

Teachers Guide

Luke : From Physician to Gospel Writer

Study Summary

Who Was Luke?

Luke was a Gentile physician from Antioch who came to faith through careful investigation of the claims about Jesus. Rather than accepting the stories he heard at face value, he interviewed eyewitnesses, gathered written accounts, and cross-referenced testimonies. His analytical, evidence-based approach led him to conclude that Jesus was exactly who He claimed to be—and that discovery changed everything.

Luke's Journey

After meeting the apostle Paul in Antioch, Luke left his successful medical practice to join Paul's missionary team around AD 50. The shift from "they" to "we" in Acts 16:10 marks the moment Luke joined the mission. For nearly two decades, Luke traveled with Paul through beatings, imprisonments, shipwreck, and danger. He witnessed Paul and Silas singing hymns at midnight in a Philippian jail. He survived a two-week storm at sea when all hope seemed lost. He served faithfully in supporting roles—treating injuries, documenting events, offering companionship—while Paul preached and planted churches.

Luke's Loyalty

When Paul wrote his final letter from a Roman prison cell around AD 67, facing execution, he noted that many companions had left. Then he wrote the words that define Luke's legacy: "Only Luke is with me" (2 Timothy 4:11). After nearly twenty years of friendship, through every kind of hardship, Luke was still there. When association with Paul was dangerous, when others found reasons to leave, Luke stayed.

Luke's Legacy

Luke wrote more of the New Testament than anyone except Paul—about 28% of the total: the Gospel of Luke (24 chapters, 1,151 verses) and the Book of Acts (28 chapters, 1,007 verses). Without Luke, we wouldn't have the Christmas story, the parables of the Good Samaritan and Prodigal Son, Jesus's words from the cross, the Day of Pentecost, Paul's conversion, or the entire historical narrative of how the church spread from Jerusalem to Rome. This Gentile physician who never performed headline miracles or preached to crowds became one of the most influential writers in Christian history—simply by being faithful with what he had.

Key Scriptures

Luke 1:1-4 • Acts 16:10 • Acts 16:16-34 • Acts 27:18-20 • Colossians 4:14 • 2 Timothy 4:6-11 • Philemon 24

Discussion Questions and Possible Answers

Q1: Luke came to faith through careful investigation, examining evidence and interviewing witnesses before committing to follow Jesus. How do you respond to the idea that Christian faith can be an "investigated faith" rather than a blind leap? What role has evidence or investigation played in your own journey with Christ?

Possible Answers:

- It's reassuring that Christianity welcomes questions rather than demanding blind acceptance. Jesus Himself provided evidence—showing Thomas His wounds, eating fish to prove He wasn't a ghost, appearing to over 500 witnesses.
- Some may share that they came to faith through studying apologetics, reading Scripture, or seeing evidence of changed lives. Others may share that their faith came through experience or relationship rather than investigation—both paths are valid.
- The challenge is that evidence gets us to the door, but faith requires stepping through. Luke didn't just study Jesus—he followed Him. At some point, investigation must give way to commitment.
- For some, ongoing investigation strengthens faith. For others, questions feel threatening. Luke's example shows that honest questions, pursued honestly, lead to deeper faith, not less.

Q2: When Luke joined Paul's missionary team, he walked away from a successful medical practice and financial security. What have you been reluctant to release or sacrifice in response to God's calling? What security or comfort might be holding you back from a deeper level of obedience?

Possible Answers:

- Common things people hold onto career advancement, financial security, comfortable routines, reputation, relationships, geographic location, control over the future, familiar church environments.
- Some may share specific areas where they sense God calling them to sacrifice but have been resistant—a job change, a move, a financial commitment, stepping into ministry, letting go of a dream.

- Important to note: Luke didn't abandon his skills, he redirected them. His medical training served Paul's team. The question isn't always "Will you give this up?" but "Will you let God redirect this?"

Q3: Paul and Silas sang hymns at midnight in prison, their backs bleeding, and their feet in stocks. What enables someone to worship God in the midst of genuine suffering? Have you ever experienced unexpected peace or even joy during a difficult season? What was that like?

Possible Answers:

- What enables worship in suffering: deep relationship with God cultivated before the crisis, eternal perspective that sees beyond present circumstances, community of believers who pray and support, the Holy Spirit's supernatural presence, and comfort, focus on God's character rather than current conditions.
- Important clarification: Paul and Silas's joy didn't eliminate their pain; they were still wounded and imprisoned. Joy and suffering coexisted. This isn't about denying reality but transcending it.
- Participants may share experiences of peace during illness, loss, job loss, relationship difficulties, or other hardships. Listen for how God's presence was experienced—through Scripture, prayer, community, or unexplainable peace.

Q4: Luke spent most of his ministry in supporting roles—traveling with Paul, treating wounds, documenting events—rather than preaching to crowds or planting churches. How do you feel about serving in behind-the-scenes roles versus visible leadership positions? What makes it difficult to embrace a supporting role?

Possible Answers:

- What makes supporting roles difficult: our culture celebrates platform and visibility; we want recognition and validation; we compare ourselves to those in prominent positions; we may feel our gifts are wasted or unseen; we struggle with questions of significance and impact.
- Some may genuinely prefer behind-the-scenes service and feel relieved they're not called to the spotlight. Others may feel overlooked or undervalued in their current roles.
- Key insight: Without Luke's faithful supporting role, much of Paul's ministry would have been impossible, and its history would have been lost. Supporting roles have enormous impact even when invisible.
- Jesus's teaching is relevant here: "The last will be first" and "whoever wants to be great must be a servant." God's economy operates on different metrics than our culture.

Q5: When Paul wrote "Only Luke is with me" near the end of his life, it revealed both his loneliness and Luke's extraordinary loyalty. Who in your life has demonstrated this kind of costly faithfulness to you? To whom might God be calling you to show similar loyal presence, especially when it's difficult or costly?

Possible Answers:

- People who have been "a Luke": family members who stayed through difficult seasons, friends who didn't abandon during failure or scandal, mentors who invested over many years, spouses who remained faithful through hardship, church members who showed up consistently.
- Characteristics of this loyalty: it's consistent over time, it costs something, it doesn't require reciprocation, it stays when staying is hard, it offers presence more than solutions.
- People who might need this from us: aging parents, friends going through divorce or job loss, those struggling with addiction or mental health, people whose failures have caused others to distance themselves, those grieving or facing chronic illness.
- Challenge: Being "a Luke" to someone requires time, emotional energy, and sometimes risk. It's easier to offer advice or prayers from a distance than to be consistently present.

Q6: Luke documented the history of Jesus and the early church with careful accuracy, creating a record that has blessed billions of people over two thousand years. What truth about God, what testimony of His faithfulness, or what lesson from your spiritual journey should you be documenting or sharing with others?

Possible Answers:

- Answered prayers, moments of God's provision or protection, lessons learned through difficulty, experiences of God's presence, ways God has changed our character, spiritual milestones, and growth points.
- Forms documentation can take: journaling, writing out your testimony, keeping a prayer journal with answers recorded, letters to children or grandchildren, sharing stories with newer believers, recording video or audio for family.
- Barriers to documentation: we think our stories aren't significant enough, we're too busy, we don't know how to start, we feel uncomfortable talking about our faith, we forget what God has done.
- Encourage specific commitments: "This week I will write down..." or "I will share with [specific person]..." Vague intentions rarely become action.

Q7: Luke was not one of the Twelve, never walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry, and possessed no apostolic authority—yet he contributed more to the New Testament than almost anyone. How does his story challenge our assumptions about who God can use significantly? What limitations do you perceive in yourself that might not actually limit what God can do through you?

Possible Answers:

- Luke's "limitations": He was a Gentile outsider, not Jewish. He came to faith later than the original disciples. He had no official position or title. He wasn't present for Jesus's earthly ministry. He wasn't known for miracles or powerful preaching.
- Common perceived limitations people carry: lack of formal theological education, past failures or sins, not coming from a Christian background, personality traits (too introverted, not articulate enough), age (too young or too old), lack of dramatic testimony, ordinary profession.
- What Luke did have: skills he could offer (medical training, research ability, writing), willingness to serve in whatever role was needed, faithfulness over time, availability to God.
- The parable of the talents applies here: God rewards faithfulness with what we have, not the amount we start with. The question is not "Do I have enough?" but "Am I using what I have?"

Q8: If you were to write a "legacy statement" describing what you want your life to be about and what you hope to leave behind, what would it say? How do your current choices, investments of time, and priorities align with or conflict with that desired legacy?

Possible Answers:

- Elements of a legacy statement might include: impact on family and future generations, contribution to God's kingdom, character qualities to be remembered for, specific people or causes invested in, truth or values passed on to others.
- Common disconnects between desired legacy and current life: spending most time and energy on things that won't last, prioritizing career advancement over relationships, being too busy for the things we say matter most, living for comfort rather than calling.
- Luke's implicit legacy statement might have been: "To carefully preserve and share the truth about Jesus so that future generations may know the certainty of what they believe." His daily choices—traveling, documenting, staying faithful—aligned with that purpose.

- Practical follow-up: What one thing could you change this week to better align your life with your desired legacy? This could be adding something, removing something, or redirecting something.
- Consider giving participants a few minutes to write their legacy statement privately before sharing. Some may want to keep it private; others may want to share. Both are appropriate.



*"Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning,
I too decided to write an orderly account...so that you may know
the certainty of the things you have been taught."*

— Luke 1:3-4



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