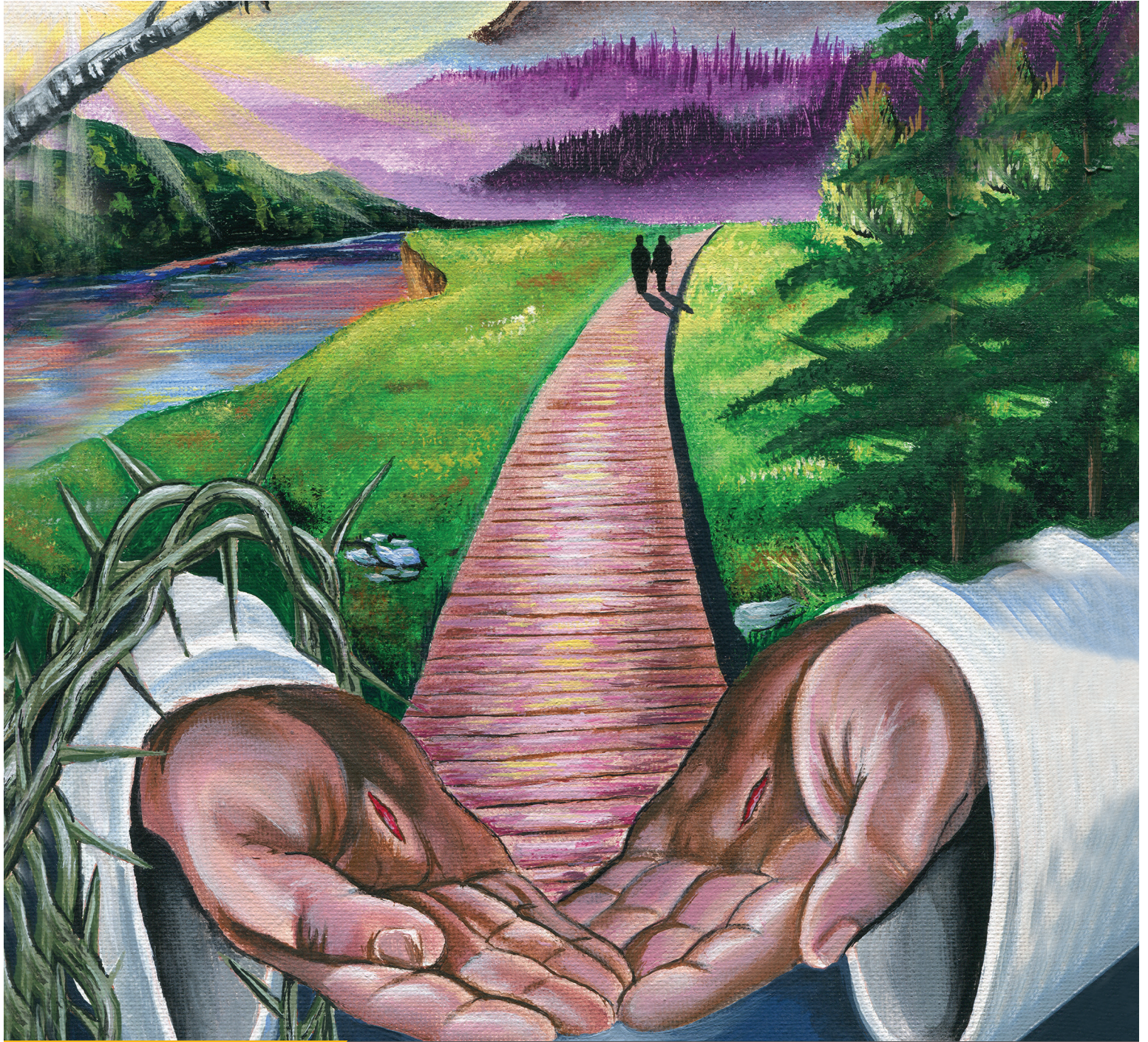


WHO IS JESUS?



CROSSROADS
PRISON MINISTRIES

ANSWER KEY

Cover artwork by Vincent M., former Crossroads student



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INTRODUCTION

In this course, students will read about Jesus' life on earth, as recorded in the book of Luke. They will learn who Jesus is, what He did, what He taught, and how He saved the world. They will also learn what the story of Jesus' life means for each of us today.

STUDY TOOLS

Throughout this course, students will be provided with the tools listed below to assist them in their studies. These tools provide ways that you can interact with your students.



CONVERSATION BOXES: We have included some spaces throughout the print versions of lessons that we call **conversation boxes**. Students can share questions or thoughts about the lesson or life. Students completing digital lessons can use the comment box at the end of the lesson for the same purpose. You may respond in any open space.



ACTION STEPS: At the end of each lesson, we have included a challenge called an **action step**. It asks the student to apply what they have learned. If they feel that they need help or encouragement to complete it, they may simply write down what they plan to do. You can follow up with the student by asking if they have completed it.

Glossary of Terms

Each lesson contains Bible names, terms, and ideas that may be new to students. We will do our best to provide definitions that are easy to understand. The list below includes all of the terms found in this course. In each lesson, we have included an asterisk (*) the first time each term appears.

Ancestor — A person's relative who lived in the past but is no longer living.

Baptize — To make someone pure or clean in their heart, usually through the use of water. In Jesus' time, people were baptized by being lowered into a river and brought back up again. Being baptized is a sign that, just as water washes away dirt, God washes away our sins.

Book of Luke — One of four books of the Bible written about Jesus' life. It was written for people who were not from Israel, called Gentiles.

Commandment — A teaching, law, or rule from God that must be obeyed. Christians follow God's commandments because they love Him.

Corrupt — Characterized by dishonest or evil behavior.

Covenant — An agreement or contract between two people or groups of people.

Crucify — To put someone to death by nailing or tying their wrists or hands and feet to a cross.

Disciple — Someone who traveled with a teacher in order to learn from him. Jesus first had twelve disciples, and more joined Him later. Today, the word is used to refer to anyone who is following Jesus.

Empire — A group of territories or countries under one ruler. In Jesus' time, Rome ruled over all the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, including Israel. These countries were all part of the Roman Empire.

Eternity — An endless amount of time with no beginning or end.

Generosity — The act of giving money, help, kindness, etc., especially more than is usual or expected.

Generous — Willing to give money, help, kindness, etc., especially more than is usual or expected.

God's glory — The presence of God as seen or experienced by humans. The Bible often describes God's glory as a light that shines brighter than anything else on earth. The term also refers to God's power, beauty, and greatness.

God's people — Anyone who decides to follow God. Throughout most of the Bible, this phrase is used only to describe the people of Israel, which is the nation God created from Abraham's family. The parts of the Bible written after Jesus came to earth promise that anyone can become part of God's people through faith in Jesus Christ.

Grace — Kindness or help that is given when it is not deserved. God shows grace to those who follow Him, even though they have done nothing to earn it.

Greed — A selfish desire to have more money or other things than necessary.

Holy Spirit — One of the three persons of the Trinity of God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in Christians, guides them, and gives them new life.

Levite — Someone who did the daily religious work at the temple. They performed blessings and sacrifices and taught the people God's laws.

Messiah — "The anointed one." When Israel first became a kingdom, its kings were anointed—meaning they had oil poured on their heads—when they took power. God promised through the prophets that a Messiah would come to earth, be anointed as King, and rule over Israel forever (2 Samuel 7:12–13; Daniel 7:13–14).

Money changer — Someone whose business is to help people trade one kind of money for another. In Jesus' time, people came from many different countries to worship at God's temple. They needed to have the right kind of money so they could buy things to sacrifice to God.

Old Testament — The first part of the Christian Bible. It is made up of thirty-nine books, which contain God's laws, the writings of the prophets, and the history of God's people before Jesus was born.

Parable — A simple story that teaches a lesson. Jesus told parables to help His followers understand what is right and wrong in God's Kingdom.

Passover — A holiday that celebrates God's people being freed from slavery in Egypt.

Prodigal — Someone who wastes a lot of money and time and does not value what they have.

Prophet — Someone who brought messages from God to His people. Seventeen books of the Bible were written by prophets (for example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea). These books contain many promises God made to His people that came true years later.

Prophetic protest — The actions of a prophet, on behalf of God, that point out evil things that a person or group (usually one in power) is doing.

Rebel — To resist or disobey someone who has authority or control (verb); someone who does not obey authority or who fights against the government (noun).

Rebellious — In opposition or disobedient to someone who has authority or control.

Repent — To turn from sin and promise to live in a way that is pleasing to God.

Sacrifice — To give something to God. For many years, the people of Israel sacrificed animals in the temple as a way to receive forgiveness from God. Jesus later became the final sacrifice, making all other forms of sacrifice unnecessary.

Samaritan — A person born in Samaria. The Samaritans were once part of the nation of Israel, but they separated from Israel, created their own religion, and married people from other nations.

Savior — Someone who saves others from danger or death.

Scroll — A roll of paper or animal skin on which something is written. The books of the Bible were originally written on scrolls.

Sinner — Anyone who hurts God, others, or even themselves through actions, thoughts, or spoken words that go against God's plan.

Synagogue — A building in a town or city where God's people gathered to read and study Scripture and worship God.

Temple — The place where the people of Israel worshiped God. The temple was a beautiful building in the middle of the city of Jerusalem. It was special because God's people could meet with Him there and be in His presence.

Tempt — To encourage someone to do something wrong, bad, or unwise, promising them something good in return.

LESSON 1: A King Is Born

Lesson Focus:

Jesus' birth shows us how He was going to change the world.

What would you say if someone asked you, "Who is Jesus?" Maybe you have heard people say He was a good man who lived a long time ago. Maybe you have heard people say He was a teacher or a prophet. Maybe you have heard people say He is God. People have many different views of Jesus.

The best way to learn the truth about Jesus is to read about His life. The book of Luke* in the Bible is a good place to start. It contains many of the earliest true stories about Jesus shared by people who knew Him. They were people God had chosen to be part of His Son's birth and His plan to save the world. God directed Luke to collect these stories and write them down for everyone to read. Luke put them together as one complete book.

The book of Luke was written for people who knew a few things about Jesus but may not have known much about His life or ministry. It was written to help people understand that Jesus was not who God's people* were expecting Him to be. In fact, Jesus was going to turn their expectations upside down. The people were looking for a military king to fix their day-to-day problems. They had forgotten that God had promised them so much more than that. God had promised that He Himself would come to earth to save them and create a new Kingdom that would last forever. He was going to do that through His Son, Jesus Christ.

1. What are some problems people have that they hope God will fix?

Students may list things like money problems or broken relationships. They may also list problems specific to being in prison or other issues that directly affect them. Some may ask why God has allowed them to have a miserable life or even why they are in prison. Acknowledge their answers and be careful not to criticize them.

God Makes a Promise

The book of Luke opens with a description of something that happened months before Jesus was born, which took place up in the hills of Jerusalem (jeh-ROU-suh-lehm). Jerusalem was a special city. God had promised that He would someday come to Jerusalem and rule over the whole world from there forever. It was also where God's temple* was located and where the priests who served Him lived and worked. A man named Zechariah (zeh-kuh-RAI-uh) was one of those priests.

Read **Luke 1:1–25**.

Angels were God's messengers and warriors who defeated God's enemies and protected His people. If an angel showed up to talk to someone in the Bible, it meant that God had an important message for that person.

God sent an angel to tell Zechariah that he and his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. That was shocking news because Zechariah and Elizabeth were very old and had never been able to have children. They had been hoping and praying for a child for a very long time.

2. Have you ever gotten something that you waited a long time for? What did that feel like?

Students will often mention upcoming parole dates or other similar news. Be sure to celebrate those events. Consider sharing a related story of your own in the lesson or your letter.

God directed Luke to begin his book with this promise to Zechariah and Elizabeth for a reason. This promise was a lot like the one that God made to a man named Abraham and his wife, Sarah, many years before. God wanted to remind people of what He had done in the past through His promise to Zechariah.

Abraham and Sarah were some of the first people God chose as His followers. Like Zechariah and Elizabeth, they were also very old. They were also unable to have children. But God did something big for Abraham and Sarah. He gave them a son named Isaac.

When God created Abraham and Sarah's new family, He was also creating a whole new nation of people who were called to follow Him. Their son and their family eventually became the nation of Israel, which is talked about often in the Bible. God introduced a new way of life for His people through the birth of Isaac.

God's promise to Zechariah made it clear that God was about to do something big again—through another child. God had used Isaac to announce that He was going to make a new nation. God was going to use Zechariah and Elizabeth's baby to make another announcement to the world.

3. What was God sending Zechariah's son to do for His people (see Luke 1:16–17)?

The Scripture passage says that John was going to bring the people of Israel back to God and prepare them for Jesus' coming. John would also help teach the people how to do what is right in God's eyes and restore peace to their families. Students' answers should reflect the general idea of the passage.

The angel's message to Zechariah pointed to a promise God had made through Israel's prophets* hundreds of years earlier. The prophets had said that God would come to earth as a King to rule over His people. As their King, He would bring them peace and create a Kingdom that would last forever. The prophets had also said that God would send someone to get the people ready for His coming—and the angel told Zechariah that his son, John (also known as John the Baptist), would be that person.

In Zechariah's time, Israel was part of the Roman Empire.* Rome controlled Israel, and they chose a man named Herod (HEHR-ud) to be Israel's king. The Romans picked him to rule over the people of Israel because they knew he would do what they wanted. Herod was a horrible king. He had people killed. He was evil and self-serving. The people of Israel wanted him gone. They wanted Israel to be a great nation again, and they wanted freedom from Rome. They were hoping and praying for a new earthly king.

So, the angel's announcement was shocking not only to Zechariah but to all the people of Israel as well. Everything was about to change! Israel would finally get a new King. But it would not be the king they expected or wanted. God was going to do something entirely new.

4. How does God show His love for us by giving us what we need, not what we want?

Some students may share examples from their own life or what they have heard from others about their experiences. Others may quote Scripture. Consider sharing some examples from your own life.

NOTE: God cares deeply for us, and Scripture promises us that God knows our hearts and lives even more perfectly than we do. If a student disagrees with the principle in the question, point them to one of the following passages about the way God provides: Matthew 6:8; Matthew 6:25–34; Proverbs 21:2. These Scriptures remind us that God is in control and knows what is best for us. Students may need to be reminded to trust God when they feel He is not answering their prayers the way they want them to be answered.

Another Surprising Announcement

The next true story recorded in the book of Luke took place in a small town called Nazareth (NAZ-uh-rehth). It was a town in the middle of nowhere that most people thought of as unimportant. A teenage girl named Mary lived there. She was part of Elizabeth and Zechariah's family, and she was engaged to be married.

Read **Luke 1:26–38**.

God sent an angel to Mary. Like Zechariah, Mary was very surprised to see one of God's messengers. The angel told her that she was also going to have a son, just like her relative Elizabeth was. The angel said she should name Him Jesus, a name that means "the Lord saves." He told her that her son would save God's people from their sins and rule over them forever.

Mary was confused. She was still a virgin! How could she have a baby? It did not make sense. But the angel told her, "The Holy Spirit will come to you. The power of the Most High God will cover you. So the holy one that is born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35).

Mary's son would become a great King—but He would be even more than that. He would also be God's own Son.

5. What are some other things we can learn about who Jesus is from God's message to Mary (see Luke 1:30–37)?

The angel told Mary that Jesus would be the “Son of the Most High.” He would take over David’s throne. He would reign over Jacob’s descendants (God’s people) forever, and His Kingdom would never end. Students should mention most of these. If a student had trouble answering the question, point out that God wanted Mary to know that Jesus would eventually rule over all of God’s people, and He also rules over our lives if we are following Him.

6. What do you think it would be like to receive such an important and surprising message from God?

Many students will say that they would be shocked or afraid. Some will indicate that they would feel blessed or special.

NOTE: In some charismatic Christian groups and the Islamic faith, dreams and visions are more common. Students from those backgrounds may need help understanding that what Mary experienced was more than just a dream or a vision—it was a real message sent from God.

Very few people who knew Mary would have thought she was important. But God was going to use her to be part of His plan to send His Son to earth. That was completely unexpected. But it pointed to what God was planning to do through Jesus’ time on earth. God was going to turn the way the world worked upside down.

Jesus was not coming to act like a normal king. He was not going to gather wealth, defeat enemy armies, or build a big castle for Himself. He was going to sacrifice* Himself for everyone. He was going to care for the poor, feed the hungry, and heal the brokenhearted.

In response to everything she heard from the angel, Mary sang a song praising God. In her song, she listed many things God had done in the past. Her song pointed to what God would do in the future. God guided Luke to write it down so we could read her words.

Read **Luke 1:39–56**.

7. What did Mary remember that God had done for humble and hungry people in the past (see Luke 1:51–53)?

Mary’s song emphasized God’s care for the humble and the hungry. He honors those who are scorned by the world, and He provides for His children. Students may simply copy Mary’s statements directly from the passage; if they do, encourage them to reflect on what God’s announcement must have meant for Mary and what it means for us.

8. How can remembering the things God has done in the past give us strength to face the future?

Remembering specific things that God has done can help us to lean on Him in the face of uncertainty. When we recall answered prayers and ways God has watched over us in the past, we can confidently place our trust in Him for the future.

NOTE: The word “remember” shows up approximately 230 times in the Bible, noting the ways that God remembered His people and encouraged them to remember His words and actions.

The King Is Born

Just as the angel said, Mary became pregnant. Around the time when Mary was ready to give birth, the Romans made a new law. Everyone who lived in the Roman Empire had to go to their hometown to be counted by the government. So, Mary and Joseph, the man she was engaged to, had to travel to Bethlehem (BEH-th-leh-hehm). It was a long way from Nazareth, and they had to travel there on foot. They had no other choice.

Read **Luke 2:1–20**.

When Mary and Joseph finally reached Bethlehem, they had trouble finding a place to stay. There were so many visitors in town that they could not find a guest room. The only place they could find to stay was a place where animals slept.

That was where Mary had her baby. She gave birth to Jesus. She laid him in a feeding box for animals—an unusual bed for a King. God’s Son was born in one of the most unexpected places.

9. What would you expect to happen when a king is born? Who would be there? Where would it take place?

Students’ answers will depend on their background and life experience. Many will mention a castle, a huge celebration, or the presence of important people. By comparing Jesus’ birth with expectations for a king’s birth, students have the opportunity to think more deeply about the surprising circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus.

God was not done surprising His people. That night, God sent His angel army to announce the birth of His Son to a group of shepherds in a field.

10. In your own words, what did the angel tell the shepherds (see Luke 2:9–12)?

Writing the angel’s message in their own words will help them think about its meaning and context. It should give them an awareness of the hope this message provides for God’s people. If they simply write down the Scripture passage, encourage them to try to put it in their own words.

Shepherds were not considered to be important people. They were usually young boys, young girls, and old men—people who were not able to do hard physical work. They were often poor and spent most of their time with their animals in the hills. Even though they had a low position in society, God chose them as the first people to hear about the birth of Jesus.

The angel told the shepherds that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem and that they should go and find this baby. The angel said that Jesus was the Messiah* (meh-SAI-uh), the King they had been waiting for, who would bring peace and hope to everyone. The shepherds did as the angel told them. They went and found the newborn King lying in an animal feeding box. They were surprised and confused. They wondered how this tiny child was going to bring peace to the world, but they began spreading the good news that the angel had given them.

11. Why do you think God planned Jesus' birth to happen the way it did?

Some responses may reflect the way God challenged people's expectations or demonstrated His love and care for people who were considered unimportant. Some students may refuse to speculate or may not feel comfortable trying to understand God's actions. In such a case, encourage the student to consider what we can learn about God from the way He planned Jesus' birth.

A Different Kind of Kingdom

In all these events, nothing happened the way people expected—and that is the point. God's Kingdom first showed up in unexpected places. People that seemed poor and unimportant to everyone around them were included in Jesus' birth. That was because Jesus had come to bring salvation to *everyone* and to show the world what was truly important to God.

Jesus was going to rule the world and save God's people, but not the way most people thought. He was not going to begin His rule by claiming the right to Herod's throne or destroying the Roman Empire. Instead, He was going to show people how to love their enemies and how to follow God by putting others first. He was going to die to pay for the sins of the whole world. He was going to be the King of a different kind of Kingdom.

12. The book of Luke shows us that God does not do things the way people expect. How did God surprise the following people in the passages you read?

Zechariah: God surprised him by telling him that he and his wife, in their old age, would have a son, John, who would tell the world about God's Son, Jesus.

Mary: God surprised her by telling her that she, a virgin, would bear a son, Jesus, who would be God's own Son and the Savior of the world.

The shepherds: God surprised them by sending an angel to tell them about the birth of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, whom they would find in a manger.

13. How has God surprised you through this lesson or in the past?

Acknowledge the student's reflection. If you feel so led, share your own answer to the question.

Action Step

In the passages you read in this lesson, God surprised people with messages of hope that changed their lives. Find a way to give some hope or encouragement to someone around you today. If you are not sure what to do, ask God for inspiration. Write down what you did and what happened as a result:

LESSON 2: Jesus Shows the Way

Lesson Focus:

Jesus' life shows us how to follow God.

The Bible does not tell us much about Jesus' early life after His birth. The next major events described in the Bible took place almost thirty years later. By then, Jesus had grown up, and John, His relative, had become a prophet.*

John was known as John the Baptist, and he lived by the Jordan River. He spent his days telling God's people to repent.* He told them to get ready for God to keep His promise to "do something new" for His people (Isaiah 43:19). The poor, the rich, tax collectors, soldiers, and religious leaders came to the river to hear John speak. Many people also came so that John could baptize* them. They wanted to receive God's forgiveness and live new lives.

What they did not know was that God already had a plan in place to give them new life, which started when Jesus came to earth. Jesus was getting ready to begin His ministry. He was going to show the people how to truly follow God and make it possible for them to be completely forgiven of their sins.

1. What do you think people mean when they say they want to live a new life?

Many students will say that people who want to live a new life are hoping for a life better than the one they are currently living. They will note that when people talk about living a new life, they want to start over and leave behind the life that they had before. If a student seemed unsure how to answer the question, share your own understanding of it and, as an example, how you have experienced new life through Jesus.

Remembering Promises

A long time before John was born, God rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them to a place near the Jordan River. He promised to give them the land on the other side of the river. But before God's people crossed the river to live in the new land, God asked them to make a promise to Him. He asked them to love Him and serve Him as their only God. He asked them to love their neighbors and practice justice. However, even though they tried, God's people could not keep their promise to God. Even though God kept reminding them over and over again, they kept failing.

When John baptized people in the Jordan River, it reminded them of the promise their ancestors* had made to God at the river. It also reminded them of the ways they were still failing to follow God.

John was telling the people that they needed to repent of their sins and restart their relationship with God. But he was also telling them that Jesus was coming and that Jesus was going to change things. John was doing what God had promised he would do. He was getting the people ready for the new thing that God was about to do through Jesus.

Read **Luke 3:7–18**.

2. How did John answer each group of people when they asked him how to show God that they had turned away from their sins?

Students may copy the verses directly from the Bible or summarize the passages.

The crowd: “Anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same” (Luke 3:11).

The tax collectors: “Don’t collect any more than you are required to” (Luke 3:13).

The soldiers: “Don’t extort money and don’t accuse people falsely—be content with your pay” (Luke 3:14).

3. In your own words, what was John trying to teach them?

John was trying to teach the people to think of others instead of thinking only of themselves. The core idea of this message is captured in Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Paul’s words in Philippians 2:1–4 speak to the same concept: “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

Jesus Is Baptized

While John was baptizing people, Jesus came to the river and asked John to baptize Him. John knew he was not good enough or important enough to baptize Jesus. But Jesus told him, “It carries out God’s holy plan” (Matthew 3:15).

Jesus did not need to be forgiven by God. Although Jesus was completely human, He was also God. Therefore, Jesus was perfect. He had never sinned. But He showed the people the first step toward living a new life. He reminded them that they needed to promise to follow God again.

As soon as John baptized Jesus, the sky opened, and God spoke from heaven. He said, “You are my Son, and I love you. I am very pleased with you” (Luke 3:22).

God’s words in those two sentences come from chapters in the Old Testament* that describe the Messiah.* God had promised that the Messiah would come to rule as King over God’s people forever. He would defeat evil and rule over the entire world (Psalm 2). He would be God’s servant who would bring hope and justice (Isaiah 42). At Jesus’ baptism, God was telling the people that Jesus, His Son, was that King.

4. Why do you think God used words from the Old Testament to tell people about Jesus?

God used words that He knew the people would already know and understand. He was also declaring that Jesus would fulfill prophecy; both Scripture passages God referenced contained promises He had made to His people about the Messiah many years before. By using these Old Testament words, God was reminding the people of the promises He had made.

Jesus Is Tempted*

After Jesus was baptized, the Holy Spirit* led Him to the desert. Jesus stayed there for forty days—with no food. After forty days, He was very hungry. But He was doing what God wanted Him to do. While He was there, He was tempted three times.

Read **Luke 4:1–13**.

5. What were the three ways the devil tried to tempt Jesus?

First, the devil offered Jesus the possibility of satisfying His hunger by turning the stone into bread (Luke 4:3). Second, the devil offered Jesus power over all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would worship him (Luke 4:5–7). Third, the devil tempted Jesus to test His power and the truth of God’s Word (Luke 4:9–11). Most students will simply quote the verses.

NOTE: These three tests relate to the different aspects of humanity: the heart, the soul, and the mind. They also correspond to the Greatest Commandment—to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Deuteronomy 6:5; Luke 10:27; Matthew 22:37)—which Jesus kept perfectly throughout the devil’s testing. Students may not recognize this, but if they do, be sure to affirm their response.

6. How did Jesus answer the devil each time? How did His answers show that He was following God?

Each time, Jesus responded to the devil’s temptations with quotes from the Bible. Jesus turned to God and God’s Word for direction, which shows that He fully trusted God.

Jesus' responses highlight the importance of knowing God's Word and trusting that God will do what He says. This would be a good opportunity to encourage students to memorize Scripture—either a passage from the lesson or a passage that you have relied on in the past.

Jesus' forty days in the desert pointed back to a similar event in history. Hundreds of years before, God had rescued His people from slavery in Egypt. They traveled through the desert and came to the land God had promised to give them. But when they arrived, they saw that the land was filled with enemies who had large and powerful armies. God's people were afraid. They did not think God could save them, so they rebelled* (Numbers 14:1–35). They said to their leaders, "We wish we had died in Egypt or even in this desert!" (Numbers 14:2). They refused to enter the land.

Because of this, God caused them to wander in the desert for forty years before the next generation would enter the land He had promised them.

The people had forgotten how God had taken care of them for years. God had defeated an entire army that was determined to capture them and make them work as slaves again (Exodus 14:5–31). God had given them food directly from heaven in the desert (Exodus 16:1–35). God had traveled with them day after day and kept them safe. But when they faced this new challenge, they were afraid.

God's people had failed to love, serve, and trust God. But when Jesus was tested, He succeeded. He remembered God's call to serve only Him. Jesus' willingness to trust God showed that He would be the leader who would carry Israel's story forward. He would show them how to truly follow God.

Jesus' Mission

After leaving the desert, Jesus went back to Galilee (GAL-ih-lee) to His hometown of Nazareth. He entered the synagogue* (SIN-uh-gahg) to read from the Scriptures, as He often did. He opened the scroll* of Isaiah and read out loud, "The Spirit of the Lord and King is on me. The Lord has anointed me to announce good news to poor people" (Isaiah 61:1).

Jesus read several more verses from the scroll. When He was done, He told the people in the synagogue that the words the prophet Isaiah had written were about Him. He told them that these words formed the purpose of His ministry on earth. Jesus was going to keep the promises that God had made to His people through Isaiah hundreds of years before.

Read **Luke 4:16–21**.

7. What did Jesus say He came to do (see verses 18–19)? Write it in your own words:

Reading from the scroll of Isaiah, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim

freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

We have asked students to write it in their own words so they will think more deeply about what Jesus promised to do. If a student has simply copied the verses, challenge them to reword their answer. You can give an example of what the passage means in your own words to help them.

In those days, being poor was not only about a lack of money. Being poor meant that a person had a low social status. Women, children, sick people, and sinners were also thought of as poor. They were ignored by everyone. Surprisingly, some people who had a lot of money, like tax collectors, were also included in this group. They were considered outsiders because they helped Israel's enemies and stole money from people. But Jesus came to bring His good news to all of these groups of people. Jesus' ministry was for everyone. Rich or poor, strong or weak, powerful or powerless—everyone was included.

He would free everyone who followed Him from their sin and shame so that they could become part of God's new Kingdom.

The Disciples*

As Jesus preached the good news, He began to choose men to follow Him and help Him in His mission. He chose twelve men to be His disciples (dih-SAI-pulz).

The disciples Jesus chose were a group of rough men. Some were fishermen. Before they joined Jesus, they spent their days dragging fish out of the water with heavy nets. They risked their lives to make a living, sailing on a sea that could kill them in an instant.

Jesus also chose a tax collector, Matthew (also called Levi), who worked for the Roman Empire and cheated his own people out of money, and a political rebel, Simon the Zealot, who opposed the Roman Empire. Because of their backgrounds, these two men likely would not have been friends.

But Jesus brought together people who were outsiders and enemies. In God's Kingdom, they promised to love and care for one another and work with each other. Jesus asked them to follow Him and leave their old lives behind.

Read **Luke 5:1–11** and **Luke 5:27–32**.

8. Based on these verses, why do you think the disciples were willing to follow Jesus?

Simon (Peter) witnessed Jesus perform the miracle of the fish when his situation seemed hopeless. Levi (Matthew) was shocked to be accepted by Jesus since his profession caused many of his neighbors to despise him. They both realized that Jesus was offering them a new life. Students will likely give answers that reflect the characteristics of Jesus they read about in the verses.

Jesus' Message

Following Jesus meant learning to live a whole new life. Jesus taught things like, "Blessed are those who are humble. They will be given the earth" (Matthew 5:5) and "Blessed are those who suffer for doing what is right. The kingdom of heaven belongs to them" (Matthew 5:10).

Jesus told His disciples to be surprisingly generous* to people they did not like. He told them to forgive others—even when they did not deserve it. He even told them to love their enemies. This is the way God has always wanted His people to live.

Jesus not only taught all of this, but He also promised that He would lead the way. He promised that He would be surprisingly generous in everything He did. He would forgive and love His enemies by giving up His life for them.

Read **Luke 6:27–31**.

9. If everyone did what Jesus taught in this passage, how would the world be different?

Many students will point out that the world would have less hatred, injustice, and oppression and more love, equality, forgiveness, and compassion. If a student had trouble coming up with ideas, give some examples of your own.

More Than a Prophet

One day, Jesus went up into the mountains to pray, and He took a few of His disciples with Him. While they were there, something amazing happened.

Read **Luke 9:28–36**.

10. What words from heaven did the disciples hear? Why do you think God used those words to describe Jesus to the disciples?

The disciples heard the words, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him" (Luke 9:35). These words were reminiscent of the words God had spoken at Jesus' baptism. At Jesus' transfiguration, God was once again confirming Jesus' authority and power and telling the disciples to listen to Him because He spoke for God.

Moses and Elijah were ancient prophets who lived in the times of the Old Testament. Like the disciples, they also saw God's glory* on a mountain when they were alive. And there on the mountain, Jesus spoke with the two of them as equals. He talked to them about how He was going to die to keep God's promises.

God was showing the disciples that Jesus was a powerful prophet, just like Moses and Elijah. But this passage teaches us that Jesus was more than just a great prophet. Jesus

was glowing with God's glory from the inside out. Jesus knew God's plans and spoke for God because He WAS God. He was going to save the world and show the people how to follow God because He was God, as a human, on earth. But the disciples did not understand what that meant at the time. Jesus still had more to show them before they could finally understand Him.

11. Based on what you read in this lesson, who is Jesus and what did He come to earth to do?

Answers will vary, but we hope that students will be able to articulate many of the following themes:

Jesus is the King and Messiah that God had promised to send to earth. He is God's own Son, and He is also God.

Jesus came to earth to show people how to follow God by His example. He came to challenge them to live completely different lives by turning away from their sin and showing love and forgiveness to others. He came to keep promises God had made to His people. He came to bring the good news of God's Kingdom, set prisoners free, and give sight to the blind.

Action Step

Look back at your answer to question 9. Think of something you can do this week to take a step toward that kind of world. Write down what you did and what happened as a result:

LESSON 3: The Journey to Jerusalem

Lesson Focus:

Jesus' teachings show us what is important in God's Kingdom.

The book of Luke began by describing the birth of Jesus. It introduced Jesus as the Son of God. Then, as Jesus started His ministry, God announced that Jesus was the King and Messiah He had promised to send. God also showed the disciples who Jesus really was: a mighty prophet and God Himself in human form on earth.

After all of those things happened, Jesus and His disciples left Galilee and began traveling to Jerusalem. They planned to join thousands of Israelites to celebrate the ancient feast of Passover* at God's temple in the city.

While they traveled, Jesus taught important things to everyone they met along the way. He showed people what His Kingdom looked like. He ate with both sinners* and religious leaders. He taught people that loving God meant loving the people around them too. Jesus' journey to Jerusalem with His disciples showed the world who He was and what was important to God.

1. Which of Jesus' teachings are you most familiar with?

Some students may write, "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). Others may mention the Lord's Prayer or the Beatitudes. Some students are very well versed in the Bible and may write a long list of passages and teachings. A student's answer will give you a good idea of how much they know about the Bible. If a student wasn't able to think of anything, share a few passages you have heard many times and ask if they have read or heard of them too.

It was a long journey to Jerusalem, and Jesus and the disciples did not go directly there. They stopped in many small towns along the way. Jesus sent His disciples ahead to prepare each new place for His visit. In every town they visited, Jesus announced the good news of His Kingdom and invited people to follow Him. He also healed people and performed amazing miracles, like raising people from the dead. He taught people how to live completely new lives. He challenged them to change their greed* into generosity* and their anger into forgiveness. He told them to welcome outsiders and to follow God's greatest commandments:* "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Love him with all your strength and with all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as you love yourself'" (Luke 10:27).

These two commandments were given by God hundreds of years ago and written in the Old Testament. Jesus taught the people what it meant to truly follow them.

2. What do you think it looks like to love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind?

Students will likely list things like studying God's Word, obeying what it says, and sharing the Gospel with others. If a student focuses only on knowing God's laws and following them, you may want to prompt them to think about how they can engage their heart and soul in loving God as well.

Loving God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind reflects a Spirit-led desire to follow God with our entire being. It means we focus our thoughts on God's desires, not the world's (Romans 12:2). It means we rely on God's strength, not our own (Philippians 4:6; Luke 12:22–28; Hebrews 13:5–6). It means we allow God to transform our hearts and souls and live according to the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5:12–21; Galatians 5:13–26).

3. What do you think it means to love your neighbor as you love yourself?

Students might answer with practical examples of being kind or generous to other people. Some may talk about being selfless, not getting into arguments, forgiving others, or putting others before themselves. Encourage them to put those ideas into practice. Scriptural support can be found in Matthew 5:38–42, Matthew 7:12, and Ephesians 4:32.

NOTE: Some students may say that they do not love themselves and have not felt loved by others, which makes it hard for them to put this passage into practice. In a case like that, consider sharing passages that assure them of God's love for them, such as John 3:16, 1 John 4:9–11, Romans 5:8, or Romans 8:37–39.

Loving Your Neighbor

Not everyone who heard Jesus' message understood what God's greatest commandments meant. So, Jesus told a parable.* It was a story about a good Samaritan* (suh-MEHR-ih-tuhn).

Read **Luke 10:25–37**.

4. Write what happened in the story in your own words:

Jesus told a story of a man who was left to die on the side of the road after an altercation with robbers. A priest and a Levite (religious leaders) saw the man but passed by without stopping to help him. Finally, a Samaritan saw the man and stopped to help him. He cared for the man's injuries and paid for a room at the inn for him. The Samaritan showed him mercy; therefore, Jesus said that he was a neighbor to the man and the religious leaders were not. The student's answer should cover the basic outline of the story.

Samaritans were not usually thought of as good examples or heroes by people in Israel. Samaritans were people who had left Israel and started their own nation. They created their own religious laws and stopped worshiping God in His temple.

The Israelites and Samaritans often argued about who was truly following God. They hated each other. But when Jesus told a story about what it means to “love your neighbor” and follow God’s commandments, He used a Samaritan as an example.

5. How is the Samaritan in the parable a good example of how to “love your neighbor as you love yourself”?

The Samaritan did not judge the man. The Samaritan simply saw him as a neighbor and showed him compassion and mercy. Then, he went a step further by bringing him to an inn to receive continued care. If a student had trouble articulating why this made the Samaritan a good example, point out that he treated the man the way he hoped someone would treat him if he were in a similar position instead of letting their differences define his actions.

It would have been less surprising if the Levite* (LEE-vite) and the priest were the heroes of the story. The Levite and the priest were just trying to follow God’s law that said they could not touch a dead or dying body. They had remembered to obey that part of God’s law. But they had forgotten to love their neighbor.

Jesus wanted people to understand that loving their neighbors was part of following God’s laws. To show their love for God, they had to do more than simply follow religious rules; they also had to love the people God had made.

Even before Jesus told the story of the Samaritan, He taught people what loving others meant through His actions. He talked with tax collectors and sex workers. He went to their houses and ate meals with them. These were people who struggled to follow God’s laws or did not know how to follow God at all. But Jesus spent time with them and loved them.

Israel’s religious leaders watched Jesus and started to criticize Him. They said, “If Jesus is really God’s prophet, why is He spending time with sinners and eating with them?”

The religious leaders could not understand what Jesus was doing. They tried to follow all of God’s laws perfectly. They believed that anyone who spent time with sinners would be seen as sinful too—and they might be tempted* to sin themselves. So, they made their own religious rules against it. But Jesus kept breaking those rules.

Jesus Tells More Parables

Jesus went to banquets, or dinner parties, that the religious leaders would never attend. He attended banquets with sinners. He visited houses where sick people lived, and He healed them. He did these things to help people understand that God’s Kingdom was for the poor, the sick, and sinners. He showed them grace* that the religious leaders did not understand.

Jesus also attended banquets with the religious leaders. He wanted them to understand that they could be part of His Kingdom too. But He told them they were acting like members of a

special, private club. The religious leaders thought they were better than other people because they tried to be perfect. They did not think God cared about anyone but them. So, Jesus told them a parable about what God's Kingdom was really like.

Read **Luke 14:15–24**.

6. What excuses did the guests give for not coming to the banquet?

Some students might write the excuses word for word from the passage. The first guest said, “I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it” (Luke 14:18). Another said, “I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I’m on my way to try them out” (Luke 14:19). Another said, “I just got married, so I can’t come” (Luke 14:20). Other students may simply summarize these points.

NOTE: In Jesus’ parable, the excuses each person gave would have been very understandable to Jesus’ original audience. The man who bought the oxen had made a huge purchase. Most people in Jesus’ time were lucky to have one pair. His testing of the animals made sense. The same is true for the other excuses. Purchasing a field was even more important in Jesus’ time than it is today. Fields were handed down in families and were hardly ever sold. Getting a new field was rare, and it would have been important to inspect the land. Finally, it was a Jewish tradition that people who had just gotten married would typically spend the entire month with their new spouse without any other responsibilities. Refusing an offer for another event would have been normal and expected.

7. While the guests were busy doing things they thought were important, what happened?

The original guests missed the opportunity to come to the feast. The master of the house, angry with their excuses, invited the poor, crippled, blind, and lame to his party instead. Then, finding there was still room at the table, he sent his servant to bring back anyone else who was willing to come.

NOTE: The parable mirrors the religious leaders’ rejection of Jesus. They were so focused on trying to keep God’s laws perfectly that they failed to recognize God’s Kingdom as it began to appear on earth through Jesus’ ministry. They failed to hear Jesus’ Gospel message of forgiveness and hope. By turning away from Jesus, they were missing out on the “banquet.”

This parable was Jesus’ message to the religious leaders. They were the people who refused to come to the party. They were busy doing things that they thought were more important. They tried to follow every law they read in Scripture. They tried hard to love God with all their heart and soul, but they had forgotten that loving the people around them was part of loving God.

The religious leaders did not understand what Jesus was saying to them in the parable of the banquet. They were still holding on to the idea that the rules they were following were helping them earn God’s love. So, Jesus told the parable of the prodigal* son.

Read **Luke 15:11–32**.

It is easy to focus on the younger son in the story—the son who was a mess. The younger son demanded his share of his father’s money and ran off to a faraway land. He spent all of the money and then came back home because he was broke, scared, and hungry.

But there is something important to learn from the older son too. He tried to be the “good son” and obey his father. However, he didn’t get things right either.

8. Why was the father so excited to have his younger son home again?

The father believed his younger son to be lost or even dead, so he was overjoyed to see that his son was alive and well. His love for his son was so strong that he forgave everything the son had done.

9. Why was the older brother so angry?

The older brother compared the gifts that he had received from his father to the gifts that his brother had received. He did not think that this treatment was fair because he had been faithful and obedient to his father all his life and had never received a party for his good actions. He also may have been jealous that his brother had taken a large part of his father’s wealth and wasted it, yet he was now receiving even more.

NOTE: Students may identify more closely with the prodigal son, who made mistakes and knew he did not deserve grace or forgiveness. They may answer this question based on the way they have experienced others’ anger toward them. However, the point of Jesus’ parable is that both brothers benefited from their father’s grace, love, and forgiveness—and that both of them needed it. The same is true for each of us. We all need God’s grace, love, and forgiveness.

10. In your own words, write what the father said to the older son:

Luke 15:31–32 says, “My son . . . you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” If a student has written the verse word for word, prompt them with a question or comment to help them explore the meaning of the text more personally.

The father’s words in the story were meant for the religious leaders. Jesus wanted them to view sinners who were following Jesus the way God saw them: as beloved sons and daughters who were coming home to their Father. He also wanted the leaders to understand that the leaders themselves needed God’s forgiveness. He wanted them to know that they were just as welcome in God’s Kingdom.

The religious leaders rejected Jesus and His message. They had worked hard to try to earn God's love by keeping all of God's laws. They did not like the idea that the sinners Jesus spent time with could be forgiven or accepted by God. But they forgot that they were sinners too.

By rejecting Jesus, the leaders were rejecting God and what God wanted them to do. They had failed to realize that Jesus spoke for God because He *was* God. They failed to see that His message of forgiveness was for everyone, including them.

11. Why is it so hard for some people to admit they need God's forgiveness?

Students might bring up issues like pride, shame, or stubbornness. Some might share their own struggles with confessing that they have done wrong. Respect the student's response, being careful not to show any judgment. Consider sharing why it can be hard for you to admit you need God's forgiveness.

The Greatest Leader

God inspired Luke to write this account of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem for a reason. It is a reminder of the way God cared for His people in the past. Hundreds of years earlier, God raised up powerful leaders to guide His people back to Him.

God chose a man named Moses to free His people from slavery and lead them to a new land, where they began a new life with God. Later, God chose King David to help gather the people of Israel together into a kingdom, where they were called to live according to God's law.

Jesus came to do the same thing Moses and David had done. He came to lead people toward a new life with God. But Jesus' journey also pointed to something even more important. Jesus was truly the greatest leader God's people had ever seen. He was God, yet He chose to spend time with both religious leaders and sinners. He ate with both priests and prostitutes. Jesus told people about God's love for them and showed them God's love through His actions. He taught them what was at the heart of God's law: loving God and loving others.

Through all of this, Jesus was introducing a new Kingdom, where everyone who followed Him would be welcome. They would all receive God's forgiveness because God saw each of them as His children, and He loved them.

The religious leaders proudly followed their laws to avoid sinning. But they failed to realize that they were sinning by not following God's command to love others. Because they couldn't recognize their own need for God's love and forgiveness, they saw Jesus' message as a threat to their power and control over the people. By the time Jesus reached Jerusalem to prepare for Passover, the religious leaders were making plans to kill Him—but that was all part of God's plan.

12. Why might it be difficult for some people to believe that God loves sinners and wants them to follow Him?

Students will answer based on personal experience. Many people struggle to believe this because they doubt that God could ever love or forgive them.

Use this as an opportunity to point students toward God's grace and mercy. Consider sharing Romans 3:22–26 or other verses that speak about God's gift of forgiveness.

13. Do you believe that God loves you? Why or why not?

Some students will be able to declare that God loves them and celebrate it with Scripture to back up their answer. Others will struggle to see how God could ever love them. In those cases, share John 3:16, 1 John 4:9–10, or Romans 5:8 and affirm that God's love is greater than we can imagine and that His grace is for everyone, including them.

Action Step

In this lesson, you learned about God's greatest commandments. Read Luke 10:27 again and reflect on your answers to questions 2 and 3. What is something you can do today to put one of those commandments into practice? Write down what you decided to do and what happened as a result:

LESSON 4: Jesus Saves the World

Lesson Focus:

Jesus' death saved the world from sin.

The book of Luke includes many amazing events that happened during Jesus' lifetime. Angels told shepherds about Jesus' birth. God spoke from heaven to tell people that Jesus was His Son. Jesus spoke with God's most powerful prophets from the Old Testament. People began to follow Jesus and listen to His message. And Jesus taught them what it meant to truly love God and others.

The next event Luke described happened after Jesus and His disciples had completed their journey to Jerusalem. They were getting ready to enter the city to celebrate Passover.* If this were an ordinary story, we could guess what would happen next: Jesus would ride a big white horse into Jerusalem. He would gather the people. They would grab weapons and defeat the Romans. They would arrest the religious leaders and take over the city. The people would cheer, and Jesus would be king. But what happened next was not what anyone expected.

1. What story have you heard, read, or watched that had a completely different ending than you expected?

Answers will vary. Consider sharing your own answer to the question, either in the lesson or in your letter, as a way to connect with the student.

Jesus Arrives in Jerusalem

Before entering Jerusalem, Jesus told His disciples to find a donkey. Then He rode the donkey into the city. Israel's ancient prophets had promised that a king would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. They had also promised that one day God Himself would arrive in Jerusalem. He would come as the Savior* of His people and bring justice and peace. The people had seen Jesus do amazing things—things only God could do. When they saw Him riding a donkey, they hoped He was coming to lead them to victory over Rome.

Read **Luke 19:28–44**.

2. How did the crowd react as Jesus rode toward Jerusalem?

The crowd was overjoyed because they believed they were welcoming a new king who would free them from Rome. They praised God loudly, creating what would have looked like a victory parade for Jesus in front of the Roman rulers and the religious leaders (who were trying to keep the Roman rulers happy). The student's answer should reflect

the fact that the crowd was happy, excited, or celebratory. If it does not, point the student to Luke 19:37–40.

NOTE: More details about Jesus' Triumphal Entry can be found in the other Gospels. The palm branches were a symbol of Jewish nationalism, the lowly donkey was a prophetic symbol, and the cry of the people, "Hosanna," means "save us." Jesus' simple prophetic entry clashed with the typical entry of Caesar, which involved war horses, spears, soldiers, and cries of respect for Rome. It pointed again to Jesus being a different kind of King.

Not everyone was excited about Jesus' arrival. The religious leaders were not celebrating; they were angry. They were worried that Jesus would take away their power. The people had started listening to Jesus instead of listening to them.

Jesus was not happy either. He was crying as He rode into the city. Jesus knew that the people did not understand who He was or what He was coming to do. They would not accept the peace and hope He offered to those who followed Him. They were going to keep fighting Rome, and their city would be burned to the ground—and that broke His heart.

Jesus Enters the Temple

After Jesus entered Jerusalem, He headed straight to the temple. He marched into the temple courts and chased out the money changers.* They had been stealing from the people who came to worship in God's temple. The religious leaders knew that this was happening, but they had done nothing to stop it.

Jesus was angry that people were being cheated in God's temple. He was even angrier that the religious leaders were allowing it. He flipped over the money changers' tables and threw their money on the ground as a prophetic protest.* He stood in the center of the crowds that were gathered for Passover and shouted words from Israel's ancient prophets: "It is written . . . 'My house will be a house where people can pray.' But you have made it a 'den for robbers'" (Luke 19:46).

Jesus was quoting the prophet Jeremiah (jer-eh-MAI-uh). Jeremiah had stood in that same spot in the temple more than 600 years earlier and said the same thing to Israel's leaders because they were rebellious* and corrupt.* They were not serving God; they were serving themselves.

3. What do you think it would have been like to see Jesus confront the religious leaders?

Since we have asked students to write a personal reflection, answers will vary. Consider sharing your own answer to this question.

The religious leaders knew what Jesus was saying to them, but they didn't listen to Him because they were too afraid of losing their power. They wanted to kill Him, but they could not figure out how to do it. The crowds around Jesus were too big, so He was never alone.

Jesus knew that the leaders wanted to kill Him. But He also knew that it was God's plan and that it would happen during Passover. Passover was a celebration of God saving His people, and that was exactly what Jesus had come to do.

God commanded His people to celebrate Passover each year. It was a reminder of how God rescued His people from slavery in Egypt hundreds of years before (see Exodus 1:1–12:51). People would travel for weeks to reach Jerusalem for the festival. Every family had to go to the temple, sacrifice* a lamb, and ask for God's forgiveness. Then they would celebrate. They would eat the lamb, drink wine, and break bread together. Everything they ate had meaning. The sacrificed lamb reminded them of God's forgiveness. The bread reminded them that God led His people out of slavery from Egypt and into freedom. The wine reminded them that God had made a covenant* (KUH-vah-nunt) with them. He had promised to be their God, and they had promised to be His people.

Jesus and His disciples celebrated Passover too. They knew the meaning of the meal, and they remembered the promises connected to it. However, Jesus was going to show the disciples a new way to understand the bread and the wine.

Read **Luke 22:1–30**.

4. What did Jesus say would happen to Him (see verses 14–23)?

Most students will note that Jesus said He was going to die and that one of His disciples would betray Him. Jesus also told His disciples that He would suffer to fulfill the new covenant through the breaking of His body and the spilling of His blood. He was telling them that He would keep God's promise from the Old Testament by dying to pay for all of humanity's sins. The disciples did not understand that at the time, and many students will not fully understand this either, but as they continue to study God's Word, they will begin to see the connections.

During the meal, Jesus used the bread and wine to tell the disciples why He was going to suffer and die. He said the broken bread was His broken body. He said the wine was His blood.

Jesus was telling the disciples He was going to be the final sacrifice on Passover. Sacrificing lambs to God would no longer be necessary for forgiveness. That was why Jesus came to earth. He had never sinned, but He was going to die to pay for the sins of all humankind. He would make it possible for anyone who followed Him to experience God's forgiveness. He would make a way for them to have a new relationship with God. Jesus would do more than save them from death—He was going to give them the gift of eternal life with God.

Jesus Goes to Pray

After the meal, Jesus took His disciples to a garden to pray. Jesus knew that He needed to die to finish what He came to do. But He still struggled with the very human desire to avoid death.

He knew He was going to face horrible pain and rejection. He did not want to experience those things. But He wanted to follow God's plan. So, He talked to God.

Jesus was still praying in the garden when the religious leaders found Him and arrested Him.

Read **Luke 22:39–46**.

5. What was the last thing Jesus said in His prayer?

Jesus prayed that God's will would be done instead of His own. If a student has simply written the verse word for word, consider asking them to think about the meaning of Jesus' prayer. Encourage them to think about why Jesus said those words or what He might have been feeling as He prayed.

6. What can we learn from the way Jesus prayed when He was struggling?

Jesus' prayer reminds us to go to God when we are struggling, to remember that we should seek God's will instead of our own, and to trust God for the answers to our problems. Jesus did all three of these things. Because He was fully human, He faced the human desire to avoid the pain He was about to endure. He asked God for what He wanted but maintained His desire to do God's will. And, in the end, He followed God's plan.

The Trial and Sentence

Because Jerusalem was ruled by the Roman Empire, the religious leaders could not execute Jesus themselves. They had to get permission from their governor, Pontius Pilate (PAHN-shus PAI-luht). The leaders made up a charge that Jesus was a rebel* king. They said He was telling people to fight against the Roman Empire. Pilate was not sure they were telling him the whole truth. So, Pilate asked Jesus if He was really a king.

And Jesus answered, "You have said so" (Luke 23:3).

Pilate believed that Jesus was innocent. He knew that Jesus did not deserve to die, so he offered to let Jesus go. But the religious leaders argued that He was dangerous. They asked Pilate to release a man named Barabbas instead. Barabbas was guilty, and Jesus was innocent. But Pilate agreed, and Jesus was the one taken away to be crucified.*

Pilate handed Jesus over to the guards. They beat Him and dressed Him like a fake king. They pushed a crown made of thorns onto His head. Then they nailed Him to a Roman execution device—a cross. And as He hung there, the people mocked Him. *If You're the promised king, save Yourself!*

Even though they made fun of Him and wanted Him to die, Jesus loved His enemies to the very end. He gave hope to one of the criminals who was crucified beside Him. And He even prayed

for the men executing Him, saying, “Father, forgive them. They don’t know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Then the sky turned dark. Jesus cried out with ancient words from the Psalms: “Father, into your hands I commit my life” (Luke 23:46).

Then Jesus died. At that moment, He paid the price for all our sins. And no one came to save Him.

Read **Luke 23:26–49**.

7. The Bible tells us that Jesus died on the cross for all of us to pay for our sins. What does that mean for you?

Some students will write that this means they have been washed clean or given a second chance. If a student shares a response like this, celebrate with them! If a student shares that they struggle to believe that their sins can be forgiven, share additional Scriptures to read that will encourage them, such as John 3:16–17. However, do not expect students to have a detailed understanding of atonement theology. If you’re comfortable doing so, you might also encourage your student by sharing some of your own story and what Jesus’ sacrifice means to you.

Not the End

Jesus’ death seemed like an ending. He was gone. His body was buried in a tomb. Almost everyone had given up on Him. But then, something amazing and unexpected happened. Two of God’s angel messengers appeared to the women who went to care for Jesus’ body, saying, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here! He has risen!” (Luke 24:5–6). The angels reminded them that Jesus had said that all of those things would happen.

The women left in shock and ran to tell the disciples what they had seen and heard. The tomb was empty! Jesus was gone! The disciples did not believe it at first. They wondered how it could be possible.

The same day, two of Jesus’ followers left Jerusalem. They began traveling toward a town called Emmaus (eh-MAY-uhs). They were still discussing what had happened to Jesus. They were completely confused. Then, Jesus appeared and walked alongside them. But for some reason, they did not recognize Him.

Read **Luke 24:13–35**.

8. Why do you think Jesus’ followers were still struggling to understand what happened to Him?

Jesus continually did unexpected things. His followers were still thinking in earthly

terms and were confused when things did not turn out the way they expected. They did not understand that Jesus was ushering in a heavenly Kingdom, not a physical one. They did not realize that He was going to save them from their sins, not just from Roman rule, and that He had to die to accomplish God's plan. Most students will understand this and write something similar. Some may need help understanding the disciples' confusion.

9. What are some reasons that people today fail to understand who Jesus really is?

Students may give a variety of responses, including but not limited to the following: It is hard to believe without seeing. There are so many different perspectives about Jesus. It is easier to live in denial. Some people don't read the Bible. Some people would rather live for worldly pleasures. Consider sharing what you do to continue learning who Jesus truly is, and encourage your student to keep getting to know Jesus. You can share Scripture passages such as Proverbs 3:5–6 and John 1:1–14.

Who Is Jesus?

The book of Luke ends with a reminder that Jesus is both God and King. The last chapter of Luke says that Jesus rose from the dead and was later taken into heaven and surrounded by God's glory. But before He left earth, He took time to care for His people. Jesus met with His disciples and blessed them. He reminded them of everything He taught them, and He promised that His Kingdom was still coming. He also promised to send the Holy Spirit to live in the hearts of everyone who followed Him. Even then, the disciples did not understand what was happening. It was not until later, when they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, that they finally understood.

Luke's book shows how hard it was for the people around Jesus to see Him for who He truly was. The religious leaders knew Scripture. But they did not recognize that Jesus was the King that God had chosen for His people. Even the disciples, who spent every day with Him, failed to see that He was keeping every promise God had made about the Messiah and King.

That is why God inspired Luke to write his book. God wanted people to know that what they heard about Jesus was true. God wanted them to understand that Jesus was more than a prophet or a teacher. He was even more than the King that God had promised would come. He was greater than all the people's expectations. Jesus was God on earth. He was the Savior who came to defeat death and rule forever. Out of His great love for us, He came to earth to live, die, and rise again so that we could experience God's forgiveness. He made it possible for each of us to have a relationship with God and experience the freedom of living with Him for eternity.* Jesus was God and man, and He came to do what no one else could. He came to save us.

10. Based on everything you have read and learned in this course, who do you say Jesus is?

Answers will vary, but we pray students will say that Jesus is their Lord and Savior, their King, etc. If they do, celebrate with them and encourage them in their spiritual walk. If they do not, use questions and Bible verses to help guide the student toward a personal

relationship with Christ (John 14:6; John 8:12; Acts 4:10–12; 2 Timothy 1:9–10). It is important that students understand that Jesus is more than just a great teacher or prophet. Jesus is God, and only He can offer the salvation that we all truly need.

Action Step

Write down something new that you learned about Jesus from this lesson or course, and then share it with someone else. How did they respond? What did you talk about as a result?



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