

# THE BIG READ

## Notes for reading- group facilitators

### 1. How do we set up groups?

Some will be doing this in groups which are already running. It will need to be explained to them that the Big Read depends on individuals actually reading their bit for each day! There are no pre-planned 'study materials'. The material is what *they* will have read.

Other groups will be specially set up for Lent. It is suggested that you look at the layout of the book and the number of weeks of readings and decide when you are best to hold your meetings. And ensure that those who sign up both have a copy of 'Lent for everyone' and are committed to reading the readings (if only in the abbreviated section!).

2. Let the group know in advance **which week's readings** you will be discussing. *Don't* plan to cover all seven readings; make sure they don't expect to cover all seven either!

3. Read the readings each day **for yourself**, letting them touch you according to your own needs. Be aware of **which passages may especially touch** group members, but know that you cannot prepare for all eventualities!

4. Decide which two readings you **might** focus on if the group are not forthcoming. If they do talk a lot it will probably be best to see **which readings impacted them most and find out why**.

5. **Encourage conversation about two of the readings**, or about whole themes which arise from the week. Be aware that some people will be very accepting of the message of hope in the gospel, and very moved by the stories. **Others might be much more questioning, as if to say 'well, these wonderful things have never happened to me!'** Do encourage both sides of the argument: scripture itself has this conflict (e.g. much of the Old Testament tells of God's faithfulness, the book of Job questions whether God might *not* be faithful . Luke chapter 1 starts about an orderly account and a secure basis for the gospel, and then introduces us to a good faithful priest, who is suddenly thrown into disorder and insecurity!)

The doubters in your group or the ones with a fresh approach, and the ones who are more 'traditional' in their tone, may all have something positive to offer. There is no need for all to agree or to have every question answered. It will be important, sensitively, to offer to God in prayer the things the group hasn't been able to resolve, or the further areas in which we might need to learn. Have some simple prayers or prayer ideas ready--not just out of a book or 'off-the-cuff' but something that will help express the needs of ALL members of the group.

6. You may like one week to try the 'lectio divina' divine reading approach, but do allow enough time (at least 25 minutes) for it. Give people a chance afterwards to say which of the four approaches came alive most for them and why.

7. **Think through *in advance* for each week ways in which Luke's stories may make special connections with the life-stories of group members. Have suitable leading questions ready!**

8. Be aware that some bible stories may bring up difficult pastoral issues for members. Allow them, if they wish, to share difficult experiences. **Consider ways in which prayer support might be offered, but beware of 'easy answers' for long-term problems.** Be appreciative, and never ever dismissive. A basic agreement about confidentiality needs to be achieved in the first session.



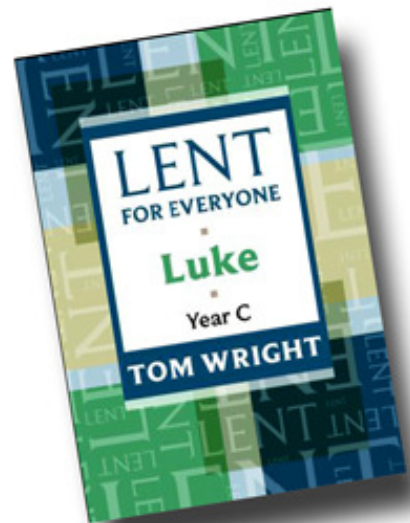
9. Agree with the group about a finishing time and stick to it.

10. Realise that you can't do everything in one night, but be deeply encouraged if your group has managed to learn in all these three ways:  
on the **affective** level (their emotions and feelings)  
"behavioural" (what they do)  
"cognitive level" (knowing more)

If you have helped them to learn deeply in this way – if only from **one** of the week's passages, you will have done a successful job – and left them hungry for more!

**Alastair Macnaughton**

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## The Gospel According to Luke

1. Part of a double work, Luke-Acts (see 1:1ff in each case). The gospel begins and ends in Jerusalem, while Acts goes from Jerusalem to Rome (“the ends of the earth”—1:8, the key to the structure of Acts). Thus: the gospel is preached first to Jews and then to Gentiles.

The geography is theological: e.g., Jerusalem is the start & the goal (Luke), and the pivot (of Luke/Acts). Luke probably wrote for Gentile Christians in a Hellenistic (Greek) culture: e.g., Luke’s genealogy goes back to Adam (3:23-38), whereas Matthew’s is from Abraham (1:1-17).

2. Luke is a deliberate reworking of Mark (see #3, below) from around AD 80; most scholars regard it as contemporary with Matthew but independent.

See Luke 1:1-4 for the liberty Luke takes with the traditions he has received and found. He used tradition creatively without being constrained by it; a first-rate storyteller.

Luke probably also used Q (e.g., 9:57-62, “Foxes have holes...”), and some material is only in Luke (e.g., the Prodigal Son; the Good Samaritan; Zacchaeus; the “good thief”; Emmaus, etc.).

3. From Mark, uses both the gospel form (that Mark invented?) and Mark’s pattern of Introduction, Galilean Ministry, Journey to Jerusalem, Jerusalem Ministry, Passion Narrative, Resurrection account. He made two insertions (Luke 6:20—8:3 & 9:51-18:14) and two omissions (Mark 6:45—8:26; 9:41—10:12).

### 4. The Structure of the Gospel

**1-2** *Infancy narrative*: who Jesus is; repeated pattern of superiority to John the Baptist

**3:1-4:13** *Preparation for public ministry*: JB’s ministry; J’s baptism, genealogy, and temptation. Note that Luke reverses temptations two and three, to have J end up in Jerusalem, as does the gospel; compare Matt 4:1-13

**4:14-9:50** *Galilean Ministry*. Note that 4:16-30 is programmatic for Jesus’ ministry as a whole

**9:51-19:27** *Journey to Jerusalem*: a peculiarly Lucan assemblage of incidents organized in a travel framework

**19:28-21:38** *Jesus’ Teaching Ministry in Jerusalem*

#### **22-23** *Passion Narrative*

**24** *Resurrection*: everything happens in or near Jerusalem, where the disciples are told to remain until they are given power from on high (24:49). The final scene is in the temple (cf. 1:8).

5. A few of Luke’s main interests, as indicated by the gospel:

a. Often regarded as an (ancient) historian. Perhaps, though, interested in order (1:3) and connectedness (e.g., via the fulfillment of prophecy or the divine plan--Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:38) rather than in history as such; interested, too, in human institutions (Luke 1:5; 2:1-2; 3:1-2);

b. Has apologetic concerns about Jesus’ innocence *vis-à-vis* the Romans (so Pilate declares Jesus innocent 3 times: 23:4, 14, 22; see also Acts 23:29; 25:25;

c. God’s offer of salvation is fundamental (1:69; 2:11; 19:9);

d. Emphasizes prayer and praising God (see the opening and closing scenes of the gospel and various times when Jesus prays);

e. Luke's Jesus both teaches about God's mercy for the ordinary people, sinners, & outcasts, and brings it to them. Yet Luke has a clear ascetical tendency: followers must take up their cross "daily" (9:23—compare Mark 8:34); possessions can be a problem—see 12:13-15; 14:33; compare also Luke 14:26-27 (must 'hate' parents, wife, siblings) with Matt 10:37-38 (loving parents or one's children more than Jesus is the problem).

## Part II: Why should people care about Luke? The Gospel as Formative

### a. Stories and how they work

i) See, e.g., Nathan's parable in 2 Samuel 12:1-7

ii) Some stories that are found in Luke only:  
Chapters 1—2, 5:1-11, 7:11-17, 7:36-50, 10:29-37, 10:38-42  
Chapter 15, 16:19-31, 19:1-10, 24:13-35 and many others

iii) Reading stories whole: the example of Luke 4:16-30

### b. Finding our own stories in Luke: some examples from Luke 1—8

- The childless woman or couple (Elizabeth and Zechariah)
- The young couple whose pregnancy occurs too early (Mary and Joseph)
- People who have to put up with journeys and homelessness at the most inconvenient times (Mary and Joseph, again)
- The old man who is (perhaps) afraid to let go, or who wonders if he can hang on long enough to see—what? (Simeon)
- The eccentric old woman who is always to be found in church (Anna)
- The families who do not understand what their teens are up to or even know where they are (Mary and Joseph)
- The religious fanatic who thinks he knows what God is up to (John the Baptist—or Jesus?!)
- Those who find themselves tempted by *good* things (turning stones into bread, etc.; it's a good thing to do but not what you know you *should* be doing) (Jesus)
- The people who are angry that their resources don't seem to do them much good (Jesus' fellow townspeople in Nazareth)
- The businesspeople whose business seems to be about to go under (Simon and his partners, 5:5: their business can't sustain too many fishless nights)
- Those who feel scared and out of their depth (Peter in 5:8)
- Those who are ill—which is all of us at some point
- Society's various outcasts (Levi, the woman who was a sinner, the Gerasene demoniacs, the woman with the haemorrhage, etc.)
- Religious leaders who are all the time picking holes in what people are doing
- People worried by the sickness of their friends (the centurion in 7:2-10)
- Parents whose child has died (the widow of Nain, 7:11-17)

- People terrified that they've got it all wrong (in 7:18-20, the Baptist asks of Jesus: Are you the one...?)
- Those who think there are things to celebrate and get on with it, regardless of popular disapproval (Jesus and his friends, 7:34)
- Those terrified that the ship will go down (8:22-25)
- Parents who are worried sick by their children's serious illness (Jairus in 8:40-56).