

# On the road

## Luke's account of Jesus' life and ministry

*".. so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught ..."* [Luke 1.4]

Luke's account of the life and ministry of Jesus is the most thorough (and the longest) of the four gospel records. It was written for a man called Theophilus (that may well not have been his actual name, but a 'cover' to protect his identity), who was almost certainly an eminent Roman citizen. His account, therefore, was written for a primarily 'Gentile' context and does not presume any great knowledge of the Bible.

Luke is up front about his intention: it's to help this man have the confidence to trust in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. It could be a costly thing being a follower of Jesus back then (as in many places to this day), and Luke wanted to bolster the embryonic faith of this man in the face of both the hostility he was likely to face and the adversity which almost certainly would be his experience.

Three good reasons why it's worth our while taking a read of his account of the life and ministry of Jesus are given by Luke in the brief introduction with which the book begins (Lk.1.1-4).

First, he underlines how **careful** he has been in researching this remarkable and important message: whenever we're able to double check what he says, he is found to be 100% reliable and accurate.

Then, too, he explains how **comprehensive** his account is as well. He investigated all his 'sources' (other accounts, Bible prophecies, eye-witness accounts, and respected preachers), and he investigated the story 'from the beginning'. He's nothing if not thorough!

Moreover, he has taken care to ensure that his account is as **clear** as possible. It's what he himself called 'an orderly account' - not random reflections and recollections hastily thrown together.

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May this study of Luke's gospel help us all "*fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith*", to the end that we "*run with perseverance the race marked out for us*" (see Heb.12.1-2)

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# 10.

[week beginning Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2018]

*“.. those with a good and noble heart ...”*

## Luke 7.36-8.21

Luke 7.1-9.50 is the third major section of his account of the life and ministry of Jesus. We've been introduced previously to the **Man** (1.5-3.38), and the **Manifesto** (4.1-6.49): this section I've entitled **Miracles**, since miracles are prominent throughout it.

We've already seen how the miracles Jesus performed raised questions (7.1-35): in this passage we see how key the word of God is to the greatest miracle of all, namely the new life effected in conversion.

*[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! Try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 2, 5, and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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**1. Read Luke 7.36-8.21** Read the whole passage to get a feel for what Luke is aiming to highlight. The well-known parable of the sower is the 'centre-piece' of the passage.

On a first reading of the whole passage how are you most challenged?

What parts encouraged you as you read the passage?

**2. Read Luke 7.36-50.** The dinner party to which Jesus was invited by a Pharisee was rather dramatically interrupted by a woman 'who lived a sinful life'.

What lesson did Jesus want Simon the Pharisee to learn?

How does this passage challenge you?

In what ways do Simon and the woman differ in their understanding of how we are 'saved'?

**3. Read Luke 8.1-3.** Luke records how Jesus and the twelve apostles were accompanied by a number of women who used their own means to support them.

What reason for this generous support does Luke point to in relation to these women?

What has there been in your experience which has prompted a similar devotion?

In what ways might this support find expression in the ongoing ministry of Jesus today?

**4. Read Luke 8.4-8.** This well-known parable of the farmer sowing his seed provides a graphic illustration of the heart of Jesus' ministry.

What would you say was the main point of the parable?

How does the parable challenge you?

**5. Read Luke 8.9-15.** The explanation of the parable given by Jesus to His disciples highlights the different ways in which the preached Word of God will be received by people.

How can you cultivate 'good soil' in your own heart?

What is the 'crop' which Jesus suggests 'a noble and good heart' will produce through rightly receiving the Word of God?

**6. Read Luke 8.16-18.** Jesus combines the parable of the farmer and his seed (which highlights the 'productivity' of truth) with a parable highlighting the visibility of light.

What is the point Jesus is making through this parable?

How does this parable challenge you?

**7. Read Luke 8.19-21.** The difficulty which Jesus' mother and brothers have in getting near Him affords Him the opportunity to explain the new family dynamics of the Kingdom of God.

In what way does Jesus' statement here tie in with the parable of the farmer which He has told?

What Jesus says here could easily be misunderstood - but if He is not advocating any sort of 'legalism' what is He stressing?