

SAMPLE DRAFT



Bible Study on Luke & Acts

Dear friends,

Welcome to the Good Book Club Bible Study offered by Forward Movement. We hope this resource is useful for your congregation as you offer Lenten and Easter programs.

You may use this resource many different ways, but we have designed it as a curriculum to be for a parish Lenten or Easter weekly program. It may also work well as for Sunday morning adult forums.

We have suggested weekly scripture lessons for Luke and Acts that coordinate with the broader readings of the Good Book Club. Each week of this resource features an opportunity to dig more deeply into the scripture. This Bible study includes teaching outlines and discussion guides. This resource will work best guided by an experienced leader of Bible studies, perhaps a clergy person or lay leader who has completed Education for Ministry (EfM) or a similar course.

Those who are looking to brush up on Luke or Acts in preparation for teaching might look for a good, sturdy commentary such as those offered in the *Interpretation* commentary series published by Westminster John Knox. Church Publishing also offers their *Conversations with Scripture* series, with volumes on Luke and Acts.

We have provided ten sessions, expecting that most congregations will offer five weeks of Lenten programs and six weeks of Easter programs. You are encouraged to add your own sessions, if needed, or to do just some of the lessons. You might also browse the Good Book Club website (www.goodbookclub.org) for additional resources.

We at Forward Movement are grateful to Dr. David Creech for his thoughtful and excellent work on this resource.

Yours faithfully,

Forward Movement staff

To learn more about the Good Book Club, visit www.goodbookclub.org.
Visit us at Forward Movement at www.forwardmovement.org.



Bible Study on Luke & Acts

Draft Schedule

Week 1: Brief Introduction to Luke-Acts and Luke 1:46-56

Week 2: Luke 4:16-30 or Luke 6:20-26

Week 3: Luke 10:25-37

Week 4: Luke 12:22-34

Week 5: Luke 16:19-31

Holy Week

Easter Week

Week 6: Acts 1:1-11

Week 7: Acts 6:1-7

Week 8: Acts 8:9-25 or Acts 9:1-31

Week 9: Acts 11:1-18

Week 10: Acts 15:1-35

Week 11: Acts 16:16-40 or Acts 28:23-31

Author

David Creech is Assistant Professor of Religion at Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota. Prior to earning his Ph.D. in theology from Loyola University Chicago, David earned a B.A. in anthropology from the University of California at Santa Barbara and an M.Div. from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California. He spends most of his days reading, thinking, teaching, and writing on early Christianities. In his free time, he works as a short order cook for his three delightful kids.



Class 1
Introduction to Luke-Acts and Luke 1:46-56
Leader Notes

1. A Brief Introduction to Luke-Acts

- Open with prayer.
- Get a feel for the room: What do people already know about Luke-Acts? What do they expect to learn over the next 14 weeks?
- Luke and Acts as a multi-volume work, intended to be read together (Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2). After reading Luke 1:1-4 together, briefly explain what Luke is doing in the introduction to his Gospel:
 - Many people have written stories about Jesus (1:1)
 - Luke is not an eyewitness but is doing research (1:2-3)
 - Luke is writing for “Theophilus,” who may or may not be a real person (1:3). Theophilus literally means “God-lover.” A work of this type would often have a benefactor (it was very costly to produce a work of this length and quality). Show them how Theophilus is also mentioned in Acts 1:1 and how Acts refers backwards to Luke.
 - Luke is setting out to write an “orderly account,” a technical term in Greek that is used when one writes history (1:3)
 - The history is not just any history, it is also a catechism—it is “concerning the things about which you have been instructed.” (1:4)
- Luke-Acts is a story of salvation history—what God began in the Old Testament God continued to do in Christ and then through the early church
- The next 14 weeks (11 classes) will be a journey through the life of Christ and the movement of the early church.
- Luke has a perspective (helpfully he sets out his agenda for us in Luke 4:16-21 and Acts 1:6-8). Read the two texts with the groups and ask: Based on these texts, what do you anticipate to hear from Luke and Acts in the next 14 weeks?

2. Luke 1:46-56

- Luke’s strategy in chapters 1-2 is to link clearly Israel’s story to the story of Jesus.
 - He tells stories that sound like Old Testament stories—stories of barren women, temple priests, and miraculous visitations.
 - He tells stories using the language that *sounds* like the Old Testament. He writes in a style that mimics the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible (also known as the Septuagint). Read Luke 1:46-56 in the King James Version:
 - ⁴⁶ And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, ⁴⁷ And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. ⁴⁸ For he hath regarded* the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. ⁴⁹ For he that is mighty

SAMPLE DRAFT

hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. ⁵⁰ And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. ⁵¹ He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. ⁵² He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree. ⁵³ He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. ⁵⁴ He hath helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; ⁵⁵ As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever. ⁵⁶ And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house.

Just like the you, the hearers of the Magnificat, just now heard the strange familiarity of the King James Version, Luke's audience would have noticed the strangeness of the dialect in its original Greek. It would have *sounded* biblical.

- He tells stories that come from the Septuagint. Look at Luke 1:46-56 alongside 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (see handout).
 - What similarities do you see?
 - Who remembers the story of Hannah from the Old Testament (1 Samuel 1-2)? What are the contours of that story? (If no one remembers you can summarize it for them.) How is Hannah's story different from Mary's? Why might they reach the same conclusions?
- **Ask:** What have we learned so far from this exercise about how Luke tells his story?
- **Key Point:** Luke is a master storyteller with exceptional command of Greek and deeply aware of the Hebrew Bible and its traditions. He uses multiple strategies early on to connect the Christ event to Israel's story. He also wants to draw attention to particular themes present Israel's story and emphasize those in his story about Jesus.
- **Ask:** What are the themes present in the Magnificat? What themes in the Magnificat were also present in the programmatic sermon in Luke 4:16-21? Themes to watch for include: concern for those who are poor, hungry, marginalized, women.
 - **Ask:** How do you feel about how these are presented? What concerns are raised? What hope is present?
- Close with prayer.



Class 1
Introduction to Luke-Acts and Luke 1:46-56
Participant's Guide

Introductions to the books

LUKE 1:1-4

Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed.

ACTS 1:1-2

In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen.

Programmatic Statements: Luke's Agenda

LUKE 4:16-21

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

ACTS 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" He replied, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

THE SONGS OF HANNAH AND MARY

1 Samuel 2:1-10

And she said, “My heart was made firm in the Lord; my horn was exalted in my God; my mouth was made wide against my enemies; I was glad in your deliverance, because there is none holy like the Lord, and there is none righteous like our God; there is none holy besides you.

“Boast not, and speak not lofty things; let not big talking come forth from your mouth, because the Lord is a god of knowledge, and a god who prepares his own ways. The bow of the mighty has become weak, and weak ones have girded themselves with might; full of bread they suffered loss, and the hungry have forsaken the land, because a barren one has borne seven, and she who is rich in children became weak. The Lord puts to death and brings to life; he brings down to Hades and brings up. The Lord makes poor and makes rich; he brings low, and he raises on high. He raises up the needy from the ground and lifts the poor from the dunghill, to make them sit with the mighty of the peoples even making them inherit a throne of glory.

“Granting the prayer to the one who prays, he has even blessed the years of the righteous, because not by strength is a man mighty. The Lord will make his adversary weak; the Lord is holy. Let not the clever boast in his cleverness, and let not the mighty boast in his might, and let not the wealthy boast in his wealth, but let him who boasts boast in this: to understand and know the Lord and to execute justice and righteousness in the midst of the land. The Lord ascended to the heavens and thundered. He will judge earth’s ends and gives strength to our kings and will exalt the horn of his anointed.

Luke 1:46-56

And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name.

His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty.

He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”