



Good News **for all people.**

The Gospel of Luke

Week 3 **LEADER** Discussion Questions

Week of 9/11/22

Text: Luke 4:1-13 or 4:14-30 (depending on which campus you attend)

This week, the Thornton Campus sermon will focus on the wilderness temptations while Boulder and Erie will focus on the Nazareth synagogue scene.

Icebreaker: What was the highlight of your summer and what are you most looking forward to this fall?

This is generic, but it may be a good way to step into your conversation if you're meeting for the first time, or at least the first time in a while.

Questions for Verses 1-13

1. Last week, we saw the glorious anointing of Jesus's baptism in 3:21-22. Does it surprise you that this wilderness experience would directly follow (after the genealogy is listed)? Why?

Jesus's baptism is an incredible scene where we see the Father, Son, and Spirit interacting and the affirmation of the Father's love and acceptance for the Son. This is a massive understatement, but it's a happy moment or emotional high point. It is arguably a bit of a surprise, then, that instead of a celebration or some other display of God's love, it would be immediately followed by a trip into the wilderness, complete with intense hunger and direct temptation by the devil.

Application: Is there something here that can be true to our own experience of what it's like to follow Jesus? Explain.

We can probably think of examples in our own lives where we've had "spiritual high points" that have been closely followed by difficulties. For example, we may know the feeling of God's close presence in our lives, but then—maybe only days or hours later—experience a time where we wonder if God has forgotten about us.

2. Verse 1 tells us that Jesus was "full of the Holy Spirit" and "was led by the Spirit in the wilderness." Why is the Holy Spirit's role important for the events that unfold in this passage?

The concept of the Trinity is famously difficult to grasp; however, we see here that the Son of God ministered in the power and leading of the Spirit of God. This description from Luke helps us see that even Jesus was equipped by the Spirit and lived according to the Spirit's leading.

Application: What difference does having the Holy Spirit within us and leading us make in our lives today?

If Jesus lived and ministered by the Spirit's power and leading, surely we need the Spirit too! Much can be said about the role of the Spirit in our lives (see, e.g., John 14-16). In sum, we can say that apart from God's Spirit, we are left isolated in our own wisdom and power. Jesus went into the wilderness by himself, but he was not truly alone!

3. If you're familiar with the first books of the Bible (esp. Genesis-Deuteronomy), do you notice anything in these first few verses of chapter 4 that reminds you of things that happened many centuries before in the Old Testament? What do you think?

A question like this can make those who are less familiar with the Bible feel excluded, so it may be wise to think about who is in your group and whether you think they will be able to engage with it. There are many parallels here with the OT. For example, we can think back to the serpent's temptation of Adam and Eve and their failure to withstand it. More directly, we can point to Israel's time in the wilderness and their complaining about hunger. We can recall the mutiny against Moses (which was a rebellion against God). Israel failed their wilderness temptations and that generation died there. Even Aaron and Moses had episodes of failure too with the golden calf and the second time God used Moses to bring water out of a rock.

What's different about how those Old Testament accounts played out versus what happens here in chapter 4?

In all, we see that Jesus succeeded where Adam and Eve and Israel failed. It's not coincidental that Jesus uses three quotations from the book of Deuteronomy—a book from the wilderness wanderings—to refute the devil.

4. The devil plays a prominent role in these verses as he presents three temptations to Jesus. What tactic does the devil use and how does Jesus respond each time he is tempted?

The devil is “a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44). We see that he seeks to tempt Jesus using a distortion of Scripture. The devil's deception is often packaged as half-truths. Note, though, that the devil has no power to force Jesus to sin. All the devil can do is dangle the deception in front of Jesus's nose. Each time, Jesus uses a correct interpretation of Scripture to combat the devil's distortion of Scripture.

Application: What could we learn here about how the devil operates and how we should respond?

We should not give the devil more “credit” than he deserves by assuming he has the power to make us give in to temptation. “The devil made me do it” is a popular slogan, but we see in this passage how powerful a Spirit-inspired use of God's Word is against the best schemes of the devil. It's a call for us to know God's Word so we're ready to withstand the deceptions of the devil.

Questions for Verses 14-30

1. Until now in Luke, a lot has been said *about* Jesus by others, but now we begin to hear directly *from* Jesus (through Isaiah!) regarding his purpose or mission. What do you notice about what Jesus says in verses 18-21 that is consistent with “good news”?

Jesus, using Isaiah's words, is singling out the “least of these” or those on the margins of society to give them relief from what oppresses them. We might think of the gospel as being only about spiritual benefits; consequently, some take these words to be metaphorical rather than literal. That is, Jesus is offering sight to the “spiritually blind.” He's releasing those who are “spiritually captive.” While these are true, we should be cautious about limiting Jesus's words from Isaiah to only a metaphorical level. In fact, it seems that a more literal sense is what Jesus (and Isaiah) primarily have in mind (see Luke 7:22 as well as the kind of people Jesus focuses his attention on). In both senses, though, this is good news that Jesus is offering! He gives a foretaste of the coming Kingdom of God, which points ahead to a final and ultimate salvation in the age to come.

Application: We see that Jesus's ministry is directed toward the "poor," the "captives," the "blind," and the "oppressed." What do you think it looks like for us to engage in this kind of ministry today?

This is an opportunity to examine whether our own ministry efforts include reaching those who are in need in our society. This is part of what it means to be "on mission" when we think through how our LifeGroups and other ministries at Calvary function. If you have questions about opportunities to engage in this kind of ministry, reach out to the Community Life staff at your campus.

2. Verses 22-23 reveal the initial "hometown" reaction to Jesus. How would you summarize it?¹

They are impressed but not convinced. They're skeptical even as they "marvel" at what Jesus is saying.

Application: What has your experience been around your "hometown" family and friends? Do you find it easy to express your faith to them or is it a challenge? Why?

This question may work better for some than for others. Those who came to faith when they were older may have more experience with people who find it hard to believe that they now trust Jesus and have been transformed (and are still being transformed).

3. Jesus illustrates his claim in verse 24 that "no prophet is acceptable in his hometown" through two Old Testament accounts.² What is it about these two accounts that Jesus is highlighting?

The emphasis seems to be that Israel's unbelief and unfaithfulness toward God was what led Elijah and Elisha to perform these miracles outside of Israel. There were widows and lepers in Israel who also needed God's miraculous provision, but their unbelief prevented them from experiencing God's blessings. In a similar way, the unbelief of those at the Nazareth synagogue will prevent them from experiencing the blessings of God.

Application: What does this tell us about the danger of unbelief in our own lives?

This should be straightforward. See Hebrews 11:6. Faith is the single requirement for the experience of God's salvation (John 3:16; Acts 4:12). It's worth pausing here to examine.

4. Is it really "good news for all people"? Why does the crowd react with wrath in verses 28-29 to what Jesus has said?

The crowd certainly does not experience Jesus's message as "good." They are deeply offended that Jesus would equate their own unbelief with that of the people of Israel in the days of Elijah and Elisha. They're all in the synagogue as this is happening, after all! Surely they don't lack faith in God!? Jesus is accusing these "insiders" to God's revelation and blessings with being outsiders instead. They, in rejecting Jesus, are also rejecting the line of God's prophets of old who spoke of God's Messiah.

Application: As we think about verses 14-30 and the title of this series, what do we mean...and what do we *not* mean...that the gospel is "good news for all people"?

In one way, the gospel is good, period. It's objectively good because it is from God who himself is good. In another way, though, its goodness is subjective because it depends

¹ For clarity's sake, the expression in verse 23, "Physician, heal yourself," is best understood as a cynical or skeptical charge against someone who claims to be greater than they are. One commentator, John Nolland, equates it with "Who do you think you are to offer to us what you do not have for yourself?" (Word Biblical Commentary). We can only imagine the shock as Jesus verbalizes their own doubtful thoughts back to them!

² See 1 Kings 17-18 for the first and 2 Kings 5 for the second.

on whether a person has faith to experience God's blessings of salvation. To those who do not believe, they are kept by their unbelief from the experience of this goodness.

Week 3 Final Thought:

Note how Jesus uses Scripture to counter the devil's temptations (verses 1-13), to define his ministry (verses 14-30), and to illustrate the consequences of unbelief (verses 14-30). We should be encouraged by these reminders of the power of God's Word to protect us from evil and lead us ahead as we walk in step with Jesus. This is why the Bible is the centerpiece of all our LifeGroup discussions at Calvary.