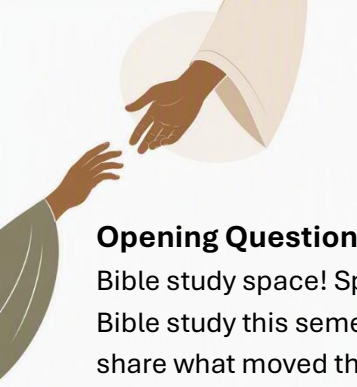




Week 1: Encountering Jesus Through the Eyes of Others

Luke 1: 1-4

Opening Question and Sharing: One of your main goals this week is to make people feel welcome in this new Bible study space! Spend a few minutes on introductions (name, major, etc..) and outline the basic structure for Bible study this semester (1 hour studies, different ways to engage the Word, open to everyone!!). Ask people to share what moved them to join this Bible study today. Then ask this question: The author of Luke uses the trusted eyewitness of others to tell the story of Jesus. What is one thing that you were an “eyewitness” to over the summer that brought you joy?

Setting the Stage

For the next 8-weeks, we are invited to join Luke as he narrates the ways in which all kinds of different people- with all kinds of different emotional, spiritual, and physical realities- encounter the person of Jesus. And as we watch and learn from these encounters, we have the opportunity to explore all the ways that Jesus meets us- in our joy, in our doubt, in our isolation, in our pride, in our need, in our hopes. Today we begin that exploration by looking at the author himself- who is Luke, how is he connected to Jesus and His followers, and why did he write this gospel? As we think about the ways these true stories of Jesus were passed down by those who lived them, it also helps us think of the ways that our faith is passed to us, and the invitation to be part of this great collection of eyewitnesses in telling with our own voices the beautiful, compelling, life-changing story of the great love of God as revealed in the person of Jesus. We are so glad that you are here to encounter Jesus together...

CONTEXT

Some interesting background info about Luke the author: (LEADERS: you can share this information or ask the group to share anything they already know about Luke from previous study or learning. And then fill in the gaps with this information)

- The book of Luke is written by the same author- named Luke (surprise!!)- who wrote the book of Acts. Together, these books make up a QUARTER of the New Testament (the New Testament (NT) is the second “half” of the Bible, focused on the life and ministry of Jesus and the emergence of the church).
- Luke the author is very unique in that he is most likely the **only non-Jewish** writer in the whole NT (this group is called “Gentiles”). Therefore, Luke gives us the really unique perspective of someone who came to know and love Jesus from “outside” the tradition of Judaism. Even though Luke was not a disciple or first-hand witness of Jesus, he shows a deep desire to share what happens in people's lives, hearts, and minds when they encounter Jesus.
- Luke’s writing is considered some of the most elegant and well-developed writing in the NT. This leads scholars to believe he was very well-educated.

CONTENT

Read **Luke 1: 1-4** and **Acts 1: 1-2** and then discuss the following questions:

1. Do any words or phrases or ideas stand out to you in these verses?
2. What has Luke done before writing? How has he collected his information?
3. Who is Luke writing to/for?
 - Leaders note: Feel free to look at any notes in your own Bible about Theophilus. The name means “Friend of God”, so writing to Theophilus could be a way to say “these accounts are to encourage anyone who loves and befriends themselves to God.” But Theophilus is also most likely some type of Roman acquaintance of Luke’s who has an interest in the Christian story and may very well have helped Luke fund his research and writing.

4. Why does Luke say he is writing this gospel?
5. What do these verses tell us about Luke's approach to telling this story?

While we don't get very many references to Luke in other places in the Bible, we do have three times he is mentioned in the NT. All of these come from the letters of Paul. Paul is a prominent missionary in the NT who helps spread the message of Jesus to the Gentile people. Much of the New Testament is made up of letters that he writes to the people he has met and ministered to, and these letters help us understand that Luke and Paul were deeply connected. **Read Col 4: 14, Philemon 1: 23- 24, and II Timothy 4: 9-11** and then discuss the questions below:

1. What further information do you learn about Luke in these passages?
2. All of these letters are most likely written while Paul is in prison. Although these references are short, what words might you use to describe Luke from what you learn here?
3. How might Luke's connection with Paul have contributed to his ability to write his gospel?
4. How might Luke's profession as a physician have prepared him to write this gospel account?

APPLICATION

How does all of this connect to our lives? Here are some questions to help guide your discussion. Choose one or several.

- Luke must have interviewed countless people and asked them to share about their encounters with Jesus. Where do you find it easiest to talk about your life of faith? Where do you find it most challenging?
- Sometimes we say that faith and evidence are different things. Luke seems to disagree with this distinction. How do you understand the relationship between faith and evidence?
- Luke gives us the gift of passing down stories of real people who have been changed by their encounters with Jesus. Is there anyone in your life whose faith story or life has influenced your understanding of God or been part of drawing you closer to Christ? Share about that person and what they have taught you.
- Luke's work as a physician seemed to prepare him in important and probably unexpected ways for his work of "careful investigation" and "orderly accounts." Are there any places in your life where your gifts or preparation for one thing ended up spilling over into another area of your life in an important way?

PRAYER

Close your time together in prayer using one of the ideas below

- Use words/images/themes from the overview to guide your prayer.
- Take prayer requests and pray over each other as a group or in small groups
- Use this written prayer:

God of history and today- We are so thankful for your Word, and for people like Luke who used exactly who they were to pass on your beautiful, life-changing story of redemption and love. God, if we are honest, we often are not quite sure what it means to encounter you. How can the God of the Universe really be present to us? Really be God-with-us? And this is exactly why we need these stories. Why we need to be reminded that from the very beginning of your interaction with humanity, your deep desire was for intimate, sustained, life-changing encounter. We are so thankful that this doesn't depend on us. We are so thankful that you are the God who seeks and saves the lost, who never tires of finding us in our regular, everyday, complicated, very human lives and changing us through your love. And so as we enter these weeks in your Word, would you remind us again that you are the God who never leaves us, never forsakes us, and dwells within every minute of our days and lives. May your Spirit open us to encounter you in these very real places, where you are already working and dwelling. And may we more and more be people, like Luke, who receive stories of faith from others with gratitude, and who share our own stories of faith with eagerness and generosity. We pray this in the name of Christ- Amen