page. As a bonus, look up the Scripture memory passage in different translations and take note of the variations.
4. If you've agreed to bring something for the next session's Opening Group Activity, get it ready.



“And my spirit  
rejoices in God my  
Savior, for he has been  
mindful of the humble state  
of his servant. From now  
on all generations will  
call me blessed.”

—Luke 1:47–48

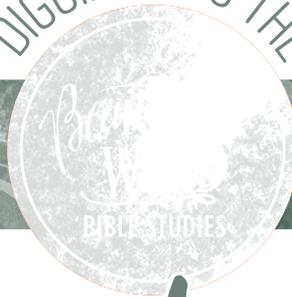


SESSION

1

# PERSONAL STUDY TIME

DIGGING INTO THE



# Luke

OUTLIERS, OUTCASTS, AND THE  
OUTRAGEOUS MERCY OF GOD

# Day 1

## Luke 1:1-25

Theophilus  
means

“LOVED  
BY GOD”

and carries  
the idea of  
“friend of God.”

—LUKE 1:3

Gospel means “good news.” Of the four Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Luke highlights the outrageous mercy of God most. From the opening verses, we see compassion and tender care on display as God is working in and through the lives of those who feel left behind, forgotten, invisible, and rejected. Jesus readily goes to those on the margins to scoop them up in his mercy and love.

Luke doesn’t want anyone left out of the deep wells of Jesus’ compassion. He addresses his letter to Theophilus, also addressed in Acts 1:1, but it’s meant for all of us. Some scholars believe the name, Theophilus, is a generic title that applies to all Christians, but it’s more likely that Luke is writing to a specific person. The description “most excellent” suggests he may have been a high-ranking Roman official, and therefore an outsider as a non-Jew.

1. **Read Luke 1:1–4.** How do Luke’s opening words show that he wants Theophilus and his readers to know and experience the presence of Jesus and his compassion?

In the ancient world, women who had children were celebrated as being blessed, but those unable to have children were often judged as having done something wrong and lacking the favor of God.

Zechariah and Elizabeth both gave their whole hearts to God, yet still experienced a painful, unfulfilled desire in their life that left them feeling less than.

- 2. Read Luke 1:5–7.** Consider how Zechariah and Elizabeth are described in this passage. What’s one painful, unfulfilled desire in your life that’s made you feel less than?

With thousands of priests in every division, the odds of Zechariah being selected for the great privilege of offering incense were highly unlikely. Zechariah’s selection was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that only God could have timed to coincide with the news he was about to receive.

- 3. Read Luke 1:8–25.** How does God reach out to Elizabeth and Zechariah, who had felt shame for their childlessness?

- 4. How is Elizabeth blown away by the outrageous mercy of God (Hint: v. 25)?**

The entire book of Luke is jam-packed full of examples of people who are not seen or acknowledged, or are buried in shame, and God comes along and sees them.

GABRIEL  
MEANS  
"STRENGTH  
OF GOD."

NOT ONLY DOES  
THE ANGEL APPEAR  
TO ELIZABETH  
AND MARY,  
BUT HE ALSO  
APPEARED TO THE  
FAMOUS DANIEL  
OF THE LIONS'  
DEN TO EXPLAIN  
HIS MYSTERIOUS  
VISIONS.

—DANIEL 8:15–26, 9:21–27

Day 2  
Luke 1:26–38

5. Describe how the outrageous mercy of God changes your understanding of God—whether you're observing his mercy toward others, or you've experienced it yourself.

Pregnancy can be uncomfortable, isolating, and lonely. God knows this, and in his compassion, doesn't leave two women with surprise births alone. God gives Elizabeth a special companion: her younger cousin, Mary.

Now, Mary's situation is a mess by cultural standards. Though betrothed, or promised to be the wife of Joseph, she miraculously becomes pregnant through the Holy Spirit. And while the immaculate conception reveals that she is highly favored by God, the surrounding community would still view her with disdain. In antiquity, an unwed mother became the center of gossip, speculation, and scandal, shunned by her community.

1. **Read Luke 1:26–33.** In the chart below, compare what the angel said to Mary about her child and what the angel said about Zechariah about his child.

READ LUKE 1:29–33.	READ LUKE 1:13–17.
What details does the angel mention about Jesus?	What details does the angel mention about John?

What do Jesus and John share in common? How will their lives differ?

Eventually both men will grow up to become outsiders to the religious community.

Pause for just a moment and sit in this truth: God intentionally uses outsiders to change the world. We don't have to understand it fully to comprehend how God values people differently than we often do.

While Zechariah asks for a sign, Mary asks for understanding about how God will accomplish his promise. The angel tells Mary that the Holy Spirit will *episkiazo*—or “overshadow”—her. The presence of God, much like the cloud of the tabernacle, will make this possible. Then the angel encourages Mary that God's timing and power are greater than she can imagine.



Therefore the  
Lord  
himself will  
give you a  
sign: The  
virgin will  
conceive and  
give birth to  
a son,  
and will call him  
Immanuel.

—ISAIAH 7:14

2. **Read Luke 1:34–37.** Consider Mary’s circumstance of culture, tradition, her age, being unwed and pregnant. When life turns sideways and you’re feeling isolated or like an outsider, why is it so important to know you’re not alone?

3. **Read Luke 1:38.** How does Mary respond to the angel Gabriel’s news?

How do you tend to respond when God prompts you to do something that might cause you to be seen as “less than” or somehow diminished in the eyes of others?

4. Is there an area of your life in which you presently feel prompted to give God a response like Mary's? What's stopping you from doing it?

## Day 3 Luke 1:39–80

Some of the biggest outliers in first century culture were women. They were considered second-class citizens. Now, there were a few exceptions, like Deborah, who was effectively the prime minister of Israel in the Old Testament. But by and large, women were considered chattel, something a man could own. One of the more common rabbinic proverbs during the time of Luke was about the Torah—the first five books of the Old Testament. The saying was that it was better that the Torah be burned than read by a woman.

Women were rarely included in the teaching of Torah, much less any type of leadership roles in orthodox faith until Jesus. Luke highlights our Savior's inclusion of women into his inner circle and includes more stories about women than the other Gospel writers. Likely because as a Gentile, Luke wasn't as tightly bound by the traditional gender role templates of Judaism.

Here we are in the opening chapter of Luke's Gospel and who does he focus on? Two women and how God is going to use them mightily.

At the news of her cousin Elizabeth's miraculous pregnancy, Mary travels an estimated fifty to seventy miles to a town in Judea to see her. This was a long, hard trip for a pregnant woman, but the incredible news compelled her. Together, they are no longer isolated and alone: they are bound by their experiences and the compassion God had on them. When they meet, something happens that only God could orchestrate.

- 1. Read Luke 1:39–45.** Why is Mary blessed and Elizabeth favored?



DIVISION OF THE MAGNIFICAT	SCRIPTURE	WHAT THE PASSAGE REVEALS ABOUT GOD
Proclaims Attributes of God	Luke 1:49–50	
Proclaims God's Reversal and Compassion Toward the Lowly	Luke 1:51–53	
Proclaims God's Mercy to His People	Luke 1:54–55	

Mary's frequent mentions of Old Testament passages suggest that she had a deep knowledge of the Bible. She knew God's Word as she prepared to give birth to the Word (John 1:1). And she knew God was famous for his "reversals," when he draws close to those on the margins and upends those who are filled with pride.

Then Luke notes an important detail about Elizabeth and Mary's journey.

Luke highlights  
 our Savior's  
  
**inclusion  
 of women**  
  
 into his  
**inner  
 circle**  
 and includes  
 more stories  
 about women  
 than the other  
 Gospel writers.



# The Lord



sustains  
the  
**humble**  
but  
casts the  
wicked to  
the  
ground.

—PSALM 147:6

4. **Read Luke 1:56.** Who is someone who has “stayed” with you during a difficult, uncertain, or confusing season?

How did your relationship deepen through that experience?

Who is someone you have “stayed” with during a difficult, uncertain, or confusing season? How did your relationship and visceral compassion for the other person grow and deepen through that experience?

Throughout the first chapter of Luke, the word “joy” appears quite often. When Elizabeth gives birth, the joy is shared through the entire community.

**5. Read Luke 1:57–66.** How does Elizabeth giving birth to John fulfill the promises of Gabriel?

What are the first words Zechariah speaks since the encounter with the angel (v. 64)?

Describe a time when you were able to offer a similar response to Zechariah after a time of hardship or suffering.

It was customary to name a child after the father or grandfather, so Elizabeth’s objection was shocking to all who heard. In a culture where women were often dismissed and ignored, those watching turn to Zechariah to decide. Everyone is astonished when he writes the name John, meaning “graced by God.”

Zechariah breaks out in a prophetic song that's known as "the Benedictus," which speaks of God's long-promised deliverance and the role John the Baptist will play in God's unfolding plan of messianic deliverance and salvation.

- 6. Read Luke 1:67–80.** How does Zechariah's song proclaim the outrageous mercy of God?

Where do you need to experience this outrageous mercy most?

- 7.** Read Luke 2 to prepare for the next session. Summarize what happens in this chapter in two to three sentences.

What do you love most in this story of Jesus' birth?

What challenges you most in this story of Jesus' birth?

# Reflection

As you reflect on your personal study of Luke 1–2, what are the **BEAUTIFUL WORDS** the Holy Spirit has been highlighting to you through this time? Write or draw them in the space below:

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lauded as a “hilarious storyteller” and “theological scholar,” **Lisa Harper** is anything but stereotypical! She is known for emphasizing that accruing knowledge about God pales next to a real and intimate relationship with Jesus.

Lisa has 30+ years of church and para-church ministry leadership, as well as a decade speaking on-tour with “Women of Faith.” She holds a Master of Theological Studies from Covenant Seminary and is in the thesis stage of an earned doctorate at Denver Seminary.

She is a regular on TBN’s globally syndicated *Better Together* show and has published multiple books and Bible studies. Lisa has also been leading the same weekly Bible study in her neighborhood for 15 years.

The most noticeable thing about Lisa Harper is her authenticity and love for Christ. But her greatest accomplishment to date is getting to become Missy’s mom through the miracle of adoption in 2014!