

Jubilee! Luke's Gospel for the Poor

2008–2009 Horizons Bible Study

Workshop for Leaders

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What Is This?

A lesson plan for introducing *Jubilee! Luke's Gospel for the Poor* to Presbyterian Women or any group who plans to use this study

Who Is This For, and Why?

- A gathering of Presbyterian Women in the congregation, to introduce the new study, and generate interest and enthusiasm for upcoming circle meetings
- A gathering of Presbyterian Women in the presbytery, to introduce the study to leaders at the congregational level

Main Idea

The Gospel of *Luke* contains stories that show the mission of Jesus to be the revelation of the beginning of the Messianic Age, a celebration of God's jubilee for all people. By examining the idea of jubilee, and the response Jesus received in his ministry, we will begin to consider our own responses to Jesus and the call to be witnesses to the gospel in our own churches, in our communities, and in the world.

Learning Objectives

What will participants learn during this workshop? Depending on the teaching activities selected, participants will

- Identify stories that show Jesus turning things upside down, challenging people to think and act in new ways, and empowering those who have been ignored or treated unjustly
- Define and reflect on “jubilee thinking”
- Examine stories in which people respond to Jesus with praise
- Consider a number of ways one can be “poor,” and how the church might respond
- Express the feelings and responses the art for each lesson illustrates
- Prepare to make the most of the multitude of resources for learning and involvement contained in this study



Bible study art by Paula Wiggins, Lesson 9, Jesus Speaks to Zacchaeus

Materials Needed

- Hymnals
- Newsprint and markers
- Pens or pencils for each participant
- Printed copies of the instructions for small group activities
- Copies of handout, *Praise Meets Recognition in the Gospel of Luke*
- Bibles, one per participant, preferably a version with titles over the stories in the Gospels
- At least nine copies of the *Horizons* Bible study for examining the art
- Copies of the list of scripture references in the Gospel of *Luke* that describe Jesus praying

Lesson Plan

Gather

As people gather, make hymnals available. Have someone ready to play the hymns suggested for each lesson, and have an informal hymn-sing as people gather. Mention that these hymns illustrate the theme of praise from *Luke*, which is highlighted in this study.

Engage

Welcome participants and tell them they are about to explore the 2008–2009 *Horizons* Bible study, published by and for Presbyterian Women.

Say, “In this year’s study we will examine 13 stories from the Gospel of *Luke*. In the introduction, the author tells us that together they highlight three ‘hallmarks’ of *Luke*:

1. The jubilee has come.
2. People respond to Jesus with praise.
3. The gospel has been told by eyewitnesses, so that those who hear the gospel might also become witnesses.

In this introduction, we will begin to delve into these themes, so that we are better able to recognize them during the study and consider the implications for us individually, for our Bible study groups, and for our communities of faith.”

Explore

Hallmark of Luke #1: The jubilee has come.

Ask, “What images come to mind when you hear the word ‘jubilee?’” Note them briefly on newsprint. Using the author’s notes in the introduction under “The jubilee has come” and her explanation on page 8, “Grace for the people of Israel,” as your guide, describe the policy of jubilee. Emphasize the aspects of the return of land to original owners/families and the freeing of all Israelite slaves.

Say: “As indicated in the title of this study, *Jubilee! Luke’s Gospel for the Poor*, the concept of ‘jubilee’ was central to the author’s selection of stories from *Luke*, and to her intention to show how Jesus went about inaugurating a new age—the Messianic Age. The study will help us see more clearly what Jesus was trying to show us about how to live in a new time—a time in which the coming of the Messiah, Jesus, makes a difference to how we live. ‘Messiah’ means ‘an anointed agent of God appointed to a task affecting the lot of the chosen people.’* Jesus intentionally set out to accomplish this task. He intended to turn things upside down, to challenge people to think and act in new ways and to empower those who had been ignored or treated unjustly. Because we will examine selected stories from *Luke* in this study, let’s skim through the whole book looking for stories that illustrate this intention of Jesus. Then we’ll come back and relate Jesus’ intention to the concept of jubilee.”

Divide participants into three groups. If you have more than 18 people, make six smaller groups; give half the groups *chapters 1–12* and half the groups *chapters 13–24*.

Group One: **Say,** “divide the chapters of the Gospel of *Luke* among you and look for stories that show Jesus ‘turning things upside down.’ As a clue, watch for things Jesus does or says that make people upset, or puzzled, or confused. Make a list of the stories on newsprint. Be prepared to name the stories, and to explain why, as a whole, your group thinks these stories show Jesus ‘turning things upside down.’ Identify one impression this provides about who Jesus is.”

Group Two: **Say,** “divide the chapters of the Gospel of *Luke* among you. Look for things Jesus does or says that show Jesus challenging people to think and act in new ways. Make a list of the stories on newsprint. Be prepared to name the stories, and to explain why, as a whole, your group thinks these stories show Jesus challenging people to think and act in new ways. Identify one impression this provides about who Jesus is.”

Group Three: **Say,** “divide the chapters of the Gospel of *Luke* among you. Look for things Jesus does or says that show Jesus empowering those who have been

ignored or treated unjustly. Make a list of the stories on newsprint. Be prepared to name the stories, and to explain why, as a whole, your group thinks these stories show Jesus empowering those who have been ignored or treated unjustly. Identify one impression this provides about who Jesus is.”

Ask the groups to stay together as they offer their reports. Remind them to take time to identify what they were looking for, list the stories by name, say one reason their group believes these illustrate their task, and to provide one impression they have of Jesus from the stories.

Ask the groups to reconvene to discuss this question: What are some ways that Jesus’ activity is like inaugurating jubilee? After a couple of minutes, ask the question of the whole group. End the conversation with an invitation to the group to watch the stories in this study for “jubilee thinking,” which is the author’s phrase for what Jesus proclaims and calls us to recognize.

Examine

Hallmark of Luke #2

People respond to Jesus with praise.

Say, “The second hallmark of *Luke* in this study explores the response of praise frequently expressed by individuals and, occasionally, by a crowd. There are many more such responses in *Luke’s Gospel* than are shown in the stories of this study.”

Distribute the handout, *Praise Meets Recognition in the Gospel of Luke* (see back page). Divide participants into 12 smaller groups and assign one story per group. A “group” can be one person. Tell them they have five minutes to answer the questions for their story.

Listen to quick responses to the three questions asked of each story so the whole group has the big picture of the praise response in the Gospel of *Luke*. **Say,** “In 11 of these 12 instances of the praise response, the individuals or groups praise God, not Jesus. Why might God be the one receiving praise? What might your response have been to these events had you been there? What are some things for which you praise God?”

Say, “There are many other responses to Jesus besides this response of praise. Only two of the stories in this chart are included in this study. Watch for other responses to Jesus, and watch for your own response as you examine these stories. Every time you meet, consider the question, ‘who is Jesus to me?’”

Empower

Hallmark of Luke #3

The gospel has been told by eyewitnesses, so that those who hear the gospel might also become witnesses.

Read hallmark 3 aloud. Invite participants to think quietly about what it might mean to them to study these

stories with the intention of seeing Jesus through the eyes of these eyewitness accounts. Observe a couple minutes of silence for their reflection. Then ask them to write down two or three things they hope to discover about Jesus during this study. Then ask them to think quietly about two or three people they know who they hope might see Jesus in new and engaging ways. Invite them to consider how they might be witnesses to the gospel of Jesus Christ in their words and in their actions as they encounter those people. Observe a couple minutes of silence for reflection. Then ask them to turn to a neighbor and tell them one idea they have of how they might be a witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Close with the prayer on page 12, or one of your own choosing. End by inviting everyone to read the entire Gospel of *Luke*, or all of *Luke/Acts*, during their participation in this study, using the guide provided on the handout.

Additional Activities

A significant focus of this study is on justice for the poor, partly because that is a significant focus for Luke and partly because the author chooses to highlight ways in which the poor are cared for, empowered, and lifted up by Jesus. The author is careful to point out that “poor” does not only refer to those who are at the bottom end of the economic ladder. Use your choice of these questions in the whole group or in small group discussion to explore ways in which one can be “poor” and ways we can address the needs of the “poor.” This will heighten awareness of the issues of the “poor” as raised in this study.

- What are some ways in which one can be “poor”?
- Describe a person you have known whom you would describe as poor. What did this person most need?
- During your lifetime, what is one way you have been “poor”? What did you most need?
- What are some ways your church addresses the needs of the “poor”? Are a variety of dimensions of being “poor” included? If not, why not?
- In your own community, what kind of poverty is most evident to you? What are the signs of this poverty? How might Presbyterian women address this poverty?

And/Or

Divide participants into nine groups and assign each group one lesson. Instruct them to turn to the opening page of their assigned lesson, where they will find the illustration for that lesson. Ask them to locate the corresponding Bible story, found for most lessons on the first page opposite the art. The caption under the art is a good guide for identifying the story illustrated by the art.

Provide these instructions: “Read the story that goes with the illustration. What feelings do you see represented in the faces? What response to Jesus do you see represented here? What might these bright, warm colors suggest about the response to Jesus? What additional things do you see that give you insight into this story?”

And/Or

The author highlights the many times Jesus prays in the Gospel of *Luke* by ending each session with a description of one such time, and by offering a closing prayer in the spirit of that incident. Provide participants with a list of all the times Jesus prays in the Gospel of *Luke* and invite them to use them at home to inspire their own times and kinds of prayer.

- Luke 3:21–22 Jesus prays at his baptism
- Luke 5:15–16 Jesus withdraws to a deserted place to pray
- Luke 6:12–13 Jesus prays before making an important decision
- Luke 9:12–17 Jesus blesses food for those who have none
- Luke 9:18–20 Jesus prays alone, with his friends near him
- Luke 9:28–36 Jesus takes his closest friends up a mountain to pray
- Luke 10:21–23 Jesus thanks God for revelation
- Luke 11:1–4 Jesus prays, then teaches others to pray
- Luke 22:14–20 Jesus gives thanks for the cup and the bread that represent his sacrifice
- Luke 22:31–34 Jesus prays for another
- Luke 22:39–46 Jesus prays before his greatest challenge
- Luke 23:32–34 Jesus asks for forgiveness for those who are against him
- Luke 23:44–46 Jesus commends his spirit to God
- Luke 24:28–31 Jesus blesses and breaks bread with friends

And/Or

Point out the “Join the Journey” section toward the end of each lesson. Tell participants these “Join the Journey” sections suggest an extra activity that draws women into ministries of support beyond their congregation. Suggest they ask women in circles to sign up to research these opportunities and be prepared to give their circles more information about them so they can decide whether they want to participate.

* *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*, Paul Achtemeier, general editor, revised edition, page 677.

Additional Resources Available from PDS (800/524-2612)

By Dale Lindsay Morgan: *Eyewitness News: Transcripts of Live Interviews with Those Who Saw Jesus* (HZN-08-103) and *Out of the Abundance of the Heart: A Jubilee Journal* (HZN-08-105)

Horizons

Subscribers will receive additional Bible study resources in five consecutive issues of *Horizons*, beginning with the July/August 2008 issue. To subscribe, call 800/524-2612.

Handout—Praise Meets Recognition in the Gospel of *Luke*

Story	Who offers praise?	To whom?	For what reason?
1. Luke 1:57–66			
2. Luke 2:8–14			
3. Luke 2:15–20			
4. Luke 2:22–35			
5. Luke 2:36–38			
6. Luke 4:14–15			
7. Luke 13:10–17			
8. Luke 17:11–19			
9. Luke 18:35–43			
10. Luke 19:28–40			
11. Luke 23:44–49			
12. Luke 24:50–53			

Read the Entire Gospel of *Luke*

The good news of Jesus, the Christ, told “so that you might know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed” (*Luke 1:4*).

- For Lesson 1: Chapters 1–4
- For Lesson 2: Chapters 5–7
- For Lesson 3: Chapters 8–9
- For Lesson 4: Chapters 10–12
- For Lesson 5: Chapters 13–14
- For Lesson 6: Chapters 15–16
- For Lesson 7: Chapters 17–19
- For Lesson 8: Chapters 20–22
- For Lesson 9: Chapters 23–24

Read the Entire Gospel of *Luke* and *The Acts of the Apostles*

“The good news continues in the life of the early church.”

- For Lesson 1: Luke 1–6
- For Lesson 2: Luke 7–12
- For Lesson 3: Luke 13–18
- For Lesson 4: Luke 19–24
- For Lesson 5: Acts 1–5
- For Lesson 6: Acts 6–11
- For Lesson 7: Acts 12–17
- For Lesson 8: Acts 18–22
- For Lesson 9: Acts 23–28