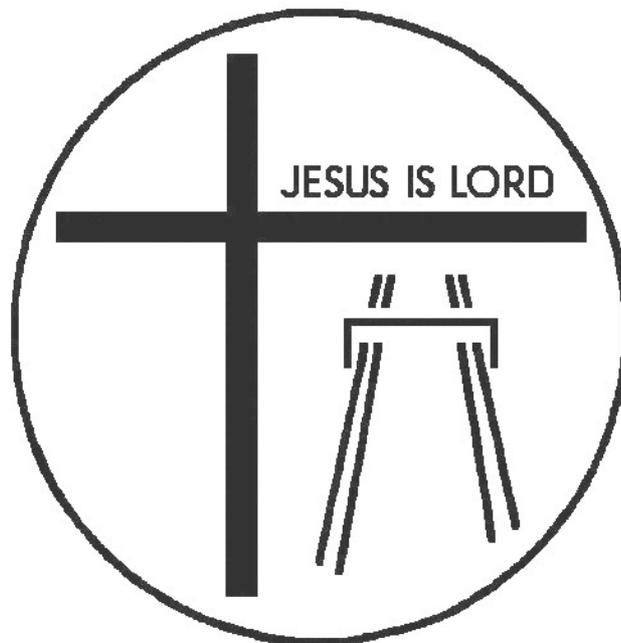


# The book of LUKE

(Part 1)

*~ Knowing What You've  
Been Taught To Be True ~*

*6 Home Group Studies on the Gospel  
of Luke*



# Midrand Presbyterian Church

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK OF LUKE

Nearly two thousand years ago a doctor named Luke began a letter to a friend with these words:

*Many have tried to report on the things that have happened among us. They have written the same things that we have learned from others – the people who saw those things from the beginning and served God by telling people his message. Since I myself have studied everything carefully from the beginning, most excellent Theophilus, it seemed good for me to write it out for you. I arranged it in order to help you know that what you have been taught is true (1:1-4).*

Luke and Theophilus shared two loves. A love for Christ and a love for the facts. They didn't want legends, they wanted truth. And so Dr Luke begins to sort the truth and report the facts to Theophilus. The result is part letter and part research paper.

It is part letter because it was written for a friend. What a bond must have existed between these two that Luke would labour so! It is part research paper, because Luke had studied *everything carefully from the beginning* and he wanted Theophilus to benefit from his study.

Can't you envision him in the home of Mary, "Tell me again what happened in Bethlehem." Can't you see him peppering Matthew with questions? "Let me see if I got this parable right." Or on long walks with Peter, "When you denied him the third time, did Jesus know?"

With the skill of a surgeon, Luke probes for truth. Why? So his friend could know that what he had been taught was true.

Did Luke have an idea that millions of us would benefit from his study? I doubt it. All he did was share the truth with a friend.

Can you imagine what would happen if we did the same?

## Week 1

# HOPE IN GOD

Luke 1:5-25

### Setting the Scene:

Think of a time when God did an amazing work in someone's life – how did this impact you?

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### From the Word:

Read Luke 1:5-25.

### Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. What kind of reputation did Zechariah and Elizabeth have in their community?

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2. How did Zechariah and Elizabeth cope with the humiliation of childlessness?

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3. The angel promised a child. In what way did this offer hope to Zechariah in his situation?

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4. Why did Zechariah doubt God's promise?

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5. In what way did Elizabeth react to the fulfilment of the angel's prophecy?

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Reflection:

Hope is not what you expect; it is what you would never dream. It is a wild, improbable tale with a pinch-me-I'm-dreaming ending. It's Abraham adjusting his bifocals so he can see not his grandson, but his son. It's Moses standing in the Promised Land not with Aaron or Miriam at his side, but with Elijah and the transfigured Christ. It's Zechariah left speechless at the sight of wife Elizabeth, gray-headed and pregnant. And it is two Emmaus-bound pilgrims reaching out to take a piece of bread only to see the hands from which it is offered are pierced.

Hope is not a granted wish or a favour performed; no, it is far greater than that. It is a zany, unpredictable dependence on a God who loves to surprise us out of our socks and be there in the flesh to see our reaction.

(From *God Came Near* by Max Lucado)

**Making it Relevant – Life Application:**

6. Why do we sometimes doubt God’s desire to fulfil our deepest longings and what personal hopes or dreams am I tempted to give up? How can I entrust them to God?

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7. What comfort or encouragement does this passage offer to us when we find ourselves in seemingly hopeless situations?

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8. What steps can we take to deal with feelings of hopelessness?

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## Week 2

# FAITH AT WORK

Luke 5:17-26

### Setting the Scene:

Give examples of when you have seen faith at work and how that impacted those involved.

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### From the Word:

Read Luke 5:17-26

### Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. This group of men brought their paralysed friend to Jesus. What do you think they thought Jesus would do for him?

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2. What risks and obstacles did the men face because of the crowd around Jesus?

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3. What were the pros and cons of their plan to let their friend down through the roof?

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4. What did the fact that these men would do anything to get their friend to Jesus reveal about their view of Jesus?

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5. Why was Jesus' first response to forgive rather than to heal?

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Reflection:

Whether he was born paralysed or became paralysed – the end result was the same: total dependence on others...When people looked at him, they didn't see the man; they saw a body in need of a miracle. That's not what Jesus saw, but that's what people saw. So they did what any of us would do for a friend. They tried to get him some help...

By the time his friends arrived at the place, the house was full. People jammed the doorways. Kids sat in the windows. Others peeked over shoulders. How would this small band of friends ever attract Jesus' attention? They had to make a choice. Do we go in or give up?

What would have happened had the friends given up? What if they had shrugged their shoulders and mumbled something about the crowd being big and dinner getting cold and turned and left? After all, they had done a good deed in coming this far. Who would fault them for turning back? You can only do so much for somebody. But these friends hadn't done enough.

One said that he had an idea. The four huddled over the paralytic and listened to the plan to climb to the top of the house, cut through the roof, and lower their friend down with their sashes.

It was risky – they could fall. It was dangerous – *he* could fall. It was unorthodox – de-roofing is anti-social. It was intrusive – Jesus was busy. But it was their only chance to see Jesus. So they climbed to the roof.

Faith does these things. Faith does the unexpected. And faith gets God’s attention...

Jesus was moved by the scene of faith. So he applauds – if not with his hands, at least with his heart. And not only does he applaud, he blesses. And we witness a divine loveburst.

The friends want him to heal their friend. But Jesus won’t settle for a simple healing of the body – he wants to heal the soul. He leapfrogs the physical and deals with the spiritual. To heal the body is temporal; to heal the soul is eternal. ...So strong was the love for this crew of faith that he went beyond their appeal and went straight to the cross.

Jesus already knows the cost of grace. He already knows the price of forgiveness. But he offers it anyway. Love bursts in his heart...

And although we can’t hear it here, the angels can hear him there. All of heaven must pause as another burst of love declares the only words that really matter: “Your sins are forgiven.”

(From *He Still Moves Stones* by Max Lucado)

**Making It Relevant – Life Application:**

6. In what way did the four friends’ faith in Jesus affect the life of the paralysed man?

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7. In what ways does your faith affect others around you?

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8. List some practical ways we can show our faith in Jesus Christ.

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9. What risks or obstacles have you faced in living out your beliefs?

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10. In what way have those difficulties stretched and strengthened your faith?

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**Prayer:**

Father, when all the doors are closed, give us the courage to persevere. When no solutions are in sight, help us to find new ways to break through the barriers that separate us from you. May we persistently seek your face and daily demonstrate our faith in you.

**Week 3**

**PRAYER THAT STRENGTHENS**

**Luke 6:1-16**

**Setting the Scene:**

Describe a time when you felt strengthened through prayer.

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**From the Word:**

Read Luke 6:1-16

**Going Deeper – Group Discussion:**

1. What kind of power struggles did Jesus have with the religious leaders of his day?

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2. How did Jesus deal with the accusations of the Pharisees and teachers of the law?

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3. Why did Jesus' actions enrage the religious leaders?

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4. In what way did Jesus cope with the pressures of his ministry?

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5. Why did Jesus spend the night in prayer before choosing the twelve disciples?

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Reflection:

“He went up on a mountainside by Himself to pray” ...

Maybe he didn't ask for anything. Maybe he just stood quietly in the presence of the Presence and basked in the Majesty. Perhaps he placed his war-weary self before the throne and rested.

Maybe he lifted his head out of the confusion of earth long enough to hear the solution of heaven. Perhaps he was reminded that hard hearts don't faze the Father. That problem people don't perturb the Eternal One.

We don't know what he did or what he said. But we do know the

result. The hill became a steppingstone; the storm became a path. And the disciples saw Jesus as they had never seen him before.

During the storm, Jesus prayed. The sky darkened. The winds howled. Yet he prayed. The people grumbled. The disciples doubted. Yet he prayed. Jesus did not try to do it himself. Why should you?

There are crevasses in your life that you cannot cross alone. There are hearts in your world that cannot change without help. There are mountains that you cannot climb until you climb his mountain. Climb it. You will be amazed.  
(From *In the Eye of the Storm* by Max Lucado)

**Making It Relevant – Life Application:**

6. What lessons can we learn from Jesus' spiritual habits while he lived on earth?

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7. List some of the benefits of extended times of prayer.

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8. In what way does Jesus' example inspire you to change the way you deal with the pressures of your job or ministry?

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9. What happens when we try to do God's work in our own strength?

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10. What practical steps can you take to depend more on God to help you face the challenges of your life?

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**Week 4**

**CHRIST'S COMPASSION**

**Luke 7:11-23**

**Setting the Scene:**

How have you been affected by someone else's compassion?

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**From the Word:**

Read Luke 7:11-23

**Going Deeper – Group Discussion:**

1. Jesus and his followers encountered a funeral procession near the city of Nain. Why do you think Jesus chose to resurrect the boy?

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2. Describe Jesus' compassion for the people in the funeral procession.

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3. In what way did Jesus specifically show his compassion for the mother who had lost her son?

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4. What good came from the miracle Jesus performed?

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5. What does it mean to stumble or be offended in our faith?

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Reflection:

Two crowds. One entering the city and one leaving, They couldn't be more diverse. The group arriving buzzes with laughter and conversation. They follow Jesus. The group leaving the city is solemn – a herd of sadness hypnotised by the requiem of death. Above them rides the reason for their grief – a cold body on a wicker stretcher.

The woman at the back of the procession is the mother. She has walked this trail before. It seems like just yesterday she buried the body of her husband. Her son walked with her then. Now she walks alone, quarantined in her sadness. She is the victim of the funeral.

She is the one with no arm around her shoulder. She is the one who will sleep in the empty house tonight. She is the one who will make dinner for one and conversation with none. She is the one most violated. The thief stole her most treasured diamond -companionship.

The followers of Jesus stop and step aside as the procession shadows by. The blanket of the mourning muffles the laughter of the disciples. No one spoke. What could they say?...

Jesus, however, knew what to say and what to do. When he saw the mother, his heart began to break...and his lips begin to tighten. He glared at the angel of death that hovered over the boy. "Not this time Satan. This boy is mine."

At that moment the mother walked in front of him. Jesus spoke to her. "Don't cry." She stopped and looked at the stranger's face. If she wasn't shocked by his presumption, you can bet some of the witnesses were.

Don't cry? Don't cry? What kind of request is that?

A request only God can make.

Jesus stepped toward the bier and touched it. The pall-bearers stopped marching. The mourners ceased marching. As Jesus stared at the boy, the crowd was silent. ...

Jesus turned his attention to the dead boy. "Young man," his voice was calm, "come back to life again."

The living stood motionless as the dead came to life. Wooden fingers moved. Gray-pale cheeks blushed. The dead man sat up....

Jesus must have smiled as the two embraced. Stunned the crowd broke into cheers and applause. They hugged each other and slapped Jesus on the back. Some proclaimed the undeniable, "God has come to help his people."

Jesus gave the woman much more than her son. He gave her a secret – a whisper that was overheard by us. “That,” he said pointing at the cot, “that is fantasy. This,” he grinned, putting his arm around the boy, “this is reality.”

(From *Six Hours One Friday* by Max Lucado)

**Making It Relevant – Life Application:**

6. What do you think motivated Jesus to heal the sick, deliver the demon-possessed, and give sight to the blind?

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7. What new insight can you gain from this passage about Christ’s character?

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8. What difference does it make in our lives to know that Jesus had mercy on people?

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9. What keeps us acknowledging and appreciating what Jesus has done for us?

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10. In what tangible way can we thank Jesus for the love and mercy he has shown to us?

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11. Think of one person to whom you could show more Christian compassion. Why have you not so far?

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**Prayer:**

Lord, thank you for taking the time to save a poor widow from a life of loneliness. It helps us to see your power over death and your deep love and compassion for needy people. Our hearts overflow with gratitude for the mercy you have shown to us. Receive our praise and help us to show your love to the people around us.

**Week 5**

**OBEYING GOD’S WORD**

**Luke 8:4-15**

**Setting the Scene:**

Consider the first time you heard and understood the Gospel message. What was your response?

**From the Word:**

Read Luke 8:4-15

**Going Deeper – Group Discussion:**

1. Why do you think Jesus told such a mysterious story to such a large crowd?

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2. Why did Jesus use stories and parables to teach people?

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3. In the parable, what do the seed and the four soils represent?

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4. What interferes with people's acceptance of the Gospel?

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5. What evidence in a person's life proves that God's Word has taken root?

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Reflection:

Only when I reach the point where I solemnly place great store upon what He says will it ever become a powerful force in my life. Only when I really take Him seriously will His Word be made Spirit and life (supernatural life) to me.

Only when I recognise that what I am hearing is in fact and in truth divine revelation designed by deity for my own good, will I hear it as a Word from above.

God has chosen to articulate Himself to me as a man in four ways: through the natural created universe around me; through His Word expressed by inspired men who reported it in human language I can read and understand; through the person of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, exemplified in human form; through those other men

and woman in whom He deigns to reside by His own gracious Spirit.

He may speak to me deliberately and distinctly through one or all of these ways. It is my responsibility to recognise: “O God, You are communicating with me. I will listen. I do recognise Your voice communicating with me.” ...

I must set aside whatever else preoccupies my thoughts and give my undivided attention to the Lord.

It is not good enough to “half listen” to God. He demands my total concentration on what He is conveying to me. He knows that anything less will leave me halfhearted. ...

My positive response results in immediate action on my part. His will is done. His wishes are carried out. His desires are complied with happily. His commands are executed without delay or debate. In short I simply do what He asks me to do. This is faith in action – the faith of obedience. This is the gateway into the good ground of God’s garden. This is to “hear” the Word and have it come alive. This is to have Him Implant the good seed of His good intentions for me in the good, warm, open, prepared soil of my responsive soul.

The seed will germinate. The young plants will prosper and grow vigorously. There will be fruit production of his choosing – a harvest that delights Him and refreshes others.

(From *A Gardner Looks at the Fruits of the Spirit* by Philip Keller)

**Making It Relevant – Life Application:**

6. How does God speak to us today?

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7. What prevents us from hearing and obeying the Word of God?

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8. In what ways can we increase our openness to God's Word?

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9. What good fruit is produced when we obey God's teaching?

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10. How can the worries of life keep us from growing and producing fruit?

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11. In what ways has God's Word changed you life?

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**Prayer:**

We cherish the precious gift of your Word, Father. We praise you for providing a way to communicate with us. Give us ears to hear your voice and hearts willing to obey. Plant your good seed in our souls. May it dig deep into our lives and produce good fruit for your kingdom.

## Week 6

# BELIEVING IN JESUS

Luke 9:18-27

### Setting the Scene:

How would your friends and co-workers answer the question, “Who is Jesus?”

### From the Word:

Read Luke 9:18-27

### Going Deeper – Group Discussion:

1. Why do you think Jesus posed probing questions to his disciples about his identity?

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2. What different views did people have about Jesus’ identity?

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3. Why did Jesus warn his disciples to keep his true identity a secret?

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4. What kind of commitment does Jesus require from his followers?

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5. List the rewards of sacrificing one's life to follow Jesus.

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Reflection:

One of the most dramatic scenes in the New Testament occurred in a city known as Caesarea Phillipi. ... It was indeed a dramatic picture. In the midst of this carnival of marble columns and golden idols, a penniless, homeless, nameless Nazarene asks his band of followers, "Who do you say that I am?"

The immensity of the question is staggering. I would imagine that Peter's answer did not come without some hesitation. Shuffling of feet. Anxious silence. How absurd that this man should be the Son of God. No trumpets. No purple robes. No armies. Yet there was a glint of determination in his eye and that edge of certainty in his message. Peter's response sliced the silence. "I believe that you are...the Son of God."

Many have looked at Jesus; but few have seen him. Many have seen his shadow, his people, his story. But only a handful have seen Jesus. Only a few have looked through the fog of religiosity and found him. Only a few have dared to stand eye to eye and heart to heart with Jesus and say, "I believe that you are the Son of God."

(From *On The Anvil* by Max Lucado)

**Making it Relevant – Life Application:**

6. Why is Jesus' identity crucial to your faith?

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7. How would you explain what you believe about Jesus to a person who had never heard his name?

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8. Explain what it means to give up your life daily to follow Jesus.

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9. What opportunities have you had to proclaim your faith in Jesus?

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10. In what circumstances is it difficult for you to share your religious views?

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11. In what way does this passage motivate you to speak out about your faith in Jesus Christ?

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