

SPRING 2024

YOU



**IT'S ALL
ABOUT JESUS**

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**BEING AN
AUTHENTIC
CHURCH**



A STUDY ABOUT THE LIFE AND WORK OF JESUS

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The reality of Jesus's existence has massive implications for our daily lives. These implications were felt from the very beginning. The apostles, and the early disciples who supported them, were inspired to provide future generations of Christians with an accurate representation of Jesus. However, Jesus is such a complex figure that a one-dimensional view would not do Him justice. Instead, each of the four Gospels has been intentionally designed to show us Jesus in ways that complement, fill out, and build upon the others. As you study these sessions, you will consider various passages in the Gospel of Luke that will empower you to:

- Align your actions and current situation with Jesus's mission.
- Share your faith in new ways as the Spirit prompts you to reflect on Jesus's ministry.
- Identify with people from all walks of life

because of Jesus's death.

- Endeavor for holiness as you consider the impact of Jesus's resurrection.

These are just a sampling of the many principles covered in Luke's Gospel. Luke invites us to see fascinating details about Jesus that nuance what can be seen elsewhere, tying concepts together into an "orderly account" that will cause us to meditate on the Word. Jesus's life and mission should change and shape our lives. As such, Luke invites us to be "on mission" regardless of our circumstances. The many individuals mentioned in his Gospel provide examples of how we should respond to Jesus during the best and worst times. Let us choose to engage and proclaim "repentance for forgiveness of sins will be proclaimed in his name to all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Acts 24:47), and let everyone around us know that it is all about Jesus.

SESSION 1

THE MISSION OF JESUS

Leader pages on pp. 100-103

THE POINT:

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER
THE GOOD NEWS OF
SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLE.

LUKE 3:1-6; 4:14-21

^{3:1} In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, while Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Iturea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, ² during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, God's word came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness.

³ He went into all the vicinity of the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, ⁴ as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah: A voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord; make his paths straight!

⁵ **Every valley will be filled, and every mountain and hill will be made low; the crooked will become straight, the rough ways smooth, ⁶ and everyone will see the salvation of God.**

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^{4:14} Then Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread throughout the entire vicinity. ¹⁵ He was teaching in their synagogues, being praised by everyone. ¹⁶ He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written: ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, ¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

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²⁰ He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. And the eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fixed on him.

²¹ He began by saying to them, "Today as you listen, this Scripture has been fulfilled."

MEMORY VERSE

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KEYWORDS

Fifteenth year . . . Tiberius Caesar (v. 1)—This dates John the Baptist's ministry beginning around AD 27.

Proclaiming (v. 3)—This word communicates an authoritative message from another. John was proclaiming God's message of repentance.

Because he has anointed me (v. 18)—In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to represent the Holy Spirit's guiding presence with them. The Messiah (Anointed One) would be the person in whom God's Spirit fully dwelt.

WHY DID JESUS COME?

One day some soldiers found a little package in a clover field south of Frederick, Maryland, on September 13, 1862. It was a roll of paper wrapped around three cigars. Though they were initially excited to find the cigars, the real excitement came when they read the paper. It was a copy of Robert E. Lee's Special Orders No. 191, and it detailed the general's plan of attack to invade Maryland. The paper made its way through the chain of command and was instrumental in the Battle of Antietam, which ended Lee's first invasion of the North. Talk about being at the right place at the right time!

Those soldiers demonstrated their faithfulness by putting away the cigars and reporting what they had found. However, the soldiers were fortunate. They had not been assigned the task of locating Lee's plan of attack. A serendipitous circumstance is much different than a specific mission. The former is about chance; the latter is about intentionality. The former is a lucky confluence; the latter is about orchestrated design. When it comes to Jesus and His mission, we find someone more qualified to thwart the enemy's plans. Jesus did not come to simply stumble around looking for random lost individuals, but He came prepared to fulfill a perfectly orchestrated and intentional mission for God.

Jesus Had a Mission // Luke 3:1-6

These verses begin with a colorful and influential character in the Gospels—John the Baptist. But his uniqueness began long before the moment he began to preach and call people to repentance; it began even before he was born. His mother and father, Zechariah and Elizabeth, loved the Lord and yet were without a child, which in that culture was often seen as a sign of divine displeasure. Then there came the day when Zechariah, a priest who, in the middle of his priestly duties, received a visit from an angel who told him that despite his and his wife's ages, they were going to have a son. The angel said many things about the boy—that he was going to be filled with the Holy Spirit from birth, that people everywhere would rejoice at his birth, and that he would go before the Lord as someone

responsible for turning people back to God. The angel said that this child would be great in the sight of the Lord (Luke 1:5-20).

Skip forward several years, and we find that, as a prophet, the Word of God came to John, and his seeming eccentricities multiplied. He moved out into the middle of the desert. He lived as a hermit, he wore clothes made out of camel hair, and ate locusts. He had a certain wildness about him and preached a message of judgment and repentance. He even went so far as to insult people of great importance in his day. He called the Pharisees, the religious leaders of the time, broods of snakes



THE POINT:

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLE.

and other worse things. Later, he publicly rebuked the ruler of the region for marrying his brother's wife, which got him thrown in prison, eventually being executed for his commitment to God's law (Mark 6:14-29).

Though some considered him strange and maybe even crazy, John was very clear about his purpose in life. He was born, and lived, for one reason alone—to prepare the way for Jesus. This was the overarching theme of John's whole life, and in this, he shows us how we might live according to God's mission as well:

- **Our mission is formed by God's Word.** John did not search until he found a cause that grabbed his attention and captured his imagination; his mission was firmly rooted in the unchanging Word of God. The same must be true of us. In a culture in which it seems that everyone has a purpose that's important to them, we have the wonderful opportunity to align ourselves with the only mission that is unchanging, and the only mission with true, eternal significance.
- **Our mission is understood in light of Jesus's mission.** John understood and accepted that his life was subject to Jesus's life, and his mission was, therefore, only a smaller component of Jesus's mission. We must do the same. We must not trick ourselves into thinking that we can somehow live with passion and meaning in a way that does not fall in line with who Jesus is and what He came to do. Indeed, the pathway to true significance is only found in the shadow of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS GOD PREPARED YOUR HEART TO HEAR ABOUT JESUS?

Jesus Had a Message // Luke 4:14-19

With the way prepared by John, Jesus began His public ministry, and in so doing, He created quite a stir due to the miracles He performed and the authority of His teaching. When we come to Luke 4, we find that Jesus's pathway has led Him back to His hometown of Nazareth.

Jesus read from the prophet Isaiah, a messianic prophecy found in Isaiah 61:1-2, and one the people would have been familiar with. It was one of the promises they had clung to about God's coming chosen one through all the years of oppression, through the destruction of the temple, and through the occupation by the Romans. It was a passage of hope, one that talked about giving sight to the blind, freedom to the captives, and bringing in the year of the Lord's favor.



DIGGING DEEPER OBSTACLES TO FAITH

John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecy found in Isaiah 40:3-5 and called on his audience to live out its message. The imagery in this passage focuses on obstacles that can keep people from seeing "the way of the Lord." Valleys that allow people to walk through low places are filled up. Mountains meant to allow people to see things from above are made low. Crooked paths that would warp the sight of various individuals are made straight. And even rough paths are smoothed out. All of this is done so that everyone, all flesh, could see the salvation of God. Regardless of their location, God ensured that anything obscuring a person's view would be removed. Similarly, John the Baptist explains that genuine acts of righteousness undergird true repentance (Luke 3:7-9). John dealt with three different groups and the obstacles that keep them from expressing true repentance. The crowds need to share more (Luke 3:10-11), the tax collectors need to be fair (Luke 3:12-13), and the soldiers need to avoid using their position for their own advantage (Luke 3:14).

What obstacles in your life keep you from seeing Jesus clearly?



This is Jesus, and this is His mission. Foretold hundreds of years earlier, Jesus was now here, fulfilling those ancient words. He was chosen by God, set apart for this specific and sacred purpose. His mission was indeed to:

- **Proclaim freedom for the prisoners.** Every human is a prisoner of sin and death, incapable of freeing themselves. We all need a rescuer who can break the chains of our own making and bring us into glorious freedom as the children of God.
- **Give sight to the blind.** We have all been blinded by our sin, each of us convinced that our own way is good and right. We need our eyes opened to the truth of our rebellion and God's great mercy by which we can be forgiven for our sin and be restored to him.
- **Set the oppressed free.** True freedom is not doing whatever our sinful nature desires; this is the insidious nature of sin, tricking us into believing that slavery is actually freedom. True freedom means living rightly with God and each other, free to love and serve God with our whole hearts.
- **Proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.** At long last, the Messiah had come. And is there any greater favor God could show on the earth than providing the way of reconciliation to Him? Despite our sin and rebellion, God's great favor rests on us in that He has bridged the gap back to Him.

WHICH OF THE METAPHORS IN THIS PASSAGE BEST REPRESENTS HOW GOD SAVED YOU?

Jesus Had a Mandate //

Luke 4:20-21

Having read Isaiah 61:1-2, Jesus continued, a true "drop the mic" kind of moment, "Today this passage has been fulfilled in your presence." In other words, I am Him. I'm the one you have waited for. And you are bearing witness to the fulfillment of these very words.

The Book of Isaiah was written approximately 750 years before Jesus stood in the synagogue of Nazareth. Those 750 years represent several generations of expectations, each dying off without seeing the fulfillment of God's promise. But no matter how much time passes, God's faithfulness never changes. To say God is faithful, is to say that He always keeps His word. True enough, things might not happen in the timing or the fashion that we expect, but He keeps His word, nevertheless. Because we cannot always comprehend the actions of God, we should humble ourselves as we encounter different events. In hindsight, God's actions are always fulfilled in expected and unexpected ways.

- **Jesus is the expected Messiah.** The crowd in the synagogue that day loved the pronouncement. Of course, they did—they were bearing witness to that which generations had waited for. Here, finally, was the promised one of God, the Messiah, and even better, He had come from their own small town of Nazareth. But amazingly, if we continue to read the chapter, we see that the crowd's attitude began to change. Though they began with excitement and joy, they ended with anger and violence, even attempting to throw Jesus to His death from a hilltop outside of town. We might wonder what exactly happened. How could the attitude change so dramatically if Jesus truly was the expected Messiah?
- **Jesus is the unexpected Messiah.** The reason the crowd shifted so abruptly and dramatically is because even though they expected the Messiah, they did not expect this kind of Messiah. The crowd in Nazareth assumed many things about Jesus and His mission. They assumed He would be a political leader. They assumed He was the Savior of Israel, and correspondingly, He was the

THE POINT:

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLE.

conqueror of their enemies. But Jesus is the Savior that challenges our assumptions.

As the passage continues, we see that Jesus references instances from the Old Testament in which God worked not in Israel but outside of it. He focused on the people's faith regardless of their bloodline. This, it seems, is not exactly what the people had in mind for their Savior. When they came to that realization, slowly at first, but then all together as a mob, they are absolutely livid. Angry enough to kill. The same crowd that only moments before was filled with pride and approval was suddenly bent on death and destruction. These people didn't want a Savior like this—not a Savior who would be as much for "those other people" as He was for them. They wanted a Savior who would put "those other people" in their place and who would commend them for their righteousness and faithfulness.

When we encounter Jesus, we cannot try and bend Him into the type of Savior that is more to our liking. Instead, all our assumptions, preferences, and desires must be brought under His lordship.

HOW CAN WE PREPARE THE WAY FOR OTHERS TO BELIEVE IN JESUS AS CHRIST?

DID YOU KNOW?

The list of names found in Luke 3:1-2a might easily be glossed over. Still, this information provides us with several important details. First, with it, we can identify the historical context of the events of John the Baptist's ministry to have taken place around 27-29 AD. Second, Luke introduces John the Baptist according to the normal prophetic introduction. "In the [x] year of [name] . . . God's word came to [prophet]" (Jer. 1:1-4; Ezek. 1:1-3, Hos 1:1, etc.). Third, the seven highly esteemed political figures mentioned here (Tiberius, Pilate, Herod, etc.) do not bring "salvation" to their regions. As Luke unfolds the story of Jesus's life and ministry, five of them disappear. When two of them do reappear (Pilate and Herod), they use their office for sinful purposes instead of for the good of their citizens (3:19; 13:1; 23:1-52).

Biblical Truth: Those committed to living by the "way of the Lord" engage people with the message of salvation and righteous living.

How can you become properly engaged with bringing the message of salvation to your neighborhood?

LIVE IT

How are your actions and choices related to the mission of Jesus?

Jesus came with a specific purpose and mission. As a Christian, our life should be lived to support that mission. We must be intentional to live the gospel with and be ready to share the good news when the opportunity is given. No conversation or encounter is haphazard or coincidental. Just as Jesus was God's plan for redemption, we are part of that plan to bring His redemption to others.

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- **Assess Your Thinking.** Are there any groups of people you consider to be "off limits" from the message of the gospel? If so, pray and repent of those attitudes.
- **Align Your Mission.** Consider your personal gifts, talents, and ambitions. Are they in alignment with Christ? Remember, our mission must fall in the shadow of Jesus's mission.
- **Share the Message.** Write out a summary of the gospel and read it a few times each day. Ask God for an opportunity to verbally share it with someone else.

DAILY READINGS

1. GET READY! // LUKE 3:3-6

There is nothing like witnessing someone live out their passion, but more rewarding, their God-given passion. It is one thing to see this with your own eyes, but equally compelling is to hear it with your own ears. The reaction is catching, and contagious. It is like living with an ever-conscious mission or joining in with the hymnist and declaring, "A charge to keep I have, an eternal God to glory." John the Baptist was sent with a charge to prepare all those around the Jordan for God's coming and His mission to save. Just like John, as believers we also have a charge. "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

Christ's commission is for every believer and we all have a Jordan mission field. Are you ready?

2. GOT POWER? // LUKE 4:14-15

Sometimes, we feel energized and enjoy tackling to-do lists, but more often than we care to admit, much of the time, we do not. This may not be laziness, but the lack of will or strength to follow through. The popular saying "Where there is a will, there is a way," does not apply to all situations. God often sends challenging situations or leads us into unwanted places to strengthen and empower us to accomplish His mission. That places us in the perfect position for us to be used—totally dependent on Him. In our weakness, His power is perfected (2 Cor. 12:9). He is the Omnipotent God. He gives us the will, power and depth to accomplish our assigned mission. On our own we can do nothing, but will God all things are possible.

When we are at our lowest, the power of God is at its greatest.

3. GOT PURPOSE? // LUKE 4:16-21

Do you have a purpose? Yes, of course, you do. We all have a purpose. So, the easy answer is "Yes." However, the difficulty with that question comes

with the obvious follow-up question of "What is my purpose?" Knowing your purpose is the gateway to a fulfilling and God-glorifying life. Notice that I said the gateway. To live in purpose, you must embrace it. The best way to do that is follow the leader. He knew who He was, His purpose and mission in life. In Christ, we come to know our purpose and mission for life. Our identity is in Him and we bear fruit, when we abide in Him (John 15:5).

I am who I am because Jesus knew and fulfilled His purpose and mission.

4. LIFE AS YOU SHOULD KNOW IT // JOHN 10:10

People live based on many experiences: personal, others' experiences, hard knocks, the streets, etc. In John 10:10, Jesus clearly distinguishes between the enemy's mission of life destruction and His mission of life more abundantly. He told those following Him that if they stayed in a relationship with Him, they would be His disciples. Then they would have what they needed—the truth of life, which is only found in God. He also told them, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). An abundant and free life in Christ is the goal of every disciple.

Christ's mission was a ministry of compassion and kingdom works that connected us with the Father.

5. HOW'S YOUR LOVE LIFE? // MARK 12:28-31

How is your love life? Before you answer, allow me to explain that the question is God-focused because there must be a broader approach to answering the question. Just think about the number of relationships you have. Should love be found within them? Yes, I know there are different kinds of love, but love is love. Speaking of relationships, the Word of God tells us that the most important commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. The second is: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The mission and ministry of God are clearly love.

It is His way of being, and so it should be ours. Again, "how's your love life?"

BEFORE YOU TEACH

Pray Specifically

This is typically the season when the body of Christ as a whole focuses on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We celebrate and remember the sacrifice that Jesus made so that we can experience eternal life. This is foundational to our faith. As believers, we are bombarded with information that attempts to challenge the reality of Jesus Christ. While preparing for this lesson, pray specifically for your learner's faith to be anchored in the truth of Jesus Christ.

Know the Background

Luke was very intentional in giving the setting of the beginning of John and Jesus' ministries. Luke did this to ensure a concise historical background and give an orderly account of the beginning of their ministries in light of contemporary history. Take time to study and know the historical background of these passages to enrich your understanding of what was surrounding John and Jesus' ministry.

LOOK BACK

Ask learners to briefly discuss how last week's lesson impacted them. Remind learners that maturing faith has qualities that reflect Jesus Christ's character.

ASK: "What role does forgiveness, obedience, and humility play in maturing our faith?" Invite a learner to share their experience with last week's "Live It" exercise.

TEACHING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

GUIDE: Share the quote that D. L. Moody, one of the greatest American evangelists of the last century, was reputed to have said, "If God be your partner, make your plans large." Discuss how this is exactly what Jesus Christ did. His mission: to

offer salvation to all mankind, restoring fellowship with God. As a matter of fact, the magnitude of the mission of Jesus Christ is still awe-inspiring.

TRANSITION: Read the question, "Why did Jesus come?" and **The Point: Jesus came to deliver the good news of salvation for all people.**

PACK ITEM: Use **Pack Item 1: "It's All About Jesus"** poster to provide a preview of the session titles for the study.

DIG INTO THE TEXT

Jesus had a Mission // Luke 3:1-6

PACK ITEM: Use **Pack Item 2: "Luke Overview"** to introduce the book of Luke.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read Luke 3:1-6.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verses 1 and 2 (p. 104) and the background information you studied to describe the setting of John the Baptist's start in ministry. Summarize the first paragraph under "Jesus Had a Mission" (p. 12) to explain the events that led to His call to preach repentance to people. Remind learners that just like John the Baptist had a purpose, Jesus Christ equips every believer with purpose to support His mission.

DID YOU KNOW: Invite a learner to read "Did You Know" (p. 15) to learn more about the setting of John the Baptist's start in ministry.

DISCUSS: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "Skip forward several years . . ." (p. 12). Invite learners to think about the training ground God took John the Baptist through to prepare him to do His will. Ask, "what do you notice about the circumstances you've been through and how have they prepared you to be a voice for Jesus Christ?"

DIGGING DEEPER: invite a learner to read "Digging Deeper" (p. 13) and discuss the obstacles that can keep people from seeing Jesus.

READ: Invite a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "Our mission is formed . . ." and "Our

THE POINT:

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION FOR ALL PEOPLE.

mission is understood . . ." (p. 13). Ask the question that follows.

EXPLAIN: Point out that the illustrations used in verses 4–6 help us understand the ministry that God gave to John the Baptist. His ministry is the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Isaiah 40:3-5. John the Baptist knew his role was to be a messenger preparing the way of the Lord. He lived His life preaching repentance for the remission of sins.

ASK: "Why do you think God chose someone like John to be Jesus' forerunner?" Discuss repentance for the forgiveness of sins and the critical role it has in experiencing salvation.

Jesus had a Message //

Luke 4:14-19

READ: Invite a learner to read Luke 4:14-19.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for verses 14-19 (p. 105) to discuss how Jesus began His public ministry. Explain that Jesus had been anointed by the Spirit at His baptism (3:22). He was full of the Spirit and led by the Spirit to defeat Satan (4:1). Now He returns to Galilee in the power of the Spirit to begin His ministry.

READ: Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "This is Jesus . . ." (p. 14) to discuss the details of Jesus' mission. Point out the importance of the sermon was further heightened by the fact that it fulfilled Scripture. Note that when John the Baptist later questioned if Jesus was the expected one (7:20), Jesus repeated the same passage (7:21-22).

GUIDE: Invite a learner to read the paragraph beginning, "Proclaim the year . . ." (p. 14). Use the commentary for verse 19 on page 105 to discuss the favor we have received through salvation.

Jesus had a Mandate //

Luke 4:20-21

READ: Invite a learner to read Luke 4:20-21.

GUIDE: Using the commentary for verses 20-21 (p. 105), describe the reaction of those who were

listening to Jesus speak. Explain that the crowd was fascinated with His teaching. They were amazed with His gracious words. But they were not fully persuaded and immediately began to question the authority in which He spoke.

READ: Enlist a learner to read the paragraph that begins, "The book of Isaiah . . ." (p. 14). Remind learners that one of Luke's major purposes for writing was to assure his readers of the certainty of what they had been taught about Jesus' life and His teachings. Luke had more references of how Jesus' life was prophesied beforehand in the Scriptures than any other Gospel account.

ASK: "How does seeing Jesus fulfill Scripture written hundreds of years beforehand impact your faith?"

SUMMARIZE: Summarize the two paragraphs that begins, "Jesus is the expected" and "Jesus is the unexpected" (p. 14) to discuss the drastic change of attitude of those who were listening to Jesus. Explain how their rejection of Jesus would eventually open the door for Gentiles to receive the Good News of Jesus Christ.

DISCUSS: Summarize the paragraph that begins, "As the passage . . ." (p. 15) and discuss the negative impact having assumptions about how Jesus should work can have on our lives.

GUIDE: Challenge learners to take time this week to do the self-assessment and the summary exercise in the "Live It" section (p. 15)

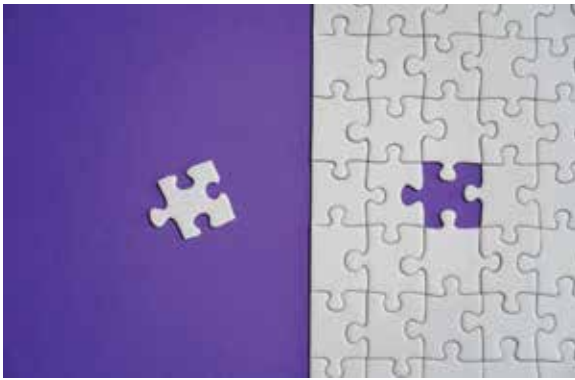
OBJECT LESSON: To close the lesson, use the "Object Lesson" (p. 104) to illustrate the importance of being a part of Jesus' mission to share the good news with all people.



PACK ITEM 1



PACK ITEM 2



OBJECT LESSON

DO: Display a picture of a puzzle piece and a puzzle that has been put together.

ASK: "Why is it important to have all the pieces when putting a puzzle together?"

GUIDE: Explain that every believer is a part of God's bigger mission. That mission includes us joining together to share the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. We each have a critical role of sharing His truth to those who are not saved. Emphasize that even if one piece is missing the puzzle is incomplete. Challenge learners to do their part in completing Jesus' mission.

CLOSE THE SESSION

SUMMARIZE: Direct learners back to the session question: Why did Jesus come? And the session point: Jesus came to deliver the good news of salvation for all people.

Point out that Jesus desires for all believers to be a part of His mission to share this good news. Invite learners to reflect on those who were instrumental in their salvation experience and how they can share that experience with someone else.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for those who led us to faith in Jesus Christ. Ask God to give us courage to share our faith and experience the joy of sharing our faith with the lost.

COMMENTARY

Verse 1-2. Luke's listing of these leaders (including two sons of Herod the Great), their geographical territories, and their official titles reveals Luke's historical diligence.

Before his birth, through a sequence of miraculous events, God set John apart to be a prophet—even before his birth (Luke 1:15-17). The function of a prophet is to speak God's word, His message. This phrase puts John in line with Old Testament prophets who had not spoken since Malachi, about four hundred years earlier.

Verse 3. The word proclaiming communicates an authoritative message from another. John was proclaiming God's message of repentance. The act of baptism (immersion in water; John 3:23) represented an outward symbol of an inward change. Repentance involves a change of mind; both the Hebrew and Greek words reflect a change in direction of a person's thoughts and actions. **For the forgiveness of sins** - "For" indicates the purpose of repentance—the forgiveness of sins. A central part of the gospel message, forgiveness for believers is a present possession (John 5:24) as well as a future expectation (at the final judgment; Rom. 14:10). The gospel message is that forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice on the cross enables a right relationship with God (10:9-10).

Verse 4-5. John's mission was to prepare the way for Jesus in much the same way as people prepared a way (road) for a visiting dignitary, making travel easier. John's message was for people to repent of their sins so they would be ready to receive the Messiah. To prepare for the Lord, John prepared the people by preaching repentance to straighten a crooked generation (Acts 2:40). He also preached humility, which required lowering oneself before God.

Verse 6. More than the other Gospel accounts, Luke focused on Jesus's concern and teaching for everyone, Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, saint and sinner alike. John's message pointed

beyond himself to the Messiah who would bring salvation to all who believed in Him.

LUKE 4:14-19

Verse 14-15. Jesus went into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13). From this wilderness area, He walked about seventy to eighty miles north to Galilee in the **power of the Spirit**. Jesus is God (John 10:30). In a way we can't completely understand, the Son had complete access to the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus's primary activity during this time was teaching.

Verse 16-17. Nazareth was Jesus's childhood home until He was about thirty years old and began His public ministry (Luke 3:23). Both Matthew (13:54-58) and Mark (6:1-6) also report Jesus preaching in Nazareth. Jesus's habit of worshiping on Saturdays meant going to the synagogue. Jesus was invited to read Scripture from the Prophets. He read from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. What Jesus read from Isaiah described the focus of Jesus's ministry in detail. Isaiah 61:1-3 is a prophecy of the coming Messiah, the future Anointed One who would fulfill God's plans.

Verse 18-19. In the Old Testament, prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil to represent the Holy Spirit's guiding presence with them. The Messiah (Anointed One) would be the person in whom God's Spirit fully dwelt. The remainder of verses 18-19 states the purpose for which Jesus was anointed and what He would do in His ministry.

Part of Jesus's mission was to preach the good news that God's salvation is available to everyone, including the poor. Jesus came because God sent Him as Immanuel ("God is with us;" Matt. 1:23) to preach the good news that all who believe in Him would be saved (Rom. 10:9-10). Jesus told His disciples the Father had sent Him (John 20:21). Jesus's ministry involved numerous healings of many kinds. Some healing was from physical blindness; other was from spiritual blindness.

Salvation in and through Jesus Christ set free all who were oppressed by Satan—those whom Satan burdened down with the weight of the

guilt of their sin. This salvation comes by trusting in Jesus.

Verse 19. To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. In Leviticus 25, God commanded Israel to celebrate His goodness every fifty years by not planting crops, freeing slaves, and forgiving debts. During that Year of Jubilee, the Israelites would have to depend on God's favor to provide for their needs. In a much superior way, Jesus brought God's favor, His salvation, to the entire world—to all who believe in Him.

LUKE 4:20-21

Verse 20-21. Jesus declared that He is the long-awaited Messiah. After Jesus read the Scripture, those present attentively waited for Him to explain it. The congregation expected Jesus to say something of interest. During this historical period, a number of men claimed to be the Messiah. Most attempted to be the military/political hero people expected seeking to expel the Romans. This particular passage from Isaiah certainly would have grabbed their attention. The word **began** indicates Jesus continued to speak. After reading the passage, He handed the scroll back to the attendant and sat down before resuming speaking. *"Today as you listen,"* that which the prophet had spoken hundreds of years earlier had a contemporary relevance, if the people would but hear. Jesus's words were more of an application of Isaiah's prophecy about the Messiah than merely an explanation of Scripture. The Jews were looking for God's kingdom to be the restored Israel. Jesus told His listeners God's kingdom had come in Him.

This Scripture has been fulfilled. The Greek verb tense indicates a past completed action resulting in a current state of being. Because of Jesus's incarnation (His coming as the God/man—Immanuel), He was now the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One on whom God's Spirit rested fully. Jesus fulfilled Isaiah's words about the Messiah in several ways.

Note: Additional commentary can be found at you.lifeway.com.