

THE BIG IDEA: Seeking truth will always lead us - and others - to Jesus.

The Take-Off

I am pumped about this time of year!

I love everything about the Christmas season: the lights, the cold, the songs, the warmth of family and faith!
And this year we're using the Christmas season to start a brand new series through the third book of the New Testament - Luke.

In the weeks and months to come (we won't be in a hurry!), we'll learn a lot about specific passages in the book, but this morning, we simply want to take some time to introduce you to the men behind the mission that led to the Gospel of Luke that you and I have in our Bibles today.

The first 4 verses are all we'll need today to get a really good feel for this book, so let's read them.

1. Meet Luke

- a. The first person we meet isn't named, but it's the author, and everyone agrees that the author is Luke.
- b. [Show Luke pictures]
- c. Luke isn't Luke Skywalker, Luke Bryan, Luke Perry (maybe you'd recognize that name better with a younger picture), and, of course, we don't mean the Luke that a lot of us have grown to love - Luke Kuechly. (maybe we should start every message with LUUUUUUUKKKKKKEEEEEEE!)
- d. Luke was a doctor and a Gentile, so right off the bat we learn that he's a thinker and he's not religious
- e. If there are 2 types of people who don't do church, wouldn't that be them? Thinkers and outsiders?
- f. And yet, not only does Luke follow Jesus, he's the biggest contributor to the New Testament that you and I hold in our hands (or palms) today.
- g. Paul wrote the most letters, but Luke wrote the most words.
- h. What did he write? He wrote Luke and he wrote Acts, and those 2 books make up almost 25% of the NT.
- i. How do we know he wrote them? Well, we know it through church historians because Luke never identified himself as the author.
- j. In fact, Luke is only mentioned directly 3x in the New Testament.
- k. What does that tell us about Luke?
- l. He's humble, right? Another quality not common among thinkers who don't like religion!
- m. He's an investigator, too, but we'll talk more about that later.
- n. For now, know that the author of this book is educated, not raised in the church, and humble.
- o. Oh, and he's working for someone, too, and his benefactor is mentioned in Luke 1:3

2. Meet Theophilus

- a. Luke was humble, but the man he wrote this book to took humility to another level.
- b. In fact, if it wasn't for Luke mentioning him here as well as in Acts 1:1, we wouldn't know him, and that's saying something because of what we can figure out about him.
- c. First, he was more than likely a government official, because he's called "most excellent" and that phrase was used of governors and state officials
- d. Second, he was probably a Gentile, and more than likely either a new convert or extremely interested in converting to Christianity.
- e. His name actually means "lover of God"
- f. Third, he was generous. Tradition holds that this influential and wealthy Gentile convert commissioned Luke to write this book and the book of Acts, but we'll get to that next.
- g. For now, let's note that Theophilus was generous and invested in the kingdom.
- h. The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Where are we investing our resources?"
- i. You and I have 1/4 of the NT today because a man was generous and kingdom minded with his wealth
- j. What will future believers have as a result of how we're using our resources?
- k. I can say this: you sit in a church this morning as a direct result of a Theophilus who slipped this envelope to me after I shared the vision God gave me about starting it.
- l. All he said was, someone needs to fund the vision.
- m. Everything that's been done in the 4 years since we planted happened because of Theophilus-like generosity.
- n. [Pic of offering envelope]

3. Meet the mission

- a. Finally, we find out what exactly this generous man was paying this humble man for - an investigation!
- b. Luke wrote down an “orderly account” of what he had “carefully investigated...from the beginning” (v. 3)
- c. That’s the what - the book that we’ll be studying over the next weeks and months
- d. It’s the only one of the 4 gospels that is chronological - it’s an orderly account
- e. It’s unique - 41 portions in Luke aren’t found in the other 3 gospel accounts
- f. Because it’s written to a Gentile by a Gentile, it’s not very religious, and there’s a lot of explanation about the customs and traditions that Jews would have naturally understood
- g. So reading Luke is a lot like attending The Gathering - we try to do a decent job of explaining why we do what we do - why we sing so much, laugh so much, talk about Jesus so much
- h. We try not to take for granted that everyone here knows - that’s what Luke did, too
- i. It’s talk about Jesus as a child, elevates the status of women and highlights the plight of the poor
- j. All of that is WHAT Theophilus paid for, but here’s the WHY: he wanted to know the truth.
- k. Here was a man who knew that the generation who had been eyewitnesses to Jesus were about to die out (this was 30 years or so after the death and resurrection of Christ), and so he told Luke - go find the truth and write it down so that I can be sure.
- l. And he did - look what Luke wrote in verse 4 - I’ve done this “so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”
- m. It leads us to the question, “Are you an investigator? Are you seeking the truth?”
- n. If you are, your search will lead you to the Christ just like it did for Luke and Theophilus. Luke’s Gospel is a true story.

The Landing

All that leads us to this: be an investigator! Most church people are good instigators, but Luke and Theophilus weren’t stirring up trouble - they were looking for the truth, and because they did, you and I and people for 2k years have found the story of Jesus to be a true story.

You see, seeking truth will always lead us - and others - to Jesus. That’s our Big Idea this week.

Seeking truth will always lead us - and others - to Jesus.

[Close with the story of the Biltmore and turning the doorknob that led me, Wendy and a ton more people into an area behind the scenes.]

My prayer for you and all of us at The Gathering is that during this Christmas season - and throughout this True Story series - we would be doorknob turners, and that we - and the many coming after us - would find the promise of Jeremiah 29:13 ... “you will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

Let’s pray.