



**LUKE: WEEK 2**

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## LUKE – SMALL GROUP SERIES

### WEEK 2: GREATER THAN A PROPHET

**Bottom Line:** Jesus is more powerful and glorious than the greatest of prophets.

**Bible:** *Great fear swept the crowd, and they praised God, saying, “A mighty prophet has risen among us,” and “God has visited his people today.”* **Luke 7:16 (NLT)**

In week 1, we looked at the origins of the Book of Luke. The book is actually a letter named after its author. Luke was a physician, a Gentile, and a ministry partner to Paul.

Luke not only wrote “Luke” but also a sequel, in the book of Acts.

Both letters were addressed to Theophilus. Their purpose was to give the reader a faultless history of the life of Christ and assurance that it is true.

The purpose of Luke’s letter continues today.

Luke gives the most detailed account of the birth and life of Christ of all the gospels.

He begins with the prophecy of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus, moves through Mary’s experience with Gabriel to the birth of Christ, and the announcement of the birth to the shepherds.

Also, week 1 gave us insight into the family line Christ came through, and His baptism and affirmation as the Son of God.

We concluded with Luke telling of Jesus’ identity being questioned through the temptation of Satan in the wilderness.

Luke wanted Theophilus (and future believers) to know that, even though the Messiah was a Jew, He did not come just for Jews. He came for all mankind to have the opportunity of salvation.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. A theme can be defined as the universal concept that flows and recurs throughout a story. What universal theme do we find in the Book of Luke?
2. Identify a fact about the birth of Christ that Luke’s book highlights the other gospels do not?
3. What confirmations do we have that we know Jesus is truly the Son of God? How does being confident in who you are impact you and those around you?

## LESSON

### Read Luke 4:16-44.

Over the next three chapters, 4 - 6, Luke gives an in-depth look at the heart of Jesus' earthly ministry.

The passages depict His rejection in Nazareth, His teaching, healing, and casting out of demons, The Beatitudes, and His selection of the twelve apostles.

The Nazareth experience is the first extensively narrated act of Jesus' public ministry in Luke's Gospel. Jesus' words give a complete description of the work that He will do, defining Him as one empowered by the Spirit of the Lord. The hostile response of the crowd foreshadows the rejection that He will face.

He announces who He is and why He has come. In this sermon, Jesus reads a portion of Isaiah 61:1–2 and 58:6 and gives us an example of His Spirit-empowered preaching and teaching. It is a simple sermon, with just two basic points.

First, Jesus is the long-awaited Servant of the Lord, the Messiah, the one who will bring salvation to the world. Second, the ministry of the servant is to proclaim good news to the poor.

In the second part of chapter 4, we find that Jesus has left Nazareth for Capernaum in Galilee. There He continues His ministry work of healing people, casting out demons, and preaching to the crowds.

As He did with the birth and early childhood of Jesus, Luke shares stories in great detail of individual experiences with Jesus throughout the book. Each story reinforces why He came, who He came for, and how to be in a relationship with Him.

Jesus is no ordinary man, preacher, or prophet; He is the Messiah. Luke is intentional in writing to reiterate this truth.

By the end of this chapter, we find that the crowd has tracked down Jesus begging Him not to leave their presence. **Verses 43-44** show Jesus' reply to the people, and more importantly, His commitment to what He was sent to accomplish.

### Read Luke 5.

Luke begins this chapter with the words "One day" as if he is telling a children's story, which has been his style throughout the book.

In the first few verses of the chapter, we see Jesus serving in His calling, preaching to the crowds of the shore of Galilee.

Because of the size of the crowd, He had used a fishing boat for His pulpit and taught the crowds from the water.

In **verses 4-11**, the calling of His disciples begins with Simon Peter, James, and John, all fishermen by trade. Jesus uses their trade to call them into something greater.

He did not approach them with scrolls of scripture. He met them where they were—literally and figuratively.

Christ demonstrates even in the calling of His disciples that He came for all humanity regardless of status or position.

When Jesus tells Simon Peter to go into the deep water, Peter is offended that a man with relatively little experience in fishing—a carpenter, no less—is daring to advise him, a seasoned professional. Peter knows that the middle of the day is not the time to fish; besides, they had already worked all night and had caught nothing.

Peter's response in verse 5 showed that he was willing to be obedient. He started with a sign of respect calling Jesus "Master."

The ancient Greek word Luke used for Master is unique to Luke's Gospel. The word encompasses the ideas "commander," "leader," or perhaps even "boss." With this title, Peter shows that he is willing to take orders from Jesus.

Once Peter witnessed the miracle that Jesus performed, he glimpsed the Lord's glory and holiness, and at the same time, saw his own unworthiness.

For Peter, this is a life-changing revelation. Jesus is clearly more than a prophet. The power He exercises over the world reveals that He holds a unique authority.

Jesus tells Peter, James, and John that the rest of their lives will be spent not catching fish, but men and women (verse 10). The enormous catch they have brought in points to the thousands who will turn to Christ through their preaching.

The last verse of this section models what is expected of every follower of Christ; these disciples left everything and followed Jesus.

After calling the first of the disciples, Luke uses the second part of the chapter to share two accounts of healing and the calling of another disciple.

**Verses 12-26** show us Christ the healer. First Jesus meets a man "covered with leprosy," then He meets a man paralyzed man in a very peculiar way.

In just 4 verses, Luke shows the power and compassion of Jesus as He interacts with a man society has cast out because of his condition. He is suffering from physical pain as well as social isolation, and the Lord heals him from it all.

The condition of leprosy is a model of sin and its effects. Just like sin, it is a contagious, debilitating disease that corrupts a man and makes him essentially dead while still alive. The man called out to Jesus begging to be healed; however, this was not the average request for healing. This was a faith request.

The leper did not doubt that Jesus *could* heal him, he only wanted to know if Jesus was *willing* to heal him. Jesus was willing because of the leper's faith (**verses 12-13**).

Not only did Jesus make him clean, but he also showed compassion for the man by touching him. This was a bold and compassionate touch from Jesus. It was against the ceremonial law to touch a leper, which made the touch even more meaningful.

Jesus possesses holiness that is not defiled by the unclean; with *His* touch, the unclean is made clean.

The man now healed was instructed to go and show himself to the priest to be deemed clean according to ceremonial law.

Why was this necessary if Jesus, the Son of God, the Messiah already said the man was clean?

According to the requirements of Levitical law, a person must present himself to the priest to be declared clean and restored to society.

Luke gives another piece of evidence to support that Christ came to fulfill the law. Luke's next record of healing is in **verses 17-26**.

Like any good author, Luke gives the characters and setting of the story upfront to give context to the events about to take place.

Beyond who was there and where they were, Luke adds a key supporting detail at the end of **verse 17**: "*And the Lord's healing power was strongly with Jesus.*" Luke's history is one of detail and intentionality in his writing, therefore, this sentence is included with purpose.

There was an extraordinary power with Jesus that day in preparation for the extraordinary demonstration of power and love to come.

While Jesus forgives this man of his sins first, He does not ignore physical suffering. The paralyzed man experiences both the forgiveness of his sins and the healing of his body (**verses 24-25**).

Once again, Luke's account emphasizes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Luke closes chapter 5 outlining the call of another disciple, a tax collector named Levi.

The call of Levi is like that of the fisherman. When Jesus said, “Follow Me,” the response was immediate.

Jesus broke social norms and condemned the Pharisees’ legalistic system of attaining righteousness.

The fact that Jesus ate with sinners shows that He looked beyond culture to people’s hearts. Whereas the Pharisees disregarded people because of their past behavior, Jesus saw their spiritual need.

### **Read Luke 6.**

Luke packs a lot into this chapter with a variety of anecdotes of Christ's ministry. It is in this chapter we find Jesus declaring that He is Lord of the Sabbath (5) and preaching the Beatitudes (17-26), love for our enemies (27-36), caution in judging others (37-45), and the correct way to serve God (46-49).

A key section in this chapter, however, lies in **verses 12-16**, when Jesus chooses the twelve apostles.

Jesus appoints twelve who will lead His church and the spread of the gospel to all the world. The number twelve brings to mind the tribes of Israel in the Old Testament. They are sent ones, primarily commissioned to proclaim the gospel throughout the kingdom.

It is important to note that there is a pattern among the synoptic gospels about this group of men.

First, the name of Peter always heads the list of the apostles. He is both their leader and their representative figure.

Second, the list as recorded in the Gospels ends with Judas, the traitor (**Matthew 10:1–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:13–16**).

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Rejection is not easy no matter how tough you are. It is typically not a good experience and when it comes from those closest to you, the hurt can go deep.

Why did the people of Nazareth reject the teachings of Jesus?

Do you think their rejection had a positive or negative impact on His ministry?

2. Why do you think everyday, common people were chosen to be disciples?

What message is Jesus sending to us through His disciple selection?

3. In Luke 5:20, Luke says that Jesus “saw their faith” referring to the men who lowered their paralyzed friend and as a result forgave the man’s sins.

Thinking about your own life, what kind of faith does Jesus see when He looks at you?

### **Read Luke 7:1-9:50.**

**Chapter 7** begins with a request of a Roman officer on behalf of his dying servant. This was not just any officer; he was possibly the wealthiest and most powerful man in Capernaum.

Before Jesus could get to the officer's house, the centurion sent word to Him not to come because he was unworthy for Jesus to enter his home, and he was not worthy to come to Jesus (**verse 6-7**).

What a profound confession!

What the centurion says next amazes Jesus. Even though he was a man of authority, he did not let it go to his head and remained humble.

In **verses 7-8**, the centurion recognizes Jesus is not just some prophet. He understands the power of Jesus as Lord. He asks Jesus to just speak, and he knows that his servant will be healed.

This faith is not a mustard seed, but an oak tree, and comes from the lips of a Gentile. Then, with a word, from a distance, Jesus heals the servant (**verse 10**).

The centurion soldier is an example to us that no matter our position or title, we are to remain humble and recognize Jesus as Lord of our lives.

Luke goes on in the remainder of this chapter to tell more about the ministry of Jesus including the raising the Widow Nain’s son and Jesus’ practice of teaching in parables.

### **Read Chapter 8.**

Luke begins to set the scene for another segment of Christ’s ministry. Just before we see another parable, the Parable of the Sower, we get a glimpse of some of the other people who followed Jesus, women.

This was clearly another counterculture move from Jesus. Eating with tax collectors, calling fishermen as disciples, and now including women in ministry. Jesus is unlike any other (**Verses 1-2**).

It is important to point out that these women were not just followers in the crowd. From their own resources, they supported His ministry (**verse 3**).

Luke goes on to include multiple parables in this chapter (**verses 4-21**), which Jesus uses to teach people how to live the Kingdom way.

In **verse 10**, when asked by the disciples why He spoke in parables, He reminded the disciples they had what others didn't—access to the secrets of the kingdom but that the people did not.

Parables are also easily remembered, the characters are bold, and the symbolism is rich in meaning. Jesus wanted the average person to be able to understand the Word.

**Verses 22-25** illustrate Jesus as fully human and fully God.

Jesus and the disciples are crossing the lake by boat and a storm comes down upon the lake soon after Jesus goes to sleep. Yes...Jesus slept.

Jesus was human, too, and was most likely sleeping because He was tired from ministry. This is not the first time in scripture that He took time to refresh.

The storm was raging (gale-force winds and high waves), the boat was filling with water, they knew they were in danger, and Jesus was asleep.

Luke's descriptions contrast the panic and terror of the disciples with Jesus' calm confidence as He slept.

At the cries for help from the disciples, Jesus stands up and does what only He could do: speaks to the storm (**verse 24**).

The scriptures do not say there was a gradual calm of the storm as we are often used to seeing. When Jesus spoke, instantly the storm ceased and there was peace again. The phrase "shock and awe" can best be used to describe the disciples' reaction to what they just witnessed. "Who is this man? they asked each other. When he gives a command, even the wind and waves obey him!" (**verse 25**).

Jesus slept because He was a man. Jesus commanded the winds and waves because He is God.

No mere prophet could do that.

Luke concludes the chapter with additional records of Jesus' healing power, the restoration of the demon-possessed man (**verses 26-38**); the healing of Jarius' daughter, and the account of the woman with the issue of blood (**verses 40-56**).

## Read Chapter 9.

Of all the events that Luke records in chapter 9, one of the most profound occurs in just 3 verses, **Luke 9:18-20**.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had large crowds following him. However, He was aware that large numbers did not equal large faith.

It's the same with us today. When celebrities or others in the public spotlight have large followers on social media, is it because the people following truly believe in the message that the person is sending or the brand they're promoting? Or is it because they just want to be part of the crowd?

Jesus wanted to know if the people in the crowds honestly believed that He was the Messiah, the Son of God. So, He asked the disciples what people are saying about Him (**verse 18**).

The disciples' response to Christ is much like the response some people have today. Some say Jesus was a great prophet; others say he was John the Baptist. Jesus then turns the question on the disciples.

It may seem like an odd question for Jesus to ask His followers, the ones whom He called, who they think He is (**verse 20**).

However, this line of questioning is not off-base. Churches are filled each week with people who come but may not really know who Jesus is.

Peter confesses that Jesus is the Messiah sent from God. What Luke's gospel does not record is Jesus' response to Peter's statement.

**Matthew 16:17**, however, shows Jesus' response to Peter's confession: "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You did not learn this from any human being."

What Peter confesses is that Jesus is not merely a prophet revealing God's way, but that He *is* the way to God.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do the two stories of the centurion and Jesus calming the storm tell us about faith? What do they tell us about the people He met?
2. **Verses 22–25** pronounce Jesus' control over the world that He, by His word, created. What comfort does this truth bring to us today?

3. Then, the same as now, people have their opinions about Jesus. Even today, some say He was a great moral teacher, a deeply spiritual man, or a prophet.

What do you hear people say about Jesus? What do you say about Him?

### **Read Luke 9:51-13:21.**

Throughout Luke, we see Christ calling people to repent and follow Him. Here at the end of **chapter 9**, He lets His disciples and the rest of us know that following Him is nothing to take lightly.

There is a cost to following Jesus, and He wants everyone to be aware of that and to make an informed decision.

In the scriptures beginning at **verse 57**, we see three people who verbally committed to following Christ; however, their conditions for following do not match the expectations of Jesus.

The presence of the kingdom does not mean instant power and position but rejection by the world. Being a disciple of Christ requires a focused commitment.

In **verse 60**, the second man asked if he could bury his father first, before taking off to follow Jesus. Jesus' reply may seem harsh, but he was trying to teach a greater lesson to the man. Jesus needed the man to see that nothing comes before Him.

With each request, Christ gives what would be considered a harsh reply, but He wanted each person then and now to know what is at stake: the Kingdom of God.

Man's desire for comfort and security can often hinder our dedication and obedience to fulfill the Great Commission.

### **Read Luke 10-13:21.**

Immediately following the lesson on what it takes to follow Christ, in chapter 10 He sends out his followers to spread the Good News.

**Verses 4-16**, Christ gives instructions for what the disciples were supposed to do, take with them, and even how to handle rejection.

They returned with joy, telling Jesus that even the demons submitted to them in His name (**verse 17**).

Like many of the previous chapters in Luke, he concludes **chapter 10** with more parables, The Good Samaritan (**verses 30-37**) and the visit that Jesus made to the home of Mary and Martha (**verses 38-42**).

Whether in a parable, or encounter with an individual, Luke is always careful to highlight Jesus as the Son of God and salvation is for all.

Over the next three chapters, Luke chronicles additional tales of healing, teaching, preaching, parables that Christ used to help the people understand His message. The book of Luke has more parables than any other gospel, so there must be something important there.

The parables contain volumes of truth in very few words. Jesus' parables are filled with imagery and are not easily forgotten. Parables are blessings to those with willing ears. In contrast, for dull hearts and ears slow to hear, parables can be instruments of judgment.

Regardless of the parable or encounter, one thing remains the same. The need for repentance and salvation is necessary to be a follower of Christ.

### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. In today's culture, if we go into a store and look at the price tag of an item, we can determine within seconds if the item is worth the cost.

Jesus was clear about the cost of following Him. The question to Christ's followers, then and now, was simple: are you willing to pay the price?

2. What are you willing to sacrifice to follow Jesus? Are you ready to leave everything and follow Him?
3. Many of the events in history are being repeated in the world today. Think about the parables of Jesus in the scripture passages.

Which parable parallels current events happening in society? As Christ-followers, what should our response be?