

***Luke: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws***

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***Chapter 1 Discussion***

***Lifting up the Lowly (pgs. 1-18)***

***Biblical Foundations Luke 1-6***

***Opening Prayer***

*Holy God, you inspired your servant Luke the Evangelist to write a carefully ordered account of how your Son, our Lord Jesus, fulfilled your saving purposes. Inspire us now as we study Luke's work, that in it we may read, hear, and believe the good news of your promises kept and made in Christ, and may grow as his faithful followers. Amen.*

***Before we Start...***

**POP QUIZ**

1. Luke is closely related to John's Gospel.
2. Luke's Gospel is our only biblical source of information about Jesus' birth.
3. Only Luke tells us John the Baptist and Jesus were relatives.
4. Luke puts a strong emphasis on Jesus' ministry to those who are poor and vulnerable.
5. The parables of the good Samaritan, the prodigal son, and Lazarus and the rich man are found only in Luke.
6. Luke devotes less attention to Jesus's journey to Jerusalem than do the other Gospels.
7. Only Luke records Jesus's miraculous "feeding of the five thousand."
8. Luke contains more material about worship and prayer than do the other Gospels.
9. In Luke, Jesus appears first to several women after his resurrection.
10. Luke is the only New Testament Gospel with a "Sequel."

***God Can Choose and Use Those of Any Age***

The first two chapters of Luke's Gospel include instances of God choosing and using of all ages to accomplish God's purposes- from the very old in Elizabeth, Zechariah, Anna, and Simeon, to the teenage Mary.

***Read Luke 1:5-7***

***Read Luke 2:25-35***

*Read Luke 2:36-38*

*Discuss:*

- What does Luke tell us about Zechariah and Elizabeth, Simeon, and Anna?
  - How are these individuals alike and different?
  - How does each one of them accomplish God's purposes?
- Luke portrays all four of these seniors as righteous and devout.
  - Who are the most righteous and devout seniors you know or know of?
  - How has their faith in God shaped your own?
- "Scripture does not see infertility as a sign of God's pleasure or disregard," says the author. Throughout the bible we do find God's compassion and concern for those who wrestled with infertility."
  - How much stigma do couples who struggle with infertility face today?
  - How does your congregations show compassion to these couples?
- Luke implies Simeon is an old man and tells us Anna is an old woman.
  - What have they been waiting for see and to proclaim?
  - What would cause you to tell God you could "go in peace" if you experienced it, and why?
- Hamilton describes the difference between "fluid intelligence" and "crystallized intelligence" to help us see the value of experience and wisdom that come with older age.
  - What does each kind of intelligence mean?
  - Which do you think you have more of right now?
  - How might that be a valuable gift that God can use through you?
- How has your response to God's calling changed over time?
- How is God seeking to choose and use you right now?

*Read 1:26-38*

- Hamilton states that Mary was "thirteen or fourteen" when God called her to be the mother of Jesus.
  - Why do you think God chose this young girl for what Hamilton calls "the single most significant event that will on earth since creation?"
- What do you know about the other bible young people who served God whom Hamilton mentions?

- David?
- Esther?
- Timothy?
- Can you remember or find other examples?
- What young people do you know or know of who have been called to serve God?
  - How do their responses influence your own openness and responsiveness to God's call?
- What did Jesus mean when he taught his disciples to “welcome God's kingdom like a child?” (Luke 18:17)

### *God Lifts Up the Lowly*

- Hamilton describes the term “*Am ha-Arez*” as a phrase referring to “the lowly” in Luke and other early Christian and Jewish writings.

### *Discuss:*

- Who were the “*Am ha-Arez*”?
- What did the term signify?
- How did the “*Am ha-Arez*” characterize the people Jesus came to minister to?
- Why does God show special concern for the “*Am ha-Arez*” and the others who felt, or were considered by others, lowly?

### *Read 1:46-55*

- Which of Mary's words, phrases, or images most captures your attention or imagination? Why?
- In Mary's words, writes Hamilton, “Luke lays out the theme of his Gospel, the theme of his book: God looks with favor on those of low status: (Luke, pg. 14).
  - What stories about God in Jesus “lifting up the lowly” did you notice as you skimmed through Luke earlier?
- What order Bible stories about God “lifting up the lowly,” can you remember or locate now?
- A poor young woman like Mary would have had “low status” (verse 48) in her society.
  - Who are the “lowly” in society today?
  - Who are the “powerful” (verse 52) and “rich” (verse 53)?
  - To which end of the status spectrum are you closer?

- Mary's words present uplifting the lowly as God's action.
  - How, if at all, do you believe God "lifts up the lowly" through God's people today?
  - What moral and ethical imperatives, if any, do you hear in Mary's words?

**Closing Prayer**

*God Most High, who always looks with favor on those who are lowly. Move us by your Spirit to show your mercy to people pushed to the margins and pressed down by suffering. Use us, unlikely choices through we are, to reach out with compassion to all people, in the name and for the side of him who was born among the hungry and the outcast, our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*