

Hope in The Lord

~ The Gospel of Luke ~
Bible Study

By
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Podcast of Lessons available at www.DwellingRichly.Podbean.com

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Welcome!

Over the next several weeks I invite you to enjoy this study. Whether this is your first time going through a group Bible study, or you're a seasoned Bible study expert, I believe you'll be refreshed and encouraged as you read God's Word.

In these lessons we'll look at God's Word and see God's plan and how He sees us – as well as our view of God - how we see Him. Through the pages of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation the story of God has a constant theme, and the theme revolves around God's plan to redeem us through His Son, Jesus. Since the dawn of time and man's fall from grace in the Garden, we've been looking for hope. And yet, with all the looking and longing don't we each know someone dear to our heart who has lost their hope?

Perhaps even you have felt a sense of hopelessness to some degree in your own life.

This study grew out of my own personal experience with losing hope and finding it again. My story brought me through the pain of infertility, struggles with depression, an abusive marriage, and the destructive impact of addiction. For years, I walked through my days under the cover of "Christian" woman and wife...but I had a nagging sense in my heart that there was really no hope for healing in my life and relationships. I believed in the big picture of hope - That God had redeemed us all - that there was a future and a hope for all who called on His name - that one day all would be made right. Hope in God for the big stuff? No problem. But in my day-to-day life, I had lost hope on a smaller scale. Hope for me. For my marriage. For my heart. Hope for me on a personal level? I had all but let that go. I've learned a lot through my journey, and I'm still learning so much every day. I'm looking forward to sharing in God's Word with you!

Let's grow together!

We'll be writing and digging into the Scripture together. Each time we gather you'll receive the new week's study materials to add to this notebook. You'll want to have the following with you during the week as well as at our Bible study get togethers:

- Your Bible – I'll be quoting mostly from the NIV, but any translation is fine. I recommend that you get a good Study Bible – I like my NIV Study Bible or the MacArthur Study Bible
- A Journal – or pages added to this notebook to journal in
- Pen and highlighter

In my role as a women's pastor I get asked a lot of questions, but there's one in regards to Bible study that comes over and over: "What do you use to help you study the Bible?"

That's a great question! Here's what I use...

- A Good Study Bible – I mentioned that above, but it's so helpful, I didn't want you to miss that. Ryrie, ESV, Scofield, NIV, MacArthur. It's important that you have a Bible that is a translation and not a paraphrase. "The Message", the "Living Bible", "New International Readers Version" (NIRV) are among the easy-to-read paraphrases that you will not do your actual Bible study from.

And these websites:

- BlueLetterBible.com
- BibleGateway.com
- StudyLight.org

You could purchase any one of a number of excellent commentaries, dictionaries, and lexicons, but all the ones I use are freely accessible at the above websites and even on your phone as an

app! Go, have fun, and check some out. A great way to start is to go to their home page and type a word like “hope”, and do a search on it.

How is this study organized?

We meet January through May. During that time there are eight lessons that will cover 24 chapters of Luke. This works out to about a chapter and a half every week. Each of the eight lessons are organized to give you structured time daily to pray, read, and study the Bible. There are usually 13 days in between our meetings. Here is a sample of how those days are organized for you:

DAY:

1. Attend the Study – Fellowship with your small group and hear the talk
2. Active Reading (you’ll see the suggested approach each in your lesson) through the passages we’ll be covering for the next few days.
- 3-5. Complete the study questions and reading for each day.
6. Active Reading
- 7-9. Complete the study questions and reading for each day. One of these days is a perfect time to get together with your small group for a social. Coffee? Park day? Lunch?
10. Active Reading
- 11-14. Complete the study questions and reading for each day.
15. Welcome back! We’ve missed you!

*****Don’t miss this...**

As you complete each day of the study, you’ll note some questions are marked with three asterisks: *** When you see these you can make special effort to answer that question as it will be one that we’ll refer to when we come together for our small group time. So, if you’re short on time, definitely do these!

How should I approach my study time?

Listen. Look. Live.

Listen. As you read you are not only seeing the words of God but are listening to what He has said. Each study session is created to give you time in the Word – just you and God. No commentaries. No explanations. This might seem hard for you if you’re brand new to reading the Bible, but it’s a skill you’ll develop. I’m confident of that. Pray before you begin –not sure how? Read Psalm 119:18, Proverbs 1:7 or James 1:5 – then read the Bible passage and follow that lesson’s notes to guide you in thinking through and understanding what you’ve read. Then...

Look. Look again at the Word and make some observations to understand deeper. What figures of speech are there to understand? What about the culture of the time? Are there any allegories? Who was the intended audience? Who was the writer? The Bible was written largely from a Hebrew Middle Eastern mindset – that’s very different from our 21st century western mindset! We’ll want to understand the Scripture from the author’s point of view and not through the lens of this modern era and our sensitivities. Use your journal to write these observations down.

Live. It’s tempting to start here, right? We want to know how exactly these verses apply to our own lives. But while all of Scripture was written for you, it was not all written **to you**. If you start here you’ll make a common mistake in overly-applying passages to yourself that weren’t meant for you at all. So, this “live” approach is the final not the first step. After you Listen to God, Look at His word in all that it means you can ask, “What does it all mean for me personally?” Clearly, the nature of this study is to not only understand verses or just see examples of how to live in the Bible, but to move from the words on the page through our hearts and out into our lives. God’s word isn’t just a great book. It’s not inspirational literature or self-help.

Remember...God’s Word is alive and powerful. It’s sharper than a sword as it slices to the core of our hearts and reveals what’s really true about us in light of who God says we are. How empty it would be to first approach the Word with a “what can this do for me today?” mentality! And yet, we also must not

just read to understand...we must read to apply. And that will mean making a shift in our thinking and most likely a change in our behavior as well. Not every verse was written to you, but every word was written for you, and there's a difference. One of my favorite Bible teachers, Kay Arthur, says it this way: *"When you know what God says, what He means, and how to put His truths into practice, you will be equipped for every circumstance of life."*

What can you expect?

This is a Bible study. Simply put, we'll be studying the Bible.

We'll Read the Bible. We'll Write from the Bible. We'll prayerfully Respond to the Bible.

This study is organized around our bi-weekly meetings. There are at least 13 days between each of our group Bible studies. I've set up this study the lessons will take about 20-30 minutes each to complete. If you read through your study, taking time for church, your Life Group, or other mid-week study, you'll find it much better than doing the entire study the day before we meet! You have 168 hours in your week...imagine if you tithed (giving 10%) from your time. That would be 16.8 hours a week in study...that's more than two hours a day! What if you gave even 5% of your time? Or 3%? Just set aside the time, and you'll be so happy you did.

By the way, don't think you're the only one who gets behind and has to do all that catch-up the day before...or the day of! It happens to me too! And never, ever skip coming to our study because you didn't do the study...come!! We have great fellowship and teaching for you to receive! Why not pray right now and ask the Father to help you make time and priority for this study? Pace yourself and get an accountability partner to help so you stay committed to being in the Word daily.

Are you ready?

I am! I have prayed over every moment of time in my preparations, and I have prayed for you, dear sister, as well. My heart is that we would come away from our time of Bible study not just with a better understanding of the gospel of Luke, but that we would above all things know our Father and His truth. *So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8:31*

Ready to be free? Me too! Let's abide in His Word together! See you soon, and until then, know that you are loved and prayed for,

Jennifer Richmond

Women's Pastor, La Mirada Christian Church

p.s. You can reach me at Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com or 562.755.4964

I am happy to meet with you should you ever need to talk, share your heart – or a cup of coffee! – or get some input on an issue. Also, if you're new to Bible study, you might like to do a few lessons with a friend...that's me! Don't hesitate to ask for a little help....or a lot! I'm here for you.

~ ACTS Prayer Model ~

God wants to speak to you through His Word as you read each day. Take time to ready your heart and mind by praying. James 1:5 gives us a great reminder of God's heart:

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives generously to all without finding fault and it will be given to him."

God wants you to understand and apply His Word – that takes wisdom. Pray before you begin that God would give you wisdom to understand His Word. Mark this verse in your Bible. We'll come back to it often.

A simple guide for structuring your prayer is to think of Luke's second book: ACTS

A — Adoration

God, you are great and good!

C — Confession

I need you and I confess I cannot do this on my own. I confess I have sinned [in this area].

T — Thanksgiving

Thank you for all you have done and are doing in my life!

S — Supplication

Please supply my need for wisdom as I read and understand your Word today.

... Active Reading Notes Page ...

Use this table as an **example** of how to take notes on the "Active Reading" days in this study

VERSE	WHO	WHAT	WHEN/WHERE	QUESTIONS THOUGHTS

Lesson One

Hope Breaks Through

~ Luke chapters 1-2 ~
Lesson 1 of 8

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Discussion Questions

~ 7 ~

Welcome! Let's get to know one another!

Hi! My name is . . . and:

- I'm new, returning, or somewhere in the middle to this church Bible study group
- My favorite treat to eat is.....
- In my spare time I love to...

What are you looking forward to in this Bible study?

- Structure to your spiritual walk?
- Friendship?
- Learning more about the Bible?
- ????

The Gospel of Luke has some of the most familiar accounts – the birth of Christ – and parables – the prodigal son in all of the Bible and even in all of literature. What is your favorite parable or Bible story from Luke? (page through your Bible to get a refresher.)

Setting aside time every day to be in the Word, in prayer and in Bible study is such an important part of your spiritual growth. Do you have any questions about how to do this? Any tips to share on doing a Bible study even with a busy and demanding schedule?

Starting tomorrow, you'll have studies written to give you time in the Word and to draw you closer to God. Set aside time every day to pray, read, and complete your study for that day. Got a busy day? No problem. Combine two days together the next time.

Need help?

Call on God. Ask God for wisdom and understanding. James 1:5

Call your small group leader(s)

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Call a friend in your small group

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Call or email Pastor Jennifer. 562.755.4964 Jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com

"My Hope is Built on Nothing Less"

by Edward Mote, 1797-1874

My hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
My anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

His oath, His covenant, and blood
Support me in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may I then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!
On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Study Teaching Notes
Introduction to the Gospel of Luke

~ Day One ~

Introduction and Read-Through

Welcome to this study through the Gospel of Luke. This is the part two in our “Lessons in Hope” series and unique in that we’ll go verse by verse through one full book of God’s Word. This study is organized into daily sessions of reading or study or reflection that will take 25-40 minutes to complete. Some days are short and might take only 15 minutes, others are longer (Day Three, for example) and might take the full 40 minutes.

Luke’s gospel – like all the gospels – is truly the ultimate message of hope. The word “gospel” means “good news”, and isn’t that just what we all need today? Through this study we’ll revisit the lives and stories of men and women you are probably very familiar with...John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph, the disciples, the Prodigal Son, Zacchaeus (that “wee little man”), and of course, the greatest Man who ever lived: Jesus.

Four men wrote out their personal account of “the things that have been fulfilled among us”: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Of the four, only Matthew and John were disciples called by Jesus. Luke was a physician and a missionary partner with Paul, and Mark was a later convert and wrote his gospel based on Peter’s own witness. Like you and your friends having each witnessed an event or heard about it, you would each retell the details with your own style and perspective and even with your own audience in mind. The writers of the first four books of the New Testament did the same thing. Each man experienced the life of Jesus in his own way and each recorded the details with his own style. There are four gospels, and Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the “synoptic” gospels because of how they give a picture together, essentially in chronological order, of the Life of Christ. John is different because this gospel is more of the concepts of Christ’s teachings.

Mark, or John Mark, was the first to record the gospel – early 50s or 60s. He, like I mentioned above, wrote down the account from Peter and emphasized the end times. He wrote with the newly converted believers who were gentiles and were under heavy persecution. He wanted to relay the teachings of Christ and prepare his readers to endure hardship and suffering.

Matthew, a tax collector, was also called “Levi” in the gospels of Mark and Luke. He left his business to follow Jesus (read Matthew 9:9-13) and after Jesus’ resurrection, drawing also from Mark’s gospel*, he wrote his own perspective – anywhere from the late 50s to late 70s.

Our study will dig deeply into Luke’s gospel. Here’s a little about the author:

Luke was a physician. He wrote this gospel as well as the “Acts of the Apostles” or “Part Two” of his gospel account. Like Matthew, he borrowed from Mark’s gospel. He was a gentile (not a Jew by birth) and was clearly well-educated in the Greek tradition. He was Paul’s companion on several missionary journeys and even suffered imprisonment for the sake of Christ. In Colossians 4:14, Paul refers to Luke as “dear friend Luke, the doctor”, and in Philemon 24 he names him as a “fellow worker.” Luke never walked the dusty roads with Jesus and the disciples. He didn’t sit at the table of the Last Supper, but he brings us to each of those miraculous moments and helps us see just how powerful the life of Christ was.

Luke has a way of bringing not just the facts of the life of Jesus to us, but bringing the life to the facts. He writes with details that draw us in. I found myself clearly picturing the setting of each account not only the scene but the heart and the emotion that must have filled each moment he relates. What a blessing

to have his words to bring Jesus to us to beautifully. More than the other gospels, Luke give us the parables of Jesus. If you're like me, when the pastor starts sharing a story I perk up and listen all the more. I wonder if Luke was like me too. He loved the stories and parables and how they cause us to be able to recall the heart of the gospel even better. There are thirty-three parables in all. Matthew tells eighteen of them, Mark six, Luke – twenty-one! Not only does Luke tell the parables, but gives us the full background and result of each. Mark and Matthew leave much of these details out.

Our pattern in each lesson of this study will be the same.

Refer to the "Luke Study Overview" on page 7 to guide and plan your study. Take time in this first lesson to feel the rhythm and let it become a part of your daily routine.

... Luke 1:1-56 ...

... Open with Prayer ...

Refer to the "ACTS Prayer" guide on page 5.

Write your prayer here:

How wonderful it will be when we complete this study and you'll have your days of prayers and thoughts to look back upon. You'll see how you grew in "grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 3:18)

... Active Reading — Luke 1:1-56 ...

Read the verses and take notes in your journal or notebook pages inserted here using the table on page as an example. (See page 6)

— Day Two —

Luke 1:1-4

... Open with Prayer ...

Write your prayer here:

Read Luke 1:1-4

1. Who do you think are among the “many” who have drawn up the account of Jesus’ life? Can you name a few? Just make your best guess...

Hint: They were “eyewitnesses” who were “servants of the word” you might recall from reading the introduction to this lesson.

2. Knowing that Luke was a physician, what do you think this says about how he might have approached “carefully investigating everything from the beginning”?

3. Luke refers to Theophilus as “most excellent.” This is probably because Theophilus was of high status. What was Luke’s goal in writing this all down for him? (vs 4)

Let’s make this our desire as well! Let’s read Luke’s gospel like Theophilus and the others who would have read his account would have, that we might “know the certainty for the things you have been taught.” We all want certainty, yes? Yes!

Read John 21:25

4. How does John’s comment compare with that of Luke’s in his opening statement (Luke 1:1-4)?

***Paraphrase the sentiment of both the opening of Luke’s gospel and the closing of John’s:

The great hymn writer Fredrick M. Lehman penned powerful words that capture the grandeur of the love and acts of God and how overwhelming it is to consider them all. Like Luke or John or any of the gospel writers and writers to come, it would be impossible to fully grasp let alone capture all that God has done.

You can find this hymn on YouTube at: [The Love of God video](#) or search “The Love of God by Mercy Me”

~ The Love of God is Greater Far ~

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell.
It goes beyond the highest star
And reaches to the lowest hell.
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled
And pardoned from his sin.

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made:
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade:
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry:
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

— Days Three AND Four —

Luke 1:5-25

... Open with Prayer ...

Write your prayer here:

It had been 400 years.

400 years of silence.

400 years of not a word from the God who had spoken through prophets.

400 years of not a miraculous deed from the God who had parted the seas, healed the sick, delivered from flames, saved from lions, defeated enemies...

400 years of captivity, enslavement, abuse, persecution.

I've gone 24 hours without speaking. I've even gone 24 hours without hearing a word from a single person. You're never more aware of your need – even craving – for the comforting sound of a voice than when you've gone without it for a length of time. But 400 years?

Such is the season in the opening of the gospel of Luke. It's been 400 years and God has been what appears to be *Absent. Silent. Missing. Unconcerned. Forgotten and forgetful.*

And then...God breaks through. Light is coming. Hope is here...finally.

When my son was three I came to pick him up from his first time ever at a full day of preschool. I walked into the playroom filled with the busy little sticky, noisy, active preschoolers. Standing at the sign-out table I could see my wee child across the room playing quietly with a puzzle. "Jonathan..." I spoke his name sweetly over the happy din of the room. His head lifted from his little puzzle and he scanned the room to bring into view my familiar voice and face.

"Mommy!" he shouted. Abandoning his puzzle and scrambling up and across the room, he sprinted for me, arms outstretched.

"Mommeeee! I thought you were never coming back!" he wailed as he ran and leapt up into my arms, tears of relief practically spraying from his sweet eyes.

For a child, the first time mommy is gone for a while can be so scary. And while Jonathan had been wonderfully loved and cared for in my absence, he still felt the hurt in his heart and longing for his mom. The sound of my voice breaking through brought him instant relief. All would now be right again.

What a simple faith and a perhaps a simple visual to consider as we read these first verses and imagine what it must have been like for "the people walking in darkness [to] have seen a great light." (Isaiah 9:2)

Read Luke 1:5

1. In this one verse, Luke introduces us to three people. Write their names here and the phrases associated with each name that gives just a bit of detail about who they were:

➤ _____ - _____

➤ _____ - _____

➤ _____ - _____

2. During whose “time” (reign) does this account take place? _____
 If I were to say, “During the time of Hitler...” or “During the time of Idi Amin...” or [insert the name of the most brutal dictator you can recall] you would immediately have a strong visual and even emotional sense of what those “times” were like. Brutal. Oppressive. Even horrific and terrifying. Such were the times under Herod’s rule. So, when Luke opens his account with those words, any reader of the day and generations to come would have known exactly how those days were and how dark and terrible it was to live under his rule.

3. ***As we study you will want to not only think about what was said, but what wasn’t and even what could have been said. For example, in opening his account in this way (introducing Herod, Zechariah, and Elizabeth), what do you think Luke might have been trying to accomplish or help his readers grasp? *There’s no right or wrong answer here. Just give it some consideration and write your thoughts.*

Read Luke 1:6-7

4. ***What images come to mind most readily as you read Luke’s description of Zechariah and Elizabeth? I see five distinctions that Luke takes time to include. Write down what you find. I wrote the first one for you:

- Upright _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Highlight the distinctive that stands out most to you or that you relate with.

Maybe you are an obedient person who has made an effort to follow the teachings of the Bible, like this couple. Or maybe, like these two, you relate to being “well along in years” and wonder if God has plans for you still? For me, the word “barren” practically bounced off the page of my Bible and onto the line. You see, I know the pain of barrenness. For seven years my husband and I dealt with the monthly blow of yet another reminder that my womb was empty and our hearts were feeling the emptiness too. As our young friends and family members all sent out their baby shower invitations and birth announcements, Glen and I waited and prayed and wondered if we would ever know the joy of having a child. In 1996, after seven years of trying, a little blue line brought me more joy than you can imagine...unless you’ve also struggled with infertility. That home pregnancy test may as well have been a full page add in the Times announcing to the world, “Jennifer and Glen are finally pregnant!!” What relief! What joy! What a longing fulfilled. You can hear my story at <http://www.Vimeo.com/LaMiradaChurch>

Read Proverbs 13:12

5. Write it here:

We are wired for hope. Surely you can reflect and relate with this feeling.

6. List one or more times in your life when you felt the relief of a “longing fulfilled.”

A recurring theme in the Gospel of Luke is introduced right here in the first verses...Hope Breaks Through. Look for this as we continue to read.

If you have time, read the following to help give you context for the verses we’re studying.

. . . Understanding the Times . . .

Let’s remember that the Bible is God’s Words communicated through 66 books of history, prophecy, wisdom, and poetry recorded by 40 authors, set in ancient Middle East thousands of years ago and written largely to a Jewish and Greek audience. To presume to grasp the intent of the material without keeping in mind the historical and cultural context is a quick way to misunderstand and misinterpret its message. Throughout this study I’ll provide some background to help us keep things in perspective. I hope you’ll find this helpful in your studies.

Read Luke 1:8-10

Division, priest, lots, temple...these are not familiar words to us in our culture. Let’s do a little background to understand the times:

- *When God separated his people and delivered them from 400 years of slavery in Egypt, he gave them the laws and systems that would govern how they would conduct themselves as the people of God. When we became the United States of America, our founders created the Constitution much with the same intent. “We’re a new people. Here’s how we are distinct. Here’s how we’re going to conduct ourselves” is the idea.*
 - *Read more in Exodus starting in chapter 20. Watch the classic movie “The Ten Commandments” for an artistic impression of the history.*
- *Priests were chosen from the family group of the Levites to take care of the daily, weekly, monthly and annual workings of life as Israelites. This meant going into the Temple of God to pray and make offerings from the people. To decide who among the many eligible priests would go in to the Temple to pray they would rotate among the twenty-four divisions and then cast lots for the priest from that division. There were over 250,000 priests at any given time and each division was called upon twice to serve during the year. Zechariah was from the division of Abijah which was one of the “heads of the priestly families.”*
 - *Read more in Nehemiah chapters 11 and 12*
- *One of the duties of a priest was to keep the incense burning in front of the Most Holy Place. Once a year, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place. All other times, the priest would tend to the incense outside that special room. This was one such time. Zechariah was outside of the Most Holy Place while the people were outside the Temple praying.*
 - *Read more in Numbers 18*

Read Luke 1:11-17

7. After four-hundred years of silence, the first words spoken to man are recorded here in Luke 1:13. What were the first four words?
- _____
8. ...and the second four or five words depending on your translation?
- _____

“Do not be afraid...your prayer has been heard.”

9. ***Do you wonder what that prayer was? Write your thoughts here. What do you think Zechariah had been praying for?

I wondered as well. Was it for a child? I don't think so. Zechariah and Elizabeth were beyond child-bearing years. I think it was for deliverance. For the end to the silence. For God to reach down and remember his people. What a stunning moment to be going about your priestly duties and to have them gloriously interrupted by an angel of God, Gabriel.

10. Who did the angel promise? _____ Write at least ten details about this promised child:

11. Which one stands out the most to you? Why?

Read Malachi 4:5-6

12. ***This book of prophecy was written over 500 years prior to Zechariah's encounter with the angel Gabriel. What do you read in this prophecy that rings again in Gabriel's words?

Read Luke 1:18-22

13. Zechariah is struck mute. Why? Quote Gabriel's exact words:

Do you think this is harsh? Fair? Surprising? Deserved? Write your thoughts here:

14. Can you recall any other times in Biblical history when someone doubted the words of an angel? What was the consequence of their doubt? Write down the names and situations you recall:

Read Jeremiah 17:10

15. ***What does this say to you about God's power and God's prerogative?

While we may feel a bit sorry for Zechariah – I did! Being mute for nine months? No thank you! – We must acknowledge that it is indeed God's prerogative to shut a mouth or open it and to teach a lesson in His way. We have examples throughout the Bible of men and women who, when faced with startling news from an angelic messenger responded across the gamut...humility, resistance, double checking (Gideon and his fleece!), and of course good 'ol fashioned doubt. When we read further tomorrow, we'll be comparing Zechariah's and Mary's angelic encounters. I think you'll find it very interesting.

Read Luke 1:23-25

16. Normally, burning the incense would have taken a priest a relatively short amount of time - hours. But, Zechariah was in the temple a lot longer than that. How long?

17. Numbers and specific periods of time carry significance throughout the Bible. Perhaps you know some of these:

God created the earth in _____ days. It rained during Noah's time _____ days and _____ nights. The Israelites wandered in the wilderness _____ years. Jesus rose on the _____ day. The number five comes up 318 times throughout the Bible. It is considered a symbol of the grace, goodness and favor of God toward man. Five is the number of grace, and multiplied by itself, which is 25, is 'grace upon grace' (John 1:16 ESV).

- There are five primary types of offerings mentioned in Leviticus
- The Ten Commandments contains two sets of 5 commandments.
- There are five books of God's Law – the Pentateuch: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy
- Jesus multiplied 5 loaves of barley to feed the 5000

*** **Re-read Luke 1:24-25** How long was Elizabeth in seclusion? _____

What significance do you see in this time-period, and how does that relate to her comment in verse 25?

... Closing ...

To those upon whom God shows his favor, those who, like Mr. and Mrs. Zechariah, were upright and observant of God's commands, God brings tremendous blessing. As we close our time today, prayerfully consider how you may align yourself better with God's will. Pray that God will open your eyes to areas in your life that you can more fully trust and submit to him. Pray that you will be quick to hear and obey God's Word.

- Day Five -

Luke 1:26-45

... Open with Prayer ...

"Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your Law." Psalm 119:18

Write your prayer here:

Six months have gone by and heaven is reaching down again...

...this time not just with word of a man, but The Man.

...not just of one who would be "great in the sight of the Lord"

but the Man who great because He was Lord

...not just announcing the One to whom people would return, but being the One

The greatest news ever delivered for the 2000 years before and the 2000 years since.

Read Luke 1:26-38

1. There are obvious parallels between Gabriel's encounter with Zechariah and his encounter with Mary. Complete the chart here to make your observations:

	Zechariah	Mary
Where did the encounter happen? <i>Specific and general location</i>		
Details about the type of person and Z and M were...		
Details about their family tree...		
Current marital status		
Relative age of Z and M		
First words of Gabriel		
What does that imply about how Z and M must have initially responded?		
Nature of the news?		

Hundreds of thousands of women get pregnant every day. But there are two kinds of women who never get pregnant: Old Women and Virgins. So, "how then can this be?" Mary's words may well be our own. "I'm a virgin." Virgins don't get pregnant. It's what we call a logical impossibility.

A three-sided square? Impossible.

A married bachelor. Nope.

Pregnant virgin? Wait a minute...

Read Genesis 1:1

2. What did God do? _____

Read Luke 1:37

3. What does Gabriel say of God's ability?

Read Jeremiah 32:17 . . . Write it here:

Now, think through what you are dealing with in your life – any impossibilities?

A difficult relationship? A frustrating job situation? A prodigal child?

Write a name or simply a key word that reminds you of this situation or person: _____

*****If you would be willing, this would be a good point to ask for prayer from your small group leader or me. Also, when we come together again for Bible study, perhaps you would be willing to share on this as well?**

Is there any reason why God can't break through and fully redeem and restore this seeming impossible situation in your life? (That's not a trick question.) Answer: _____

God's ways are not ours. Surely choosing a barren, elderly couple and an unwed virgin wouldn't have been any of our first picks.

God's timing is not ours. Surely, He could have broken through sooner than 400 years after His last words to us.

Read Luke 1:38 . . . Write it here:

4. What does this say to you about Mary's heart?

Read Luke 1:39-45

Almost immediately after Gabriel's visit Mary heads to the "hill country of Judea and gets an amazing, Spirit-filled greeting from her cousin. Elizabeth's words are actually a little poem in the original writing.

5. How many times does Elizabeth use the word "blessed?" _____
Elizabeth has a supernatural understanding of the importance of Mary's visit, and amazingly, so does the child in her womb!
6. ***Precisely*** at what point does Elizabeth's baby "leap for joy" within her?

Make a note of this in your Bible. Throughout Luke's gospel he brings specific and revealing events to our mind marking them at a precise sight or sound. Look for these moments as we continue our study.

Read Luke 1:45

7. Exactly why does Elizabeth call Mary blessed?

Had Mary even said anything yet? _____!! Wow!! How do **you think** Elizabeth knew???

From my heart to yours. . .

As I shared back on Day Three, when I found out I was pregnant after those seven long years of trying, I know that I was positively glowing. Glowing with the joy of the beautiful news, with the thrill of God hearing my prayers, with the reality of what was going on physically inside my body – that “pregnancy glow.” But it seems that while Elizabeth might have recognized the glow of pregnancy on Mary’s face, surely if she did, she wouldn’t be greeting her with joy and praise. Mary was unwed! If she was pregnant it was scandalous, shameful, not praiseworthy. And yet, here Mary comes, fresh from her journey – not worn out and weary and not even having passed the threshold of her cousin’s home she is greeted in an extraordinary way...Blessed! Blessed! Blessed! (Remember your word count back on question #5) When a word is repeated in the Bible – PAY ATTENTION. Something extraordinarily significant is happening and God wants you to perk up and make note. Elizabeth has divinely inspired insight at this very moment. We all know that women’s intuition is a thing, right? I mean, it is and I’ve been sorry when I’ve ignored it. But Elizabeth, through the power of the Holy Spirit, up-levels women’s intuition to prophetic word! How exciting!!

Do you recall how long Elizabeth had “remained in seclusion?” _____ (Luke 1:24) The fact that Elizabeth so perfectly, powerfully and prophetically nails the truth of Mary’s visit before Mary even says a word tells me something about her time in seclusion: She had been seriously spending time God. No fussing with nosy neighbors gasping at her pregnant state. No flaunting her miraculous condition to the village. No time for that! She was meditating, praying, pondering, maybe making little booties and diapers too! But her priority was her time with God. How do I make this connection? Because, as our Lord says later in Luke, “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.” Our initial response to things speaks volumes about the condition of our heart and our relationship with God. Would you like to more rightly, accurately, and instantly assess situations as they come to you? Spend serious time alone with God. Drop your phone. Turn off the TV. Be still and be with Him. In fact, why not get serious today – right now. And why not let someone know you’re serious. It’s like Elizabeth and Mary coming together and sharing all that was going on. We were made to thrive with connections. If you feel so led, let me know today, right this moment as you’re reading this that you want to level up in your walk with God. My phone number is 562.755.4964. Text me and just say, “I’m ready.” I’ll know exactly what it means and I’ll stop what I’m doing and I’ll pray for you!

8. What can you learn from Elizabeth both in this encounter and that with her initial response to Gabriel?

. . . Closing . . .

Looking back on Mary’s words to Gabriel in verse 38, “May it be to me as you have said,” are you willing to let Mary’s words be yours? Will you close and make this the prayer of your heart today? Name the impossibility in your life. Submit it to God and be willing to hear His answer which could be: No or Not Now or Not in the way you think...or Yes. Whatever God has in mind and whatever His timing is for you, may it be your prayer today that you would surrender fully and joyfully to Him.

— Day Six —

Luke 1:46-56

~ Mary's Song — The Magnificat ~

. . . Open with Prayer . . .

Pray that God would open your eyes today and remind you of His goodness. Ask him to allow His Words to bear real, noticeable fruit in your life and that you would be a “doer of the word, and not a hearer only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22). Write your prayer here:

The Bible was originally recorded in the languages of its readers: Hebrew, Greek and a sprinkling of Aramaic (Note: Aramaic is to Hebrew as Portuguese is to Spanish). When it came to translating the original it was first translated fully into Greek and then into Latin. It is from the Latin that we get the famous name of this powerful song of Mary: The Magnificat

Everything we read about Mary confirms not only her precious and humble spirit but her right response in every way to this miraculous news. She gets it right from the get-go too! Oh, that I could be this righteously spontaneous in my response to news – good or bad.

Read Luke 1:46-47

1. What does her response in this verse say about her view of God?

He should be M

This word is why we call her song the Magnificat which in Latin means: Magnify...to make big, enlarge, you know...like a magnifying glass!

In a world that makes big the most ridiculously insignificant and meaningless of things – clothing styles, celebrity whereabouts, pop songs, body types – let Mary's words call you back to what is ultimately important: Magnifying God. Make Him big in your life today, and I promise, you'll have little room left for worldly cares. Imagine each care you have on your heart today is attached to you by a length of chain. Every care has its own weight – some lighter some heavier than others. One by one they may be insignificant, but hang every last one of them from you and you are burdened. Now imagine God lifting each and every care...taking every chain away. In their place, you have the magnitude of God around you. Imagine your life being defined by the magnificence of God instead of the magnifying of your cares. As tremendous and powerful and weighty as the reality of God is, when we magnify Him, “His burden is easy...His yoke is light.”

Read Psalm 34:1-3 and Philippians 4:4

2. ***How often should praise be at our lips? _____

Mary has no need to work up to her thoughts on her news. It's continually on her lips. Is this you? What can you do today to make this your natural and immediate response?

Read Luke 1:48

3. Mary acknowledges that "He has been M _____" of her state. What was that state?

Read 2 Chronicles 16:9 and write it here:

Knowing that God sees and searches should cause the wicked to worry (Genesis 3) but it causes the righteous to worship! What a difference! What a relief. We have a God who sees. In fact, one of the many names by which we know God means just this: El Roi ("el-roh-ee") "The God Who Sees" is a name describing our God using the word "El" (God) and "Roi" which describes his nature. It was first mentioned in Genesis 16:13 by Hagar, mother of Abraham's eldest son, Ishmael when she was sent out from Abraham's camp and nearing death was ministered to by an angel who assured her that she would be blessed. Read the whole account in Genesis 16
Mary is aware God's awareness of her too.
Be assured, that God is aware of you as well. He sees and he cares.

Read Luke 1:49 and 1:51

4. Both verses remind us that God is M _____

Read Luke 1:50 and 1:54

5. In addition to his might, He is M _____ and true to His Word. Across time and through the generations He is now fulfilling His word and Mary recognizes this. She knows her God! She knows His Word!

Read Genesis 22:15-18

6. What promise did the Lord give to Abraham (v18) that is being fulfilled now through Mary's promised child?

Guess what? You are part of this promise!! "...all nations" that includes you and me! Praise God!

Mary's response in her song show that she knew what God had done in the past and was confident of His promise to continue to deliver and bless for generations to come.

Read Luke 1:51-55

7. ***List several mighty deeds Mary recalls that God has done:

How easily we forget, right? Ok, well, I do! Too often my mind and my heart are blinded by the present situation of trouble I see around when I should instead be like Mary and have continually on my lips His praise as well as recalling to mind what He has done. He's been faithful for generations; He'll continue to be faithful.

Paramount in Mary's praise is her acknowledgement not just of God's deliverance but of His ultimate Deliver – Jesus. She is fully reassured that He will deliver.

Read Luke 1:56

8. Time to do some math...based on the timing of Mary's visit, after what event does she head back home?

|

. . . Closing . . .

***Take a moment to reflect on what Elizabeth's and Mary's experiences say to us about *hope*. Elizabeth bears a child in her old age after all hope was gone...Mary pregnant before she ever expected and bearing the son of God who would bring ultimate hope to the World for all generations to come. What does this mean to you today in your personal life and walk of faith? Write it here and be prepared to share with your group.

— Day Seven —

Read and take notes through Luke 1:57-2:20

... Open with Prayer ...

Go to the "ACTS Prayer" page in this study for a refresher if you need to.

Write your prayer here:

... Active Reading — Luke 1:57-2:20 ...

Read the verses and take notes in your journal or pages inserted here using the table on page 6 as an example.

~ Day Eight ~

Luke 1:57-80

~ His Mercies are New Every Morning ~

... Open with Prayer ...

Pray that, like God's mercies, you would see anew the truths in His Words today during your study.

Write your prayer here:

1. Have you noticed? Mercy is a recurring theme in the opening chapters of Luke's gospel. There are only two books in the Bible that refer to mercy more than Luke: Psalm (21x) and Exodus (17x). Luke ties with Jeremiah and Matthew in his use of the word. "Mercy" occurs 10 times (ESV) in his gospel and half of those are in chapter one! Using BibleGateway.com or another online or print concordance, list the verses from chapter one where mercy is mentioned:

2. Write a definition of mercy (use dictionary.com or a good old fashioned print dictionary):

Read Luke 1:57-58

3. Summarize the four events/responses that happen in these verses:

➤ _____

➤ _____

➤ _____

➤ _____

Read Luke 1:59

4. Circumcision on *the eighth day* was ordained by God in Genesis 17:12 when he first called which Patriarch of the Hebrew faith? _____ Naming a child on that day wasn't a particularly Jewish custom, but was common in the Roman Empire. Romans named on the 9th and Greeks on the 7th or 10th.

Read Luke 1:60-63

5. What is Elizabeth adamant about? _____
In fact, her words are very firm: "Not So!" and probably shocked the friends and family who had gathered for the circumcision ritual.
6. Can you picture it? For 9 long months, Zechariah has been silent. I've had laryngitis and guess what? Not fun! I made up hand signs and spent a lot of time writing out words and my own personal hieroglyphics on a well-used notepad. One time, I just kept a small dry-erase board handy and scribbled my needs on it. By the time my voice came back I was pretty handy with that board and pen! I imagine Zechariah's tablet was nice and worn out by now! Nine months is a pretty long time to be speechless. In this dramatic, culminating scene he writes on a tablet to the amazed and clearly confused folks at the naming party. What were the words?

In the Greek, the syntax puts the name with emphasis. His words are best translated: "His name is John." In other words, the angel had already named the boy and Zechariah accepts the name as having already been given.

Read Luke 1:64

7. Immediately after the naming, what happens to Zechariah?

Like the word "mercy", the word "immediately" occurs frequently in Luke's gospel. Underline it here in your Bible and keep an eye out for it as we continue our study. How many other times does "immediately" occur in the verses we've already read? _____

Read Luke 1:65-66

8. What question do the neighbors all ask?

Isn't this the question all parents ask, if not aloud, then in their hearts? And yet, the angel had laid it out! The neighbors leave filled with the exciting details to share with all who couldn't be there. Not only did they hear the priest Zechariah finally speak, but oh, the words he spoke! Get ready, his words get even more wonderful...

Read Luke 1:67-80

9. This is not only a song, but as noted in verse 67 it was a _____
10. Underline all words in his song that refer to salvation. How many did you find? _____
11. Circle all words referring to mercy. How many? _____
12. Box all words referring to promises being kept. How many? _____
13. Infinitives (verbs that begin with "to" like "to teach") abound in this song. Highlight the ones you find. How many? _____
14. In verses 76-79, Zechariah speaks directly and prophetically to his son. Can you feel the shift? Can you hear the tenderness of a father who is in awe of what God is doing? Can you sense maybe even the aching heart of a father who knows the path set for his little child will not be easy? Write here the four infinitives Zechariah speaks about his son's future:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Read Luke 1:80

15. What four facts about John are briefly stated in this final verse:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Biblical historians note that the Essenes may have raised John. Since his parents were aged, it might be that when his parents died, and after being trained in the disciplines of the priesthood – meditation, fasting, and prayer - he left for the desert life with this religious sect and when he was ready to begin his ministry, he left them and began baptizing and calling all to hear the good news and repent!

More reading about John the Baptist if you have time...

Matthew calls John the Baptist “the greatest of Prophets” (Matt. 11:9-11) and the messenger sent to prepare the way of the Messiah. His coming was prophesied in the Old Testament books of Isaiah and Malachi:

- Isaiah 40:3, "A voice is calling, 'Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God.'"
- Mal. 3:1, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the Lord of hosts."

And the following New Testament accounts confirm his role and the fulfillment of these prophecies:

1. "For this is the one referred to by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight!'" (Matt. 3:3).
2. "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. 2As it is written in Isaiah the prophet, "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way; 3The voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make ready the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.'" (Mark 1:1-3).
3. 'This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, who will prepare Your way before You.' (Matt. 11:10).
4. "He [John the Baptist] said, 'I am a voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord.' as Isaiah the prophet said.'" (John 1:23).

... Closing ...

***God is calling each of us today to hear the good news and repent. When we answer the call, we experience His joy, His peace, His hope. We cannot simply nod to Jesus as *a* savior. Jesus came to be *the* Savior. Which of the statements from the songs we’ve read in our study to-date have resonated most strongly with you? Write it here and commit it to memory.

I would love to hear directly from you before our next meeting. You can call or text or email me with your response if you would like to. ☺ ~Jennifer 562.755.4964 jennifer@LaMiradaChurch.com

— Day Nine —

Luke 2:1-20

~ Glory to God in the Highest ~

... Open with Prayer ...

Before we begin our study of this familiar passage, pray for new eyes to see past the familiar and into the power and beauty of the most miraculous and glorious event in all of history. Pray also for your fellow Bible study friends that God would open their eyes as they study today as well. Write your prayer here:

|

Read Luke 2:1-3

“In those days...” Sound familiar? Yes? No?...go back to Luke 1:5

Now do you remember? Luke likes giving his readers a place to put the events and often that place involves the person who was calling the shots at the time. Naming the name of Caesar and the census would have created a very vivid recollection for anyone reading his account. For you and I 2000 years later – not so much. If I said, “In those days Kennedy created NASA and we landed on the moon...” or “In those days Reagan said, ‘Tear down that wall’...” or “In those days a billionaire businessman became president of the United States...” I imagine you’d recall all the details of what exactly those days were like, right?

So, for his Jewish and Greek reading audience anyone reading his account would have connected immediately to the events surrounding the birth of Jesus.

1. What people and specific places are named in these verses?

|

There are over 300 prophecies fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One mathematician has calculated the odds of one man fulfilling even one of those prophecies. For a point of reference, the odds of you rolling “snake eyes” (two ones on a pair of six-sided dice) is 1/36. The odds of you getting the Lotto in California are in 1 in 13,983,816. The odds of one man fulfilling one of the prophecies of the Old Testament are 1 in 10^{17} ...That’s 1,000,000,000,000,000,000

Read Luke 2:4-7 and the following prophecies:

2. What prophecies in each of these verses were fulfilled in just these few verses? Write the prophecy next to each verse:

Genesis 49:10 _____

Micah 5:2 _____

Isaiah 7:14 _____

Read Luke 2:8-20 and then we'll break it down a bit...

I'm not sure there is any way to read these verses and not hear them in the sweet voice of Linus from "A Charlie Brown Christmas." If you've never seen that Christmas special, run-don't walk-to your nearest video source and watch it! You can watch Linus read Luke 2:8-20 here on this [YouTube video](#). Or go to YouTube and search "Charlie Brown Christmas Linus Speech" and it will come up. Actually, even if you've seen it a kabillion times, go ahead and watch it again. It's not Christmas season...you have time!

3. Jesus was born in _____ The place of his birth is fitting not only because of its fulfillment of prophecy but because of the meaning of this town's name. You may recall from our previous study in the "Lord's Prayer" and "Ruth" chapters that Bethlehem means "house of bread."

Read John 6:35

4. What does this say about who Jesus is? _____
Jesus was born in Bethlehem! The bread of Life from the House of Bread. Beautiful!

Read Psalm 23

5. The Lord is our _____ Yes, a familiar passage again, but again, think about the Father's delight in bringing the first reports of His Son's miraculous arrival to whom?...Shepherds. Shepherds were so dismissed by the culture during this time that they were not even allowed to testify in court. Once again, God breaks through our expected timing, our expected methods and our expected peoples and brings about His will in His way. Don't forget, David, the "man after God's own heart" and the first righteous king of Israel, the one from whom both Mary and Joseph descend was what by trade before becoming a king?

Isn't it lovely that God let these lowly shepherds be the ones to whom He first brings His thrilling news. And not just one angel to do the announcing. No! By now, it feels as though God is bursting with joy and pride and rather than send Gabriel like He had done to Zechariah and Mary, He sends Gabriel and the whole of heaven to burst forth and singing the announcement!

6. When the angels first greet the shepherds, what are their first words?

Sensing a theme? How many times has this phrase occurred thus far in Luke's gospel? _____
Need a list? Luke 1:13, 30, 74

7. Write the famous angelic announcement from Luke 2:14 here:

This particular time of history, the region is under the rule of Caesar and is experience what is known at "Pax Romana" – Roman Peace. In spite of this time of "peace" God's message is higher, greater and more real and lasting peace...His Peace. There is truly no peace without God's peace. In fact...

Read Ezekiel 13:10

8. The false prophets are being rebuked for making what claim? Quote the exact words spoken:

Politicians, religious leaders, even motivational speakers for time and eternity make this claim don't they? Follow me...I'll bring you peace. Vote for me, we'll have peace. Think *this* way, and you'll feel at peace. But what does Jesus say?

*****Read John 14:27 and write it here:**

How does this differ from the world's attempts at peace? Or How have you experience the peace of Jesus in your own life?

9. After the shepherds came, what did Mary do with all this? (vs 19)

Sweet Mary. How I love your tender, pensive and humble heart.

. . . Closing . . .

Dear Sister,

How could Mary have known all that would take place when she committed "May it be to me as you have said." I don't think that her humble nature would have given her over to thoughts of grandeur in bringing forth the Son of God, but I can't imagine she would ever have thought she'd be bringing God's Son into the world essentially in a barn. From the time of Christ's birth to this very moment you are reading these words, the message is clear, this side of heaven, Christ's place is in our humble hearts and homes. My prayer for you today is that you, like Mary are treasuring up all these things in your heart – which is Christ's true home. I pray that you would reflect on these verses today and prayerfully commit to let Christ take residence in your heart and home – really and truly in every corner.

Until we meet again, know that you are loved and prayed for,

Jennifer

— Day Ten —

Read and take notes through Luke 2:21-3:38

... Open with Prayer ...

Go to the "ACTS Prayer" page if you need to review a helpful pattern of prayer

Write your prayer here:

... Active Reading — Luke 2:21-3:38 ...

Read the verses and take notes in your journal or pages inserted here using the table on page 6 as an example.

— Days Eleven AND Twelve —

Luke 2:21-52

~ My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation ~

. . . Open with Prayer . . .

Write your prayer here:

As we move into this next part of the life of Jesus, I want to remind you that while the gospel is simple, it is rich and deep - even complex - with meaning and plump with all that Christ fulfilled - as we have already seen. However, let's not lose in the details the power of the simple truth: Jesus came, and He came to "seek and save the lost." That's it. You can take that to the bank, or better yet, to heaven. Because accepting this truth is what is required of you for your eternal home with God. I am lost. You are lost. The sweetest, most innocent of person you know is lost. Jesus' own mother, as blessed as she was, knew this too. "My soul rejoices in God **my** Savior." She knew she needed a savior...The Savior.

The intent of Bible study is to, well...study. That means we're going to dig a little deeper and understand the background and the language, the culture and the setting. This will enrichen our understanding and I believe will give you a deeper love and appreciation of God's Word.

1. Have you ever done something (religious or otherwise) because it was a ritual? If so, write one or two (or more) here:

What are rituals?

A baseball player might have a ritual of putting on a lucky pair of socks before each game because the first time he wore them he won that game. That ritual is more of a superstition.

Some rituals are continued for no apparent reason...

Before a family dinner, a mother prepared the ham for the baking pan. She trimmed a large piece of the ham off and placed the rest in her spacious pan. "Why'd you do that, Mom?" her little observant child asked.

"I don't know. It's your grandma's recipe. And that's how I learned to bake. Go ask her."

"Grandma, why do you trim off the ham?" asked the child.

"Well, when I was first married, we only had a very small oven and pan. So I had to trim down that ham!"

Rituals come in many forms. Most are inconsequential, but God's rituals are not. Read on...

Read Luke 2:21-24

2. What rituals are mentioned in these verses? List them here (Hint: there are at least 4)

1. _____ (vs 21)
2. _____ (vs 22)
3. _____ (vs 22)
4. _____ (vs 24)

Each of these rituals were ordained by God in what is called the “Torah” and had been practiced by faithful and observant Jews since the time of Moses when the laws were first given.

It was not only important to Mary and Joseph as Torah observant Jews to keep the Law, but it was critical to the life and purpose of Jesus to be a Torah keeper.

*****Read Galatians 4:3-7**

3. Why is it important – to all of us! - that God’s Son keep the law?

|

So, from the very beginning, He did!

Read John 8:46

4. To what extent do Jesus keep the Law?

|

We’ve met wonderful people so far in Luke. I’m so glad to have gotten to know Zechariah, Elizabeth and of course, Mary...but two more wonderful people come on the scene and, like Zechariah and Mary, the next two lovely people sing beautiful praises to God. That brings our total songs to a grand total of Five! Five is the number of _____ (from Day Three! ...Good for you for remembering!) Songs of Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah, the angels, and now Simeon!

Read Luke 2:25-35

5. How is Simeon described and for what was he waiting?

Described as:

➤ _____ and _____

and the _____ was upon him

Waiting for:

➤ _____
(the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of Israel)

6. What was Mary’s and Joseph’s response to Simeon’s song?

|

7. Simeon followed up his praise song with a prophecy in verse 34. Based on what you know of Scripture, how was this fulfilled in Jesus’ lifetime?

|

More details to enrich your study here:

- The child was “destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel...” Read Psalm 118:22 which prophesied that Jesus would be the _____ that the builders (the Jews) _____
- “and to be a sign that will be spoken against...” A sign is a miracle and Jesus Christ is God’s miracle. But instead of receiving Him, what did they do?
 - John 8:41 (about His birth) _____
 - Matt. 12:22-24 (about His miracles) _____
 - John 8:48 (about His character) _____
 - Matt. 27:62-66 (about his resurrection) _____
- All of this (the above) was “so that thoughts of many hearts would be revealed.”
- “And a sword will pierce your own soul too.” This is the saddest part of his prophecy in a way to me because it speaks of Mary’s coming anguish. If you’ve seen the movie “The Passion of Christ” (and I highly recommend you do) then you’ve seen the scene where Mary watches in utter despair and anguish at the torture and crucifixion of her son, her Savior. Surely, this was the ultimate “piercing” of her soul.

Read Luke 2:36-38

8. Anna, whose name means “grace” was a _____
 Anna was from the tribe of _____. This was one of the “ten lost tribes” but some members survived as evidenced by this prophetess, Anna! Praise God!
 Her life was marked not only by her status as a prophetess but that she was a:

- _____ vs 37
- She never _____ (vs 37)
- She did these three things continually:
 - _____
 - _____
 - _____

Recall that it has been 400 years since God has spoken through a prophet, let alone a prophetess. Let this final encounter before the chapter closes remind you yet again of God’s nature to lift the humble... an elderly, barren priest; a meek virgin; a man of unknown status; and now a woman prophet. It is the trappings of men that oppress mankind. Not the will of God.

Read James 4:10

9. Who is lifted up? _____ **Never forget that.**
Are you poor? Widowed? A woman in a “man’s world?” Feeble? Be humble. God sees you.
El Roi is your God.

When the period had barely punctuated the final word of Simeon’s heavy prophecy here comes Anna. Old – at least 84 – and yet I have this visual (thank you again, Luke!) of her being full of life and on the edge of quirky. Think about it...she had no husband to stay home and maintain a house for so she was free to hear from God - directly as prophets do – and to devote herself to Temple life.

Read Luke 2:38

10. In classic Lukean fashion he brings this colorful and lively old prophetess on the scene when?
 Hint: like Luke using the word “immediately” earlier on in the gospel

There it is again, Luke reminding us that God does all things in His time, with His people, in His way!

11. What did Anna do?

12. To whom or for whom did she do it? Be exact. Go ahead and quote the verse word for word:

Guess what? If you are looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem, then Anna's prophetic words are for you today as well!! Anna would have been very familiar with looking forward to the "redemption of Jerusalem" and, as Simeon had just said, the "consolation of Israel." She was a woman of prayer and meditation of worship and fasting. She would have known the following Scripture.

***Read Psalm 122:6-9

13. For what should the righteous pray?

Read Luke 2:39-40

14. What did Mary and Joseph do?

15. Where did they go then? _____
Home. Routine. Normal. Family. Friends. Housework. Regular life. Wow. How could anything be regular after all that had happened?

We get a simple summary of the growth of Christ. Are you like me, wishing we had a whole book on his childhood? Many have wondered about his young years. In fact, much has been written and even recently a movie was made to fill in the blanks on these missing years. Sister, if God had wanted us to know of the details of his childhood, the way His earthly parents parented him, his teen years He could have and would have. But. He. Didn't. What we need to know about Christ is contained in the gospels and we need to trust that God, in His wisdom has given us what is needed. From verse 40, write what we do know in general about the youth of Jesus:

... Closing ...

Like Simeon, your eyes have seen His salvation. Simeon may have had the personal, physical encounter, but you have the whole of Scripture the complete history of the life of Christ and the knowledge of His death and resurrection. You have seen Jesus revealed in His Word. Today as you close this study close your eyes, hold out your arms and embrace Jesus the infant. See Him as Simeon did. Treasure Him and praise Him and thank Him for being a light to you and a glory to His people.

— Day Thirteen —

Luke 2:41-52

~ About My Father's Business ~

. . . Open with Prayer . . .

Write your prayer here:

When our son was around 7 years old we lost him at the San Diego Zoo. One minute there he was by my side in the souvenir shop looking at a stuffed gorilla and the next...gone. It was near closing time and the store was packed with parents and kids and newlyweds and teachers and students and for all I knew kidnapping marauders! I raced around that crowded store weaving through turning stands of monkey and flamingo key chains, "Jonathan?...Jonathan! JOHHHN-A-THAAAAN!!!!" I called – ok, screamed.

My husband bounded up to the second level which had an open balcony to get a better view, and when I looked up to catch his eyes hoping to see him point with relief to our little boy somewhere silly like right next to me...he just kept scanning and searching the crowd with a growing panic on his face, his head darting back and forth as he looked and looked. I alerted every employee I could find and they began to get the word out just at the moment when a sweet, blond-haired Zoo employee said, "Is this your son?" Biggest sigh...Yes! Yes! Thank you!!!

I rushed to her side, squatted to get eyes with Jonathan and tried not to wail and weep with relief. Glen, still upstairs, saw us hugging and headed back down. Oh, the surge of adrenaline, the panic, and then, the relief.

"Where were you, Jonathan?" I asked, holding his sweet face in my hands.

"Right here, mommy." He said innocently pointing to a low box overflowing with polished rocks. He lifted a shiny, purple rock and said, "This one's for you!"

Melt.

He had been squatting and digging deeply into that box to find just the "best and purplest" rock for me. I still have that rock today. Ask me next time we meet, and I'll show it to you.

After all the miraculous events, the angelic announcements, the powerful prophecies...this page in Jesus touches a little closer to home and earth and the regular...sort of. It's Jesus after all, but this is the one and only peek into his life as a boy. There's a precious humanness to this account that my mother's heart relates to – losing a son in a crowd.

Read Luke 2:41 and Leviticus 23:1-44 and Exodus 23:14-17

1. Including Sabbath, how many "appointed feasts" or "feasts of the Lord" were appointed?
_____ (Lev 23)
2. Passover took place at what time on the Jewish calendar? (Lev 23:5) _____ This would have been in the springtime.
3. For which feasts were male Jews required to attend at the temple? (Exodus 23:14-17)

- _____
- _____
- _____

Women were exempt from this obligation, but often, especially at Passover, it was a family affair. Since 1990, I have observed Passover with my friends and family. We follow the guide from the Torah (Old Testament) in the special rituals and foods. It is the highlight of our year - rich in meaning as every ritual, prayer, and custom connects the Old Testament with the New and finds its fulfillment in Jesus. We love to have a great crowd together to sing and eat and pray and thank God for His deliverance.

Read Luke 2:42-45

4. Jesus is now how old? _____ This is what is often referred to as the “age of accountability.” In Jewish custom, boys were considered old enough to take their place along with the men in the synagogue. Perhaps you have attended a Bar Mitzvah? This is a Jewish custom that came about after the time of Christ and is rooted in this custom. It is the ceremony when a boy (at age 13) becomes a “son of the commandment” (bar/son + mitzvah/commandment).
5. From this passage, let’s get a sense of what this journey was like. It will help us now and later in our studies to have a sense of the area in which Jesus lived. Use your Bible and maps (in your Bible or online) to locate:
 Jesus’ home town: _____
 Location of the Passover: _____
 Distance between the two cities: _____
6. How long was it before Joseph and Mary noticed Jesus was not with them? _____
 Traveling to and from a feast time was a huge affair and many, many families would travel together sharing food, materials, friendships and memories. In fact, in Psalms there is an entire collection of Psalms that would be sung for journeys such as these. These are called the “Songs of Ascent” – Psalms 120-134. Women and children often traveled at the front of the big caravan while the men and older boys traveled in the back of the group. Perhaps Mary thought Jesus was with Joseph and vis versa.

Read Luke 2:46-48

7. How long did they look for Jesus back in Jerusalem? _____ So he’s been at the temple, eating, sleeping, discussing all this time!
8. What was he doing in the temple according to verse 46?

- _____
- _____
- _____

9. What was the response to Jesus?
 Of “all who heard”

Of Mary...

Do you hear a tone in Mary's voice? I do! There is reproach and even anxiety in Mary's questions, "Son, why have you *treated us* so?" I can't really relate to Mary the "blessed virgin" "full of grace"...that Mary is pretty far from my reach, but this Mary? Mommy Mary? I totally relate to. Do you?

Read Luke 2:49-50

10. Jesus' first recorded words were questions. Write them here, the first question and the second rhetorical question...

Depending on your translation, you might read "in my Father's house" or "about my Father's business". But the former is a better rendering since He could have been His Father's business in many places.

There is a Jewish teaching that the Messiah would "know God directly without human assistance" (*Midrash Rabbah, Numbers xix. 2*). Here is an example, the first of many, why Jesus is the promised Messiah and why Jews should accept Him as such. Joseph and Mary didn't yet fully grasp who He was as Messiah. But little by little they would.

Read Isaiah 40:21 and 28

11. What rhetorical questions do you read here?

God has an expectation that we know what is most important. Jesus had the same expectation of his parents. "Of course I'd be here."

Read Luke 2:51-52

12. Luke gives us a summary of how Jesus continued to grow and clarifies that in all this He was obedient to His parents. In what ways did Jesus grow?

And is this not exactly how we should be growing?

***Read Proverbs 3:1-6 in closing and prayerfully consider how you can emulate Jesus in this.

... Closing ...

What are your expectations for God today? Do you have any? God may not be working in your life today in the way you had hoped for, but, sister. . . He is working. Mary and Joseph marveled at all they heard spoken about Jesus ...the good and glorious and also the anguish and pain. Mary treasured all these things in her heart. Are you willing to marvel again at Jesus...to treasure in your heart all that God has for you today? All of it? Close in prayer today and ask the Father to help you to truly treasure all His Word to you in your heart and that He would bless you as you live out your faith with a heart filled with His treasure.