

THE GOSPEL OF
LUKE

*The Son of Man Comes
to Seek and to Save*

FACT SHEET

FORMAT. 24 chapters, 1,151 verses

IMPLIED PURPOSE. To give an orderly account of Christ's life, death, and resurrection so readers may know these things "with certainty"

AUTHOR'S PERSPECTIVE. Luke, a trained physician (see Colossians 4:14), accompanied Paul on some of his missionary journeys. Although not an eyewitness of the events he records, he writes as a careful historian who has conducted thorough research.

IMPLIED AUDIENCE. Theophilus ("lover of God"), whose name may refer to a particular individual, or to any reader who wants to know God. Luke seems to write primarily to Greeks, specifically to those who want to know about Jesus' life and saving work.

WHAT UNIFIES THE BOOK. The story of Jesus as Israel's Messiah and the savior of the world; his relationship with his family, his disciples, the religious leaders, and all the lost people he meets on his way to the cross; the message of salvation especially for the marginalized; the journey motif as Jesus moves toward Jerusalem; the book's beginning and end at Israel's Temple

SPECIAL FEATURES. A full account of Jesus' birth and preparation for public ministry; compassion for those in distress, including sinful and suffering women; medical details of the healing miracles; an emphasis on prayer (eleven of fifteen recorded prayers of Jesus appear here); extensive teaching about money; nearly twenty parables not included in the other Gospels; Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (19:1-10); a pervasive note of joy, beginning with "Christmas carols" (chapter 2) and ending with the apostles worshipping the risen Christ and returning to Jerusalem "with great joy" (24:52)

CHALLENGES FACING THE READER OR TEACHER OF THIS BOOK.

1. Understanding to what extent the liberation Christ brings is physical as well as spiritual, social as well as personal
2. Distinguishing the Gospel of Luke from those of Matthew and Mark, which are nearly identical in many places
3. Recognizing the wealth of Old Testament background

HOW TO MEET THE CHALLENGES.

1. Salvation in Christ is both spiritual (forgiveness of sins) and physical (bodily resurrection). Although we must personally trust in Christ, his salvation extends to our social relationships.
2. We can understand Luke's Gospel simply on its own terms; however, to study the overlap between Luke and the other Gospels and to learn more from the significant differences, consult a harmony or synopsis of the Gospels.
3. A Bible with good cross-references will show Luke's quotations and allusions from the Old Testament.

FACT SHEET

Luke's inspired presentation of Christ is arranged in two great movements: first the "Coming" of the Lord from heaven to earth; and then his "Going" from earth to heaven. . . . Between them they sum up Luke's message of salvation. The pre-existent and eternal Son of God came to our world and became a man like us so that he might secure for us here in this world forgiveness, wholeness, peace with God and the certainty that God's will shall eventually be done on earth even as it is done in heaven. But there is more. By his Going he has taken humanity to the pinnacle of the universe. . . . [A]ll who trust him will one day be brought to share his glory in that exalted realm, and to reign with him at his return.

DAVID GOODING
According to Luke

24:50-52 Ascension of Jesus 24:1-49 Resurrection Day	The Triumph of the Son of Man	"The Son of Man Came to . . . Save the Lost" (19:10, ESV)	Jerusalem	Saving the Lost
23:26-56 Crucifixion and Burial 22-23:25 Last Supper, Arrest, Trials	The Death of the Son of Man			
19:28-21:38 Triumphal Entry, Teaching in the Temple	The Progress of the Son of Man toward the Cross	"A Mighty Teacher" (24:19); Preponderance of Teaching (Especially Parables) over Miracles	Journey to Jerusalem	
17:11-19:27 Between Samaria and Galilee; Jericho 13:22-17:10 Journey toward Jerusalem 10:38-13:21 Jesus in Bethany and Judea 9:51-10:37 Jesus in Samaria	The Ministry of the Son of Man	"A Prophet Who Did Powerful Miracles" (24:19); Preponderance of Miracles over Teaching	Galilee	Seeking the Lost
6:17-8:56 Jesus on Discipleship Jesus' Teaching and Miracles Jesus Begins His Ministry, Calls Disciples	The Advent of the Son of Man		Israel	
1:5-4:13 Birth, Boyhood, Baptism, Temptation of Jesus 1:1-4 Prologue: Luke's Purpose				

How can I know for sure? It's a question many people ask when they first investigate Christianity. How can I be sure that the Bible is true? How can I know for certain that Jesus died on the cross for my sins and rose from the dead? Sometimes the same questions return later in the Christian life. Even for Christians, there can be times when the gospel suddenly seems implausible, and we wonder whether God is really there after all.

Luke dealt with these kinds of doubts by telling the truth about Jesus Christ. As he says to his readers at the beginning of his Gospel, "I also have decided to write a careful account for you, . . . so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught" (1:3-4). Luke wanted people to know what happened, where it happened, and in what order. And as he tells the story of Jesus—the gospel of his sinless life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection—the story itself brings us to a sure and certain knowledge of Jesus Christ.

KEY PHRASE

The phrase *the Son of Man*, which occurs twenty-five times in Luke, emphasizes Christ's deity, not his humanity. In the Old Testament, the Son of Man is the divine Savior who will come to earth in glory and judgment at the end of days.

intensifying opposition along the way. The story begins with a leisurely account of the circumstances surrounding Jesus' birth. The main events in the middle of the book are miracle stories and teaching sessions, as well as dialogues Jesus had with his disciples and with leaders in the religious community. But by far the greatest attention is given to the last week of Jesus' life, which culminates in his death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. We are left with the overwhelming impression that what is important about Jesus is not simply his life but especially his death and what happens afterward.

The Aim of the Book

Luke's primary purpose is to help his readers have complete confidence in the truth of what they have heard about Jesus Christ. Apart from Luke's

The Form of the Book

Although it is familiar to Christians, the Gospel is a unique form in world literature. (See "Gospel as a New Testament Form" on page 436.) It is partly a biography of the man Jesus of Nazareth, but it is also a book that invites people to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. To that end, Luke shows Jesus in action—calling disciples to faith, teaching parables, performing miracles, and enduring suffering. He has shaped these events into the larger story of a journey from Galilee to Jerusalem, with ever-

The Parable as a Literary Form

The parables are stories told by Jesus to embody or teach religious truth. A majority of Jesus' parables teach about the Kingdom of God (also called the Kingdom of Heaven), but a parable such as the Good Samaritan embodies ethical teaching about how we must treat those around us.

Parables belong to the category of folk stories. They take their material from everyday life and are filled with realistic touches. Their characters are universal types such as exist in all places and times. As folk stories, parables repeatedly draw on the rules of popular storytelling—rules such as simplicity of action, conflict between obvious good and obvious evil, suspense, heightened contrasts (called foils), repetition (including threefold repetition), the rule of end stress (what happens last is the key to the meaning of the parable), and archetypes (universal symbols and motifs such as lost and found, master and servant).

In most parables a number of the details in the story have a corresponding "other" meaning, such as the owner of a vineyard symbolizing God and a Prodigal Son symbolizing the rebellious sinner. The right term for such stories is *allegory*, as even the word *parable* hints, since it means "to throw alongside" (to have a double meaning, in other words).

The method for reading and teaching the parables falls naturally into four distinct activities:

- Interacting with the story as a story: with its plot, its setting, and its cast of characters
- Interpreting the allegorical or symbolic meanings where they exist. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, the prodigal symbolizes rebellious humanity, the father who forgives and restores represents God, and the morose older brother pictures the Pharisees.
- Determining the themes (which is not synonymous with interpreting the allegory). The parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, embodies themes such as the tendency of the sinful heart to reject God, the nature of God as loving and forgiving, and the selfishness of religious people who do not share the joy of a sinner's conversion.
- Applying the themes to one's own life

It is untrue that you can find only one theme or "point" in a parable. Most parables embody multiple themes or ideas. The parable of the Prodigal Son, for example, shows the nature of sin as rebellion against God, the nature of God as forgiving, and the disgrace of the holier-than-thou who cannot celebrate the conversion of a sinner.

own ethnicity (he is the only New Testament writer who was not a Jew), there are many indications that Luke is writing primarily for a Gentile audience. He carefully sets the life of Christ in the context of world politics, using technical terms familiar across the Roman world. When he refers to places in Israel, he explains where they are, on the assumption that his readers won't know the territory. He tends to use Greek rather than Hebrew terminology. When he quotes from the Old Testament (which he does more sparingly than Matthew, for example), he does not quote from the original Hebrew but from the Greek translation (commonly known as the Septuagint).

All of this is in keeping with Luke's special purpose of presenting Jesus as the Savior for everyone. This is true socially: Jesus is for everyone from top to bottom. Luke shows people from every social class—especially the underprivileged and oppressed, who usually get overlooked—coming to Christ. It is also true ethnically: Jesus is for everyone from east to west. Only Luke records the global announcement of the angels: "Peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased" (2:14). Only Luke quotes the song of Simeon, which celebrates Jesus as the Savior "prepared for all people" and "a light to reveal God to the nations" (2:31-32). Only Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus all the way back to Adam, not just to Abraham. He also highlights some of the Gentiles who came to Jesus in faith (the centurion whose servant was sick, the widow of Nain, etc.). Luke wants his readers to be sure that Jesus is the Savior for everyone.

This theme comes to its thrilling conclusion at the end of the Gospel, when Luke quotes Jesus as saying that "this message [about the Messiah] would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem" (24:47). Then the book of Acts—which Luke wrote as the sequel to his Gospel—tells how the disciples took the gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

DISTINCTIVE MATERIAL IN LUKE AND WHAT IT TELLS US

The "humanitarian Luke" (his compassion for women and the marginalized members of society and his criticism of the affluent) is partly illustrated by material that we find only in his Gospel: for example, the song of Mary (1:46-55); the announcement of Jesus' birth first to shepherds (2:8-20); the poor in Nazareth who are among the first to hear the Good News (4:16-21); the sinful woman who anoints Jesus' feet (7:36-50); parables of the Good Samaritan (10:30-37), the rich fool (12:16-21), the banquet for outcasts (14:12-14), the Prodigal Son (15:11-32), and the rich man and Lazarus (16:19-31); the conversion of the outcast Zacchaeus (19:1-10).

Unifying Elements

The central unifying element in any Gospel is the personality of Jesus Christ—"a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people" (24:19, ESV). However, as each Gospel writer crafts his narrative, he skillfully weaves in recurring themes that further tie the story together. There are many such themes in the Gospel of Luke: the connection between Jesus and John the Baptist, the training of the Twelve as they gradually learn the cost of discipleship, the passionate commitment of the women who love Jesus, the growing opposition Jesus faces from leaders of the religious establishment, the empowering work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' ministry, the global reach of the gospel, Jesus' compassion for people who are down and out, the rejoicing that comes to those who put their trust in Christ, the miracles of healing, the parables of the kingdom, the journey to Jerusalem, Jesus on the Sabbath, Jesus at prayer, and Jesus at the Temple. But perhaps the strongest unifying theme is the mission of Jesus: "to seek and save those who are lost" (19:10). Luke shows that in all of Jesus' interactions with all kinds of people who were lost in all kinds of ways, Jesus was seeking to save.

Key Places and Characters

The key places in Luke are Bethlehem (where Jesus was born), Nazareth (where he was raised and later rejected), the towns and villages of Galilee and Judea (where he taught and healed), and Jerusalem (where he went to die). But don't overlook the following: the Temple (where the Gospel both begins and ends—see 1:8ff. and 24:53—and where Jesus had some significant encounters); the cross (where Jesus did his saving work of dying for sin); and the empty tomb (which proves that he is the risen Christ).

Many of the characters in Luke are familiar from the other Gospels. However, some of them deserve special mention. Apart from Christ himself, these include the following:

- John the Baptist, the forerunner who announced the coming of Israel's king
- Zechariah, Elizabeth, Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna—godly, poor Israelites who exemplify the saving faith of the Old Testament people of God

DID YOU KNOW?

Luke contains four nativity hymns—first sung by Mary, Zechariah, the angels, and Simeon—that are often used in Christian worship. Their titles come from their opening words, as translated into Latin:

- Magnificat (1:46-55)
- Benedictus (1:68-79)
- Gloria in Excelsis (2:14)
- Nunc Dimittis (2:29-32)

The Parables of Jesus

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
1 Lamp under a Basket	5:14-16	4:21-22	8:16-17 11:33-36
2 The Wise and Foolish Builders	7:24-27		6:47-49
3 New Cloth on an Old Garment	9:16	2:21	5:36
4 New Wine in Old Wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
5 The Sower and the Soils	13:3-23	4:2-20	8:4-15
6 The Weeds	13:24-30		
7 The Mustard Seed	13:31-32	4:30-32	13:18-19
8 The Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
9 The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
10 The Hidden Treasure	13:44		
11 The Pearl of Great Price	13:45-46		
12 The Net of Fish	13:47-50		
13 The Householder	13:52		
14 The Wicked Tenants	21:33-34	12:1-12	20:9-19
15 The Wedding Feast	22:2-14		14:16-24
16 The Unforgiving Servant	18:23-25		
17 The Fig Tree	24:32-44	13:28-32	21:29-33
18 The Workers in the Vineyard	20:1-16		
19 The Two Sons	21:28-32		
20 The Moneylender and Two Debtors			7:41-43

Parable	Matthew	Mark	Luke
21 The Good Samaritan			10:30-37
22 The Ten Virgins	25:1-13		
23 The Talents	25:14-30		
24 A Friend in Need			11:5-13
25 The Rich Fool			12:16-21
26 The Watchful Servant		13:33-37	
27 The Faithful and Wise Servant	24:45-51		12:35-40
28 The Faithful and Wicked Steward			12:42-48
29 The Barren Fig Tree			13:6-9
30 The Growing Seed		4:26-29	
31 The Lowest Seat			14:7-11
32 Building a Tower and Making War			14:25-35
33 The Lost Coin			15:8-10
34 The Lost Son (Prodigal Son)			15:11-32
35 The Shrewd Manager			16:1-13
36 The Rich Man and Lazarus			16:19-31
37 Unprofitable Servants			17:7-10
38 The Persistent Widow			18:1-8
39 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector			18:9-14
40 The Pounds			19:11-27

- The disciples, who show us how—and how not—to follow Christ
- Many poor people who show us what it means to be lost and need a Savior: the shepherds who hurried to the manger; the grieving widow of Nain; the woman who anointed Jesus with perfume; and all the blind, demon-possessed, leprous, paralyzed, dead, and dying people Jesus healed
- The enemies who put Jesus to death: Judas, Pilate, Herod, and all the scribes and Pharisees who refused to believe that he was the Christ
- Memorable characters from parables that are unique to Luke's Gospel: the Good Samaritan; the rich fool; the Prodigal Son, with his welcoming father and disapproving brother; and the rich man and Lazarus

Key Doctrines

The Incarnation. Luke highlights the humanity of Christ in his long birth narratives, of course, but also in showing the simple poverty of Jesus living as a man among men.

The Holy Spirit. More than any other Gospel, Luke emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in empowering the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Salvation. Luke uses the word *save* to refer both to spiritual deliverance from sin and to physical healing from the effects of the Fall; Jesus saves, body and soul.

Forgiveness. In miracles such as the healing of the paralytic (5:17-26), in parables such as the Prodigal Son (15:11-32), and in personal encounters such as those he had with a sinful woman (7:36-50) and a tax collector (19:1-10), Jesus shows the meaning of true forgiveness.

Justification. As Luke tells the stories of the woman at Simon's house (7:36-50), the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9-14), and the blind man by the side of the road (18:35-43), he explicitly mentions the saving power of faith in Christ.

The Atonement and Resurrection. Luke not only tells the facts about the cross and the empty tomb, but he also explains their meaning: Christ died and rose again so that our sins could be forgiven (24:47).

Tips for Reading or Teaching the Gospel of Luke

Keep Luke's purpose in mind by constantly asking this question: How does this part of the Gospel help me know for sure that Jesus is the Christ?

Each time there is an encounter with Jesus, identify the ways in which someone is "lost." For example, the paralytic whose friends bring him to Jesus needs both spiritual and physical deliverance. Tax collectors such as

Levi and Zacchaeus can hardly be considered poor, yet they are as lost as anyone. In what ways is that so?

Be alert for themes it would be easy to miss in any single passage but that become important by repetition (such as the role of the Holy Spirit in directing the action of the Gospel, the significant healing and teaching Jesus did on the Sabbath, the many times he went off by himself to pray, and his repeated predictions of his suffering and death).

The Gospel of Luke is often compared to the other Gospels, and rightly so. However, it is also the first volume of a two-part work that includes the book of Acts. As you study Luke's Gospel, read Acts to see how themes such as the powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit, the reality of Christ's resurrection, and the preaching of repentance to all nations come to their culmination.

quick overview of the gospel of luke

1:1–4:13	Stories of the birth and early life of Jesus
4:14–9:50	Beginning of Jesus' public ministry of healing and teaching
9:51–19:27	Increasing opposition as Jesus performs miracles and teaches in parables
19:28–24:53	Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in Jerusalem

The Flow of the Book

Purpose Statement (1:1-4). Luke tells us how and why he wrote his Gospel.

The Coming of the Christ (1:5–4:13). From the beginning, Luke intertwines the story of Jesus with that of John the Baptist. To put this in literary terms, Luke is using John as a *foil*, or contrast, for Jesus. Notice how the comparisons and contrasts created by this technique serve to introduce the person and work of the Christ. John's role as herald serves to announce the coming of the messianic King. What are some other signs that Jesus is the royal Son of David?

Look for early indications that Jesus has come to serve the poor and to save the nations and that his coming will arouse the opposition of his adversaries (including Satan himself). Also look for echoes from the Old Testament. Many elements in the opening chapters give the Gospel an Old Testament feel: the appearance of angels, the miraculous birth of a

prophet, and songs that sound as if they come straight from the book of Psalms. Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River and his temptation in the wilderness also have an Old Testament connection: They recapitulate events from the Exodus. Finally, observe how Jesus is being prepared for his ministry and the people are being prepared for Jesus.

KEY VERSES

"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free, and that the time of the LORD's favor has come" (4:18-19; compare Isaiah 61:1-2). By reading these words at the synagogue in his own hometown, Jesus is outlining his agenda for ministry and announcing his arrival as Israel's Messiah.

The Ministry of the Son of Man (4:14-9:50). Jesus begins his public ministry in his hometown. There he becomes the proverbial "prophet without honor," largely because he has the audacity to tell people how much they need him and also that God has grace for the Gentiles. Look for examples of God's grace to the Gentiles and to other outsiders.

Most of the material in these chapters is in the form of short stories or teaching segments. From the beginning we see Jesus engaged in two primary activities: preaching and healing. Watch for occasional statements (such as those in 4:15, 42-44; 5:15; 6:17-19; 7:21-22; and 8:1) that summarize these two aspects of his ministry and the effect those statements had on people. Jesus quickly became astoundingly popular, but many of the things he did—such as claiming the authority to forgive sins, eating with sinners, breaking man-made rules for the Sabbath—were destined to bring him into conflict with the Pharisees and other religious leaders. (See "Jewish Religious Groups at the Time of Christ" on page 441.)

Each healing miracle adds something to our understanding of who Jesus is and what he came to do, as he is shown to have power over demons, the devil, disease, and death. Pay attention to the way he treats each person in each story. The teaching Jesus does in these chapters—including the Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49) that parallels Matthew's longer and more famous Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)—is directed primarily toward the disciples he called to follow him. By the time we get to chapter 9, the disciples are finally ready to confess Jesus as the Christ (9:18-20). Jesus immediately responds by beginning the next phase of the disciples' training, prophesying his Passion (9:21-22, 43-45; compare 18:31-34) and teaching them the full cost of their discipleship.

On the Road with the Son of Man (9:51-15:32). Jesus has turned his face toward the Cross, and now nothing will deter him from fulfilling his mission. So he begins his long, slow journey up to Jerusalem. This is the travel section of the Gospel, and the thread that ties the winding journey together is the progress Jesus makes toward Jerusalem. Along the way he performs several miracles of healing and continues training his disciples, who are serving more and more actively in ministry (see 10:1-24).

Jesus also speaks in more parables. (See "Parable as a Literary Form" on page 447. For a listing of Jesus' parables, see pages 450-451.) Although this form of teaching was introduced in chapter 8, it becomes more prominent in the second half of the Gospel. Especially significant are three parables about seeking the lost that illustrate the theme of Luke's Gospel as a whole: the lost sheep (15:3-7), the lost coin (15:8-10), and the lost son (15:11-32). Jesus uses these parables to identify the reason for the mounting opposition of the Pharisees: They have a completely different attitude toward the lost. Rather than seek to save them, the Pharisees want to exclude them. And this is because the Pharisees have a completely different view of God. Whereas Jesus knows God to be a gracious and forgiving Father, the Pharisees—like the elder brother in the parable of the Prodigal Son—think of him as a harsh taskmaster. The practical application is first to repent, like the Prodigal Son, and then to reach out with the love of his welcoming Father.

The Coming of the Kingdom (16:1-19:27). As Jesus nears Jerusalem, the Kingdom of God becomes a more prominent theme in his teaching, setting the stage for the royal welcome he will receive on his Triumphal Entry. What does Jesus teach about the Kingdom, and how does this differ from the assumptions of his listeners? What does Jesus teach about responsible stewardship, and how does this contrast with the attitude the Pharisees had toward money?

The Death of the Son of Man (19:28-23:56). The climactic events of the Gospel are also the most familiar, so it can be hard to receive them with fresh power. During Jesus' last days he seems to have

KEY VERSE

"Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). This verse is the pivot of Luke's Gospel, as Jesus goes up to the great city to do his saving work.

KEY VERSE

"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10, ESV). This serves as the theme verse for Luke's Gospel. Jesus seeks the lost throughout his earthly ministry until finally he saves the lost through his crucifixion and resurrection.

spent most of his time teaching at the Temple (19:45–21:38). Luke uses his parable of the evil farmers (20:9–19) to set the stage for the passion of the Christ: Jesus' enemies will stop at nothing, even to the point of killing the Son of God. The end is coming, not just for Jesus but for the whole world, as Jesus teaches in "the little apocalypse" (21:5–36). Jesus also spent his last days with his disciples, instituting the sacrament of the

Lord's Supper and giving them their final instructions before his impending death.

When it comes to the trial of Jesus (see 23:4, 13–15) and also to his death (23:47), Luke is careful to show that Jesus was innocent of all charges. This would have been important for a Gentile audience because the Romans reserved crucifixion for the very worst criminals. But the Son of Man was the sinless Son of God. And to the very end he was seeking to save lost sinners, welcoming the thief on the cross into paradise (23:39–43).

The Triumph of the Son of Man (24:1–53). The women who were the last to leave the cross were also the first to see the empty tomb. In the same way that Luke lingered over the subject of the Nativity, he now lingers over the Resurrection, giving a full account of the conversation Jesus had with two disciples on the road to Emmaus and the commission he gave to his disciples afterward. Then the Gospel ends as it began: with great rejoicing in Jesus and the worship of God in his holy Temple (24:52–53).

The Main Themes

1. SALVATION. On the basis of his death on the cross and by the power of his resurrection life, Jesus brings total restoration to both the body and the soul.
2. THE COMPASSION OF CHRIST. Jesus shows love, mercy, and grace to "the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind" (Luke 14:13).
3. THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP. Jesus calls his followers to share in his sufferings for the sake of the gospel.
4. GLOBAL EVANGELISM. The gospel is not just for the Jews but also for the lost sinners of all nations.

Contribution of the Book to the Bible's Story of Salvation in Christ

Like the other Gospels, Luke's Gospel tells the story of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Among the things that Luke emphasizes about Jesus are (1) his identity as the Son of Man and the Great Physician, (2) the initiative he takes in seeking and saving the lost, (3) his concern for all people, especially social outcasts, women, children, and the poor, and (4) his self-understanding as the main subject of Scripture: "Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27; compare 24:44–47).

Applying the Book

The main way to apply the Gospel of Luke is to receive Jesus Christ by faith. This means trusting in his death and resurrection for the forgiveness of sins and beginning to follow him in the difficult way of discipleship. It also means responding to his saving grace with joyous worship, as we see people doing throughout the Gospel.

Luke contains many of Christ's hard sayings, such as "Love your enemies" (6:27), "Offer the other cheek" (6:29), and "Take up your cross" (9:23). Be careful not to dull the sharp edge of these commands by treating them too metaphorically. After all, it is in the same Gospel that Jesus asks us, "Why do you keep calling me 'Lord, Lord!' when you don't do what I say?" (6:46). Another way to apply the Gospel is by embracing the attitude that Jesus has toward the lost and needy. Who are the poor sinners that God is calling you to love? In what practical ways can you serve them?

PERSPECTIVES ON THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke wished to be taken seriously as a historian. I. Howard Marshall

Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy; he is possessed of the true historic sense; he seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians. Sir William Ramsay

Give honor unto Luke, Evangelist; / For he it was (the aged legends say) / Who first taught Art to fold her hands and pray. Dante Gabriel Rossetti

It is people who interest Luke above all else, and it is through them that he reveals the personality and nature of Jesus. . . . In all his scenes are evident his warm and generous sympathy, his pity and compassion, his sense of human worth. Mary Ellen Chase

The Christ of Luke is the friend of sinners. A. T. Robertson

Zacchaeus is a thoroughly Lucan character, well-off, shady, little, unrespectable—yet responsive to Jesus. He belongs to that suspect fringe of Judaism which plays such a telling part in the book. These, for Luke, are the people whom Jesus not only likes but chooses to stay with and eat with because they are not too encumbered with their piety and virtue to heed the gospel. John Drury

Luke knew how both Gentile and Jew looked down on women. He saw the difference in Jesus. . . . Luke wrote the gospel of womanhood, full of sympathy and tenderness, full of understanding of their tasks and their service. A. T. Robertson

Luke had a special sympathy with the poor man. But that was because of the special circumstances of the poor man, because nobody else had so far shewn him any sympathy at all. [Luke's] real sympathy was with every man. S. C. Carpenter

This Gospel is thoroughly Gentile in its spirit and outlook. . . . Most of us, in the western world, are the kind of people to whom Luke was addressing himself. We have so few material needs, but our spiritual need as Gentiles . . . is even greater than that of Jews. The good news, therefore, is even better for us than for them. And we could hardly have it more attractively presented. Michael Wilcock

Almighty God, who calledst Luke the Physician, whose praise is in the Gospel, to be an Evangelist, and Physician of the soul: May it please thee that, by the wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by him, all the diseases of our souls may be healed; through the merits of thy Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Book of Common Prayer (1662)

[On the relationship between Luke and Acts:] In Luke's thought, the end of the story of Jesus is the Church; and, the story of Jesus is the beginning of the Church. C. K. Barrett