

# LUKE

## The Gospel of Mercy

### STUDY GUIDE

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Paul Thigpen, PhD

*In loving memory of*  
**Dr. Thomas “Tom” Neil Buckley, KHS**  
*husband, father, and friend*

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## WELCOME TO LUKE

The parable of the prodigal son. It's one of the most memorable stories Jesus ever told, remarkable for the image of divine mercy that it offers us. Like the father of a wayward child, Our Lord assures us, God rushes out to meet us as we make our way home.

Now the parable of the prodigal is remarkable for another reason as well: It's found only in the Gospel of Luke. In fact, commentators have long noted that throughout his Gospel, Luke focuses on God's mercy, presenting us with stunning insights into the gracious heart of God.

During this eighteen-week study, you'll be joining Fr. Jeffrey Kirby and Dr. Paul Thigpen to find out just why Luke has so often been called "the Gospel of mercy."

In the coming weeks, you'll ...

- ✦ Meet the author of this beautiful, powerful Gospel, learning why he emphasized the reality of God's mercy for all people.
- ✦ Understand more deeply how the events surrounding Jesus' birth and in his youth revealed God's merciful plan for the world.
- ✦ Discover how Jesus' mission of mercy was launched at his baptism and strengthened by his testing in the wilderness.
- ✦ Delve into Jesus' teaching about both divine mercy and divine justice, examining his parables about the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich fool, the lost coin, the lost sheep, the Pharisee and the tax collector, and the rich man and the beggar.
- ✦ Hear how Our Lord mercifully transformed so many lives by healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, and forgiving hardened sinners.
- ✦ Ponder the events at the conclusion of Jesus' earthly life that mercifully opened the gates of heaven: how he gave us the Eucharist and the priesthood, died and rose again in triumph, and promised the Holy Spirit to those who receive his forgiveness.

Finally, you'll gain a new appreciation for the Church—established through Christ's Apostles—as God's plan to extend his mission, through us, to the end of time. As the Apostle Paul, Luke's friend and mentor, once put it, Our Lord has chosen us to be "vessels of mercy" (Rom 9:23). God bless you as you encounter the life-changing Word of God and seek to live it out!

*Conor Gallagher, Publisher*



| St. Luke, Simone Martini, 1284–1344, Tempera and gold leaf on panel



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## UNDERSTANDING YOUR GUIDE

*What's inside your Study Guide for Luke: The Gospel of Mercy? Here's an overview.*

### Study Sessions

The *Study Guide* is divided into eighteen study sessions. Each session is further divided into a “Self-Study” section and a “Group Study” section. These sections are designated (along with the session number) by the caption in the colored bar along the outside edge of each page.

*The following elements appear in each of the eighteen sessions of the Study Guide:*

#### SELF-STUDY

The first section of each session, designated as “Self-Study,” helps you prepare individually for the group study. Before coming together with the other participants, you can spend some time on your own reading the scriptural text, reflecting on the study notes in this section, and looking ahead to the questions for group discussion. Your group may have you write the responses to the questions you can answer before the session in order to prepare for a more rewarding group discussion.

***Optional use of the self-study section:*** We highly recommend that you prepare for the group experience by using the “Self-Study” section. But we recognize that busy schedules don't always allow for that possibility. So even if you're sometimes unable to prepare ahead of time, the group session recaps, videos, and discussions will still offer you valuable insights into the scriptural text. As you view and listen, you can still take part in the conversation and take notes on the videos and discussions. In addition, as time allows, you can always go back to review the material in the book.

#### Session Reading

The scriptural citation at the bottom of the opening page of each session identifies the specific portion of the Gospel of Luke to be studied in that particular session. The scriptural texts quoted in the Study Guide and Leader Guide come from the Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition (RSV-CE) translation of the Bible. Other Catholic versions are available, but you should be aware that the wording of the biblical text will vary in other translations.

Non-Catholic Bibles typically lack seven books that are found in the Catholic Bible. So make sure the version you choose is an approved Catholic Bible such as the RSV-CE or one of the editions of the *New American Bible* (NAB). The Douay-Rheims (DR) version is also an approved translation and an old favorite of many Catholics, but keep in mind that some of its older language may seem unfamiliar, and many of its books have names that differ from more contemporary translations.

## Introduction

A short description of the scriptural passage being studied introduces the session.

## Prayer to Prepare for Study

Prayer should be an integral part of every aspect of our lives, especially when we embark on a study of Scripture. We must ask God for the knowledge, wisdom, diligence, and humility necessary to understand his Word, and for the grace to change our lives by responding in faith and obedience to what he says.

This prayer, included at the beginning of every “Self-Study” section, is attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274), a Doctor of the Church and one of the greatest students of Scripture who has ever lived. It’s a beautiful, powerful petition to Our Lord for his grace as we study.

## Study Notes

These extensive notes are in many ways the “meat” of this Bible study. They provide insights into the historical, cultural, moral, and wider biblical context of the entire passage under study. They will help you understand and reflect upon what you read in the Gospel; offer occasional comments on the text by the Church Fathers and other saints; and provide answers to common questions about difficult or puzzling passages.

## GROUP STUDY

The second section of each session, designated as “Group Study,” takes you and the other participants in your group through your study together. It includes prayers, videos, questions for reflection or discussion, and other aids to study: definitions of key words that may be unfamiliar; quotes from the saints and Church documents; and relevant citations from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC).

## Opening Prayer

The opening prayer is for the group to pray together. It’s adapted from Scripture—Psalm 19:14—and is prayed at the beginning of each session.

## Teaching Video

The Teaching Video, the first of two videos for each session, is hosted by Dr. Paul Thigpen. The Teaching Video for the first session, “An Introduction to Luke,” offers an overview of the Gospel and its author. In the sessions following, while the study notes cover the entire text designated for each session, this video offers a more focused approach. It provides a close-up view of a specific portion of the Gospel passage under study, such as a particular scene, event, theme, character, or parable.

While you and the other participants are watching, you can take notes on the lines provided under various topical headings drawn from the video presentation. We recommend this activity to help you remember what you have heard.

## Small Group Discussion

If your study has ten or more participants, you may hold discussions in small groups of five to seven. Each small group will have its own discussion leader prepared to guide the group. The





small group discussion for each session will respond to two sets of questions, “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application.”

### **Digging Deeper**

The “Digging Deeper” questions prompt you in two ways: First, the questions help you recall some of the insights you have learned in reading the scriptural passage and the study notes. Second, the questions help you reflect more deeply by considering some wider issues raised by what you have learned.

### **Life Application**

The “Life Application” questions are posed to help you consider how you might apply to your own life the key points from each session. After this discussion, you will be able to consider your answers in light of the insights provided by the “Life Application Video.” Answers to these questions will vary according to the life circumstances of each participant.

Before turning to the second video, the group will take a five-minute break to socialize, stretch your legs, use the restroom, and enjoy refreshments.

### **Life Application Video**

After returning from your break, you’ll gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD. His insights focus on how to apply to your everyday life the scriptural passage being studied. We recommend that you simply listen instead of taking notes on this video.

### **How Then Shall We Live?**

This section serves as a summary of the insights in the “Life Application Video.” Since you haven’t taken notes on the video, we recommend that you silently review this section to prepare for responding to the challenges in “Living It Out.”

### **Living It Out**

This section prompts you to pray, then discern and write down the changes that God is asking you to make in your life, especially over the course of the next week, based on what you have learned. You’ll be given three to five minutes to sit quietly and reflect on the challenges you face in this regard. Then you’ll have an opportunity to share what you’re thinking and feeling if you’re comfortable doing so.

### **Closing Prayer**

Each session will close with the group praying aloud together the prayer provided. Each prayer has been chosen for its relevance to some aspect of that particular session. The closing prayers are drawn from Scripture and other traditional sources.

## ADDITIONAL STUDY AIDS

Arranged throughout both the “Self-Study” and the “Group Study” portions of the guides are special sections with additional relevant information and insights. These are intended to supplement your knowledge and enhance your understanding of the scriptural passage being studied:

### Words to Know

A list of key words or phrases that defines terms that might be unfamiliar or expounds upon their basic meaning.

### Catechism Connections

Citations for relevant passages from the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

### Rome to Home

Relevant excerpts from Church documents such as papal pronouncements and statements of ecumenical councils.

### Voices of the Saints

Relevant quotes from saints throughout history.

## My Personal Checklist

At the beginning of the first group session of *Luke: The Gospel of Mercy*, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: Before the Study” (p. XIII), which is a list of some personal benefits that we hope you will receive through this experience. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page.

At the end of the last session of the study, you’ll have the opportunity to review “My Personal Checklist: After the Study” (p. 319), so you can reflect on the areas in which you have grown personally through the study. You’ll have a minute or two to follow the instructions on the page. *Both of these checklists are for your use only; they should not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.*



## GROUP STUDY SESSION PLAN

*What does a typical study session look like? Here's an overview.*

### Before the Group Study Session

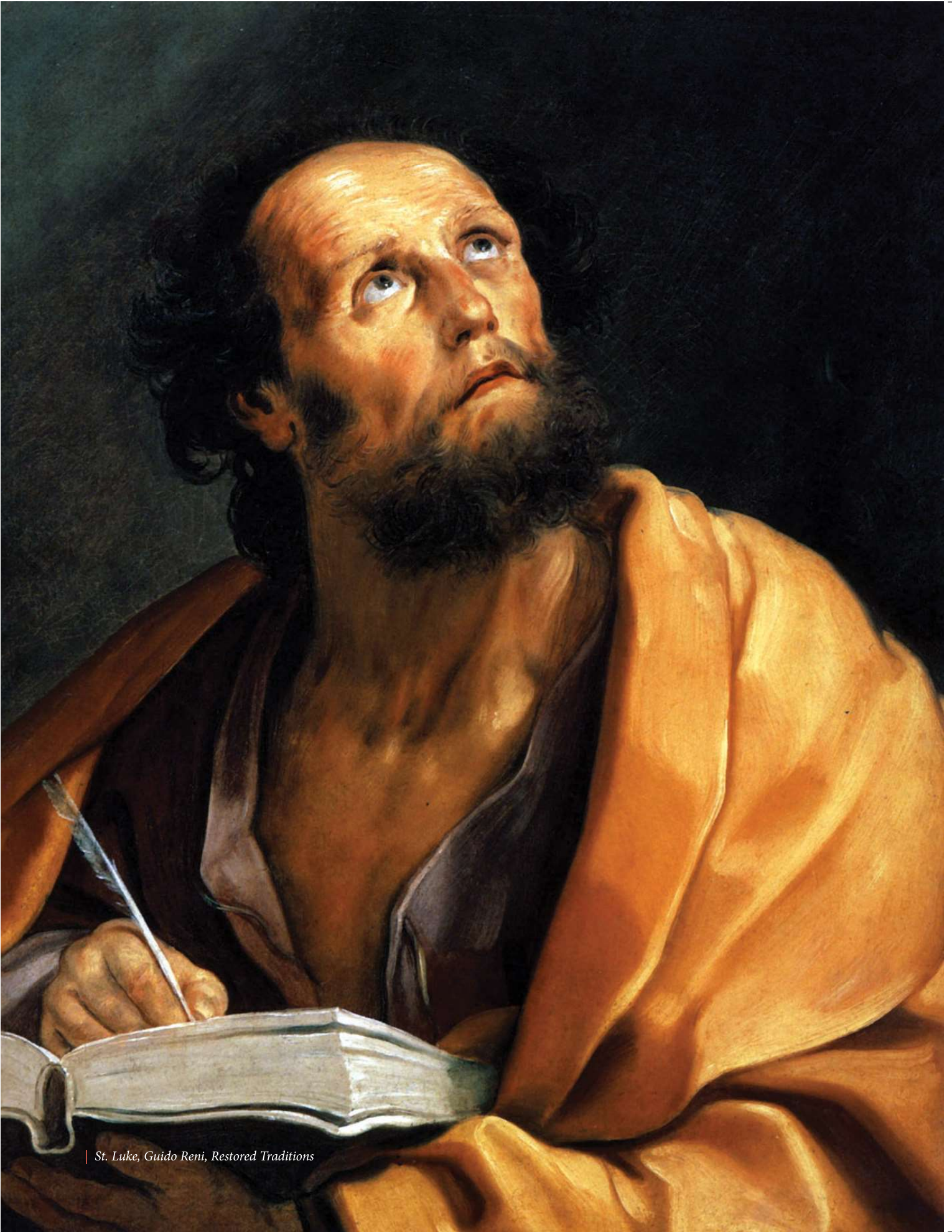
- ✦ Read the “Session Reading” and “Introduction” in the “Self-Study” section of the *Study Guide*.
- ✦ Read the “Study Notes” in the “Self-Study” section of your *Study Guide* (as time allows).
- ✦ Write your answers to the “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application” questions in the “Group Study” section of your *Study Guide* (as time allows).
- ✦ For sessions 2 through 18, review the “Living It Out” challenges from the prior session in the “Group Study” section of your *Study Guide*. Then consider in what ways you have responded to these challenges.

### The Group Study Session

- ✦ Opening Prayer
- ✦ Prior Session Recap
- ✦ Teaching Video with host Dr. Paul Thigpen
- ✦ Small Group Discussion
  - ✦ Digging Deeper
  - ✦ Life Application
- ✦ Break
- ✦ Life Application Video with host Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD
- ✦ How Then Shall We Live?
- ✦ Living It Out
- ✦ Closing Prayer

### After The Group Study Session

- ✦ On your own before the next gathering (as time allows), review this session’s material in the *Study Guide*, including the additional study aids: “Words to Know,” “Catechism Connections,” “Rome to Home,” and “Voices of the Saints.”



| *St. Luke, Guido Reni, Restored Traditions*



## MY PERSONAL CHECKLIST

### *Before the Study*

*Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path (Ps 119:105 NAB).*

*You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free (Jn 8:32).*

Here are some personal benefits you can receive through this study of *Luke: The Gospel of Mercy*. Check all those you hope to receive. At the end of the study, you'll have a chance to review the list again to reflect on the areas in which you've grown. *This checklist is for you only; it will not be shared with anyone else unless you choose to do so.*

- I want to know God more personally and intimately through studying his Word.
- I want to become more familiar with the Bible and learn how to study it.
- I want to find in the Bible the truth about God, myself, and others.
- I want to understand better the people who encounter Jesus in the Gospel so that I can learn from their experience.
- I want to understand more about God's mercy so that I can experience it more fully and extend it to others.
- I want to receive more hope and healing for the personal wounds I carry.
- I want to forgive myself for something in my past, even though it's difficult.
- I want to forgive someone else for something in my past, even though it's difficult.
- I want to be less attached to material possessions.
- I want to be more attentive and generous to those who are around me and to those who are most in need.
- I want to be more grateful for the mercy and other graces I've received from God.
- I want to be more willing to ask forgiveness from the people whom I've wronged.
- I want to become a more active member of my parish to help build the kingdom of God.
- I want to avoid rashly judging others.
- I want to honor the Lord's Day (Sunday) more fully and consistently.
- I want to prepare better for making good sacramental confessions.
- I want to reflect God's loving kindness to those around me.
- I want to appreciate more fully the meaning, the reality, and the power of the Eucharist.
- I want to accept more faithfully and joyfully the "crosses" I must bear in my life.

If you've checked some of the boxes above, *Luke: The Gospel of Mercy* can provide you with a life-changing experience. Join together with your community of faith to encounter God in his Word.



| *St Luke at his desk, detail from altarpiece of St Luke by Andrea Mantegna (1431-1506), tempera on wood, 177x230 cm, 1453-1454 / De Agostini Picture Library / G. Cigolini / Bridgeman Images*



SESSION 1

AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO LUKE

*It seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.*

LUKE 1:3

SESSION READING

LUKE 1:1–4

## Introduction

The third Gospel is a beautiful and powerful portrait of Our Lord Jesus Christ. But it's much more than just a portrait. As a part of Sacred Scripture, the Gospel of Luke is heaven's own invitation to us to draw close to the Son of God. You could call it a divine summons: to know Jesus Christ; to love, serve, and become like him; and to awaken everyone we know to the good news of his salvation.

Salvation is possible because of the abundant mercy of God, flowing out from his heart to a blind and broken world. For this reason, St. Luke, the author of the third Gospel, returns again and again to the theme of divine mercy—God's offer of forgiveness, reconciliation, and transformation.

This session provides an overview of the author and the text by addressing these important questions: What do we know about Luke himself? How did he write this book, and why? What sets this Gospel apart from the other three biblical Gospels? And most importantly: Are we willing to let this book change our lives?

## Prayer to Prepare for Study

*Lord, my God, bestow upon me an understanding that knows You, diligence in seeking You, wisdom in finding You, a way of life that is pleasing to You, perseverance that waits trustfully for You, and confidence that I shall embrace You at the last. Amen.*

—Prayer of St. Thomas Aquinas before study

## Study Notes

*These notes provide insights to help you understand and reflect upon the biblical text.*

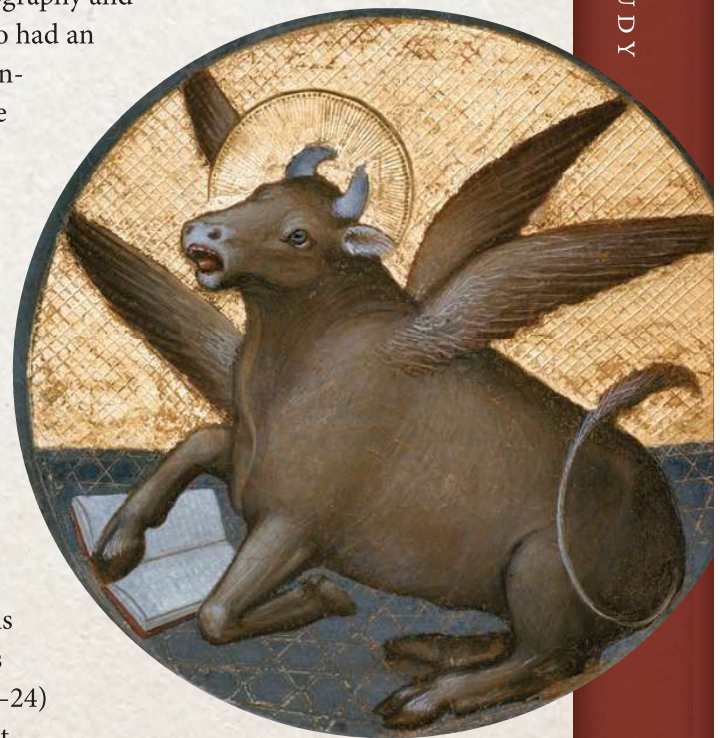
- ♣ According to ancient tradition, Luke was from Antioch in Syria, the only known Gentile (non-Jewish) author of the New Testament (Col 4:10–14).
- ♣ Luke was a disciple of St. Paul and learned the gospel from him (Phlm 1:24; 2 Tm 4:11). His writing reflects several themes from St. Paul, including a focus on God's mercy, salvation history, the redemption of the Gentiles, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the call of the disciple to continue the work of Jesus Christ.
- ♣ Luke wrote his Gospel and Acts of the Apostles as a single work (Lk 1:1–4; Acts 1:1–2). Some scholars believe that the Church later divided Luke's Gospel from Acts in order to have the four Gospel books and Acts parallel the five books of the Pentateuch in the Old Testament (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy). Given that division, it would seem to make sense that the books would be ordered Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, and John, so that the two parts of Luke's work would remain together. But from ancient times,





the Church has considered the Gospels the most important books in the New Testament, first in honor. So they were placed together and before all the other books.

- ✦ Why, then, wouldn't Luke have been listed as the fourth Gospel, with Acts placed immediately after it? The ordering of the Gospels in ancient lists varies, and some of those lists actually do place Luke fourth, perhaps for that very reason. Even so, the order that seems to be the most ancient is the present one. This order probably became standard because it reflects the chronological order of the Gospels' composition according to ancient tradition, with John last. So John had to be placed between Luke and Acts.
- ✦ Luke was a well-educated and well-traveled man. His writing displays a wide knowledge of the Mediterranean world, its geography and culture (see Acts, especially chapters 16–28). He also had an extensive knowledge of Jewish culture and history, including the Septuagint—the Greek translation of the Old Testament widely used at that time. He writes some of the most elegantly-styled Greek to appear in the New Testament.
- ✦ Luke was a physician by profession, so he emphasizes scenes of medical interest (such as healing miracles) in his Gospel and Acts (Col 4:14). It is possible that he studied medicine at the famous school in Tarsus and met the Apostle Paul while there.
- ✦ Luke was the only one among the “apostolic men” (those associated with the Apostles) and the Gospel writers who did not meet the Lord during his public ministry. Some traditions suggest that he was one of the seventy disciples sent out to preach (10:1–24) or the second disciple (along with Cleopas) who met Jesus on the way to Emmaus (24:13). But these suggestions are difficult to reconcile with Luke's own statement implying that he was not among the eyewitnesses to the events he recorded in his Gospel (1:1–4).
- ✦ The principal relics of Luke are contained in the Abbey of St. Giustina in Padua, Italy. The saint's feast day is October 18, and his Gospel is used for the “C” cycle of Sunday Mass readings.
- ✦ One tradition holds that Luke wrote his Gospel (twenty-four chapters) and Acts of the Apostles (twenty-eight chapters) during St. Paul's two-year imprisonment, sometime between A.D. 62 and 68. But scholars debate the matter, and others consider a later date of A.D. 80 to 90 more probable for the full composition.



| *Winged cow with a book, symbol of Saint Luke the Evangelist. Detail of the frescoes with the Stories of Genesis, by Giusto de' Menabuoi, in the Baptistery of Padua / Alinari / Bridgeman Images*

## LUKE: THE GOSPEL OF MERCY

- ✦ Luke’s writings are addressed to “Theophilus” (1:3) which means “loved by God” or “lover of God.” There may have been an individual with this name or title, but it may well be a general designation for all people of good will (especially the Gentiles) who are seeking to be “lovers of God.” Luke stresses the universal offer of salvation for all people in an attempt to receive a large Gentile hearing for the message of Jesus Christ.
- ✦ In his writings, Luke follows the classical historiographical tradition—the standard protocols for writing history in his culture. His opening prologue imitates the style of Greek and Roman historians of his day. He provides a geographical and chronological framework for his story by noting where events took place and who was occupying secular positions of power at various times. (There was no universally accepted method of dating at the time, so identifying publicly known rulers established a timeframe.)
- ✦ Luke’s historical approach is reflected as well in that he attempted a chronological biography of Jesus, the only Gospel writer to do so (Lk 1:1–4). The other three Gospel writers had other concerns that governed the structure of their works: Matthew, writing primarily for a Jewish audience, makes frequent reference to the Law of Moses and the Prophets, emphasizing Jesus as both the new Moses and the new David. Mark provides a compact handbook for living the Christian way of life. And John’s Gospel follows the Jewish liturgical year, showing Jesus as the new Temple.
- ✦ Writing from a Greek perspective, Luke is unique in his stress on the role of women and of Gentiles in the Lord’s ministry, both in his Gospel and in Acts. He also echoes the Old Testament emphasis on God’s care for the poor and lowly.
- ✦ Luke’s style of narration could be described as a “foot and food” approach. His Gospel reflects a Mediterranean culture in that much of the narrative revolves around Jesus’ walking or being at a meal. This narrative pattern culminates in the Emmaus scene at the end of his Gospel (24:13–35).
- ✦ As a physician, Luke is deeply aware of the human condition, so he provides some warm pastoral stories from the Lord Jesus that are not given in the other Gospels. These include



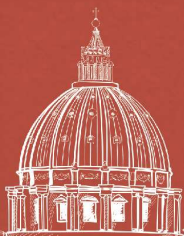
| *St. Luke painting a portrait of Our Lady holding her infant son Jesus Christ by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, best known as Guercino, Italy (16th century) / Restored Traditions*



the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, and the good thief (15:11–32; 10:25–37; 23:39–43). He also uses precise medical terms typically found only in the technical medical literature of his day.

- ✦ Tradition teaches that Mary was one of the eyewitnesses interviewed by Luke in the writing of his Gospel (1:1–4). He includes details that could have been known only to Mary or to someone close to her, such as the events of the Annunciation and her pondering of events in her heart (1:26–38; 2:19, 51). One uncertain tradition that can be traced back to the eighth century claims Luke was an artist who drew several images of Mary that are now venerated in several churches throughout the world.
- ✦ Luke visited St. Paul frequently during his two-year house imprisonment (Acts 28:30), and may have had extensive access during this time to other early Church leaders—the “eyewitnesses” (Lk 1:2), such as St. Peter.
- ✦ Luke is frequently mentioned alongside St. Mark (Phlm 1:24; 2 Tm 4:11). He seems to have used Mark’s Gospel (according to tradition, written at the feet of St. Peter) in the composition of his own Gospel.
- ✦ As a disciple of St. Paul, Luke was involved in his apostolic journeys. Beginning in Acts 16:10, Luke often speaks in the first person (“we”) because of his involvement in the work.
- ✦ Eusebius, a fourth-century Bishop of Caesaria (d. before A.D. 341), is known as the “Father of Church History.” He reported in his Ecclesiastical History (3.4): “They say that Paul was actually accustomed to quote the Gospel according to St. Luke.”

*To prepare for small group discussion, turn ahead now to this session’s “Digging Deeper” and “Life Application” sections.*



## Rome to Home

Now more than ever, in a world that is often without light and without the courage of noble ideals, people need the fresh, vital spirituality of the Gospel. Do not be afraid to go out on the streets and into public places, like the first Apostles who preached Christ and the Good News of salvation in the squares of cities, towns and villages. This is no time to be ashamed of the Gospel! It is the time to preach it from the rooftops. Do not be afraid to break out of comfortable and routine modes of living, in order to take up the challenge of making Christ known in the modern metropolis. . . . The Gospel must not be hidden because of fear or indifference. It was never meant to be hidden away in private.

—St. John Paul II, *World Youth Day Homily*,  
Denver, Colorado, August 15, 1993

## Opening Prayer

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer!*

—Psalm 19:14

## Teaching Video

*This first video, hosted by Dr. Paul Thigpen, focuses on certain themes and passages from the Gospel of Luke. Here are some key highlights of his presentation, with room to take notes as you view the video to assist you in the group discussion.*

### Why Luke wrote the Gospel and the Book of Acts

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### What we know about Luke

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### Evidence that Luke was writing as both an historian and an evangelist

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**Major themes of the book**

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**Literary genres in the book**

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**Material unique to Luke's Gospel**

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### Catechism Connections

*These readings from the Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) will deepen your understanding of this session's presentations and discussions. The numbers identify the relevant paragraphs in the Catechism.*

- ✦ The inspiration and truth of Sacred Scripture: CCC 101–108.
- ✦ The Holy Spirit interprets Sacred Scripture: CCC 109–114.
- ✦ The gospel is for the entire human race: CCC 831.
- ✦ The missionary mandate of the Church follows from her catholic nature: CCC 849–856.

## Small Group Discussion

### DIGGING DEEPER

1. Why would the early Christians need a reliable historical record of Jesus' life and ministry, and of the early days of the Church? Why would they need a written record in addition to the preaching of the Apostles?

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2. What aspects of Luke's training, skills, gifts, and personal experience made him especially well suited to write these particular books (his Gospel and the Book of Acts)?

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3. Why would Luke consider it essential for the earliest Christians to recognize that God's offer of salvation was universal—for both Jews and Gentiles; men and women; the rich, prominent, and powerful; and the poor, lowly, and weak?

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*Pentecost, 16th century, Portuguese painting / De Agostini Picture Library / G. Dagli Orti / Bridgeman Images*



4. Why was it so important for Luke to emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus and the life of the early Church?

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5. Why was it so important for Luke to place his account of Jesus' life and ministry, and of the early days of the Church, in the context of earlier events in salvation history?

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**LIFE APPLICATION**

1. What do we hope to learn from Luke's Gospel that could strengthen our faith and hope in God, and deepen our love for him and for others?

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2. What implications for our personal relationships do we find in the Gospel's declaration that God invites every single person to repentance and redemption in Jesus Christ?

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## LUKE: THE GOSPEL OF MERCY

3. In what practical ways might we get to know the Holy Spirit better and rely on him more to bear spiritual fruit in our lives?

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| *The Four Evangelists (oil on panel), French School, (16th century) / Musee National de la Renaissance, Ecouen, France / Bridgeman Images*

## Life Application Video

After breaking from your small group discussion, gather to watch the second video, a pastoral reflection from Fr. Jeffrey Kirby, STD.



## Voices of the Saints

Luke writes his Gospel to Theophilus, that is, to the one whom God loves. But if you love God, it was also written to you. And if it was written to you, you too must fulfill the duty of an evangelist. Diligently keep this token of Luke's friendship close to your heart.

—St. Ambrose of Milan





## How Then Shall We Live?

*Silently review the following summary of Fr. Kirby's reflection to prepare for answering the questions in "Living It Out."*

Look at what the Lord was able to accomplish in and through Luke, who was actually a Gentile, not one of the original Chosen People. And yet all that God has accomplished through this beloved physician, he seeks to do in and through each of us according to our own vocation and state in life.

Will we take the great leap of faith and allow God to do a great work in us and in the midst of our world today? Are we willing to leave our comfort zone—to be like Luke, the Gentile, leaving what he knew best and entering on a whole new journey? Will we dare to live in Jesus Christ and allow His grace to transform us and others through us?

God calls every one of us, as he called Luke, to share his good news, to live out the gospel, each of us in our own way. What work does God want to do in your life? Is he calling you to forgive or befriend someone? What good news is he asking you to carry to others, or to receive from others?



| *Light at the end of the tunnel, © GlebStock, Shutterstock*

Out of what kind of darkness is God calling you? What marvelous light does he desire to give you? What work does God want to accomplish in your marriage and family? And what about your neighbors? Is God calling you to go the extra mile for a neighbor? Is he calling you to a greater charity and service to others? Perhaps God wants to send you as a missionary into your work place.

And what about the poor? Do you recognize them in your life—those who need food, love, or the talents that only you possess?

Let's say to Jesus, "Yes, Lord, I will follow. I will let you work. Come, give me your grace, and let me be your instrument in my world today."

## Living It Out

*On your own, spend three to five minutes praying, discerning, and writing down the specific ways that God might be calling you to make changes in your life. Share and discuss afterwards only if you feel comfortable doing so.*

Consider this week how God is calling you to ...

- ✦ Move out of your comfort zone to share some aspect of the Gospel with someone you know.
- ✦ Demonstrate God's mercy to someone who needs it.
- ✦ Cooperate with the Holy Spirit to cultivate a particular virtue in your life.



| *The chair of St. Peter, detail of the stained glass window behind, 1665 (detail of 158488), Bernini, Gian Lorenzo (1598-1680) / St. Peter's, Vatican City / Photographer Craig Mace.*



## Words to Know

**Evangelists, the Four:** Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; according to ancient tradition, the writers of the four biblical Gospels.

**Gentiles:** People who are not Jews.

**Gospel:** Literally, “good news.” In general, the term is used to refer to the “good news” of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ. It is also used to refer to any one of the first four books in the New Testament that record the events of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

**Martyrology, Roman:** A martyrology is a list for every day of the year of martyrs and other saints whose feasts or commemorations occur on each day, usually with a brief note about each one. The Roman Martyrology is the official martyrology of the Catholic Church, extensive though not exhaustive, and subject to historical revision.

**Pentateuch:** The first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Also known as “the Law” or “the Book of the Law of Moses.”

**Prologue:** A separate, introductory section of a literary work. Both the Gospel of Luke and the Gospel of John feature a prologue.

**Septuagint:** A Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, begun in Alexandria, Egypt, in the third century B.C. and completed around 100 B.C. It also includes several books not found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Early Christians writing in Greek often quoted the Septuagint when citing the Old Testament.

**Theophilus:** Greek name meaning “lover of God” or “loved by God.” Luke addresses his Gospel and the Book of Acts to Theophilus.

## Closing Prayer

*Lord, your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*

*I am your servant; give me discernment so that I may know your decrees.*

*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

*I long for your salvation, Lord; your teaching is my delight.*

—Adapted from Ps 119:105, 125, 130, 174



*The Annunciation, before 1652 (oil on canvas), Le Sueur, Eustache (1617-55) / Louvre, Paris, France / Bridgeman Images*