

one & one

Just Looking

Exploring together the life and message of Jesus

24 sessions in the Gospel of Luke

Andrew Cornes

For all those with whom I have enjoyed Bible-reading partnerships down the years and who have helped me to understand, apply and delight in the Bible's teaching.

One2One Just Looking

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ISBN: 9781907377983

Unless otherwise indicated, Scripture quotations in this publication are from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version. © 2001, Crossway Publishers

Printed in China

Introduction Just Looking at Jesus?

Jesus said: "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority." JOHN 7 v 17

Jesus has always provoked questions. He did in his own day. He still does today.

People in his day wondered how his teaching could be so penetrating, where he got his miraculous powers from, what his popular appeal was, why he seemed so intent on moving towards his own death, and how he could be so sure that he would, in his own words, "on the third day rise again".

People today often have similar questions. It's important to know whether Jesus really is God's Son, or whether he was just a great and influential religious teacher. If he is, as he claimed, the Son of God, then his teaching is God's teaching... his miracles make sense because they are God at work... his death has great significance for the whole of humankind... and death does not have the last word, because as God's Son he has conquered it.

As the quotation above, from John's account of Jesus' life, shows, Jesus says we can know the answers to these questions. All that is required is honesty (or, as Jesus puts it, to have the "will to do God's will"); to want to know the truth and be willing to act on that truth, wherever the results of our search lead us.

Jesus always welcomed questions, provided people wanted to know the answers. He had little time for those who asked questions but whose minds were closed (and he met many of them), or those who wanted to ask question after question but never came to a conclusion.

This book is for people who have questions and want to know, and then act on, the answers; who begin by "Just Looking", but are willing to come to conclusions and then take action based on what they've discovered.

- 1. BIBLE-READING PARTNERSHIP:** This book operates on the principle that “two minds are better than one”. It is designed for two people, working through the sessions together. Both of you will have questions; each will have insights into what the passage you are studying is saying; both will find answers as you look at the Bible together. You may both be Christians: or maybe one of you is, and the other is just looking; or perhaps neither of you are. That’s fine!
- 2. FOCUS ON JESUS:** Jesus is at the heart of the Christian faith. Questions about him are central to Christianity. That is why this book concentrates entirely on one of the accounts of the life of Jesus, the Gospel of Luke.
- 3. QUICK, SLOW, FULL, YOUR CHOICE:** 24 sessions will be fine for some who use this book; they will provide a thorough study of the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus. For some, however, 24 sessions will be too many. We therefore suggest four different “routes” through the material in this book:
Quick Route: Five sessions, covering the bare essentials.
Slower Route: Ten sessions, going into some more detail.
Full Route: All 24 sessions.
Choice Route: Each session focuses on a question people often have, and which that particular Bible section answers. So, as you look at the questions on the Contents page, you might like to add sessions to either the Quick or Slower Routes. But we’d suggest you build these on top of one of those two routes, otherwise you may miss out some particularly crucial passages in Luke’s Gospel.
To see the Routes in detail, have a look at the Contents on page 7.
- 4. PARTNER:** Choose your Bible-reading partner carefully. If you are married or have a partner, you may want to have that person as your Bible-reading partner. Otherwise we strongly advise that you choose someone of your own sex. It is important that neither of you feels you have all the answers already (or thinks that your partner does!): you’re looking for answers from the Bible together.
- 5. ONLINE GUIDE:** All you need to answer each question is a Bible and your mind! But if you do just want to check, or there’s something that’s confusing you, there is an online guide to go with these sessions. If one or both of you are preparing for the session before

meeting, or if you want to use it to clarify something afterwards, we hope you find it useful. Go to: www.thegoodbook.co.uk/just-looking.

6. FREQUENCY: The ideal is to meet weekly. Some find it better to meet fortnightly, but meeting up any less regularly than that doesn't really work—it's hard to remember where you've got to!

7. TIMING: We suggest that you set aside between an hour and an hour and a quarter, and keep strictly to whatever timing you have agreed. It is normally a good idea to begin the Bible Study as soon as possible after arrival, and to catch up on news at the end rather than the beginning; experience shows that otherwise the time of Bible Study gets squeezed out.

At the end of each session there is a section entitled "Next Time". In this you are encouraged to read those parts of Luke's Gospel which you would otherwise miss out, and to come to your next meeting ready to mention what has struck you.

You will soon discover whether you have time to discuss what has struck you from these "missed-out" sections. We suggest you restrict yourself to no more than 5-10 minutes for this discussion before beginning the new session. You may find you don't have time for this at all. Whatever you decide, make sure you have enough unhurried time for talking through the questions in the new session.

8. STUDYING THE BIBLE: In each session there is a passage from Luke's Gospel, and questions on it. The aim of these questions is the same as in all genuine study of the Bible: to help us understand what the Bible is saying, and work out how it applies to our life today. Some of the questions are about Luke (the author), or Jesus and the people who originally heard or saw Jesus; and some of the questions are about us and our experience of life and of Jesus Christ today. We suggest you discuss each question as fully as you want, but that you don't get bogged down for too long on any one question. If you don't always have time to discuss every question, that's fine: but make sure you always discuss some of the questions which make you think about the relevance of Jesus and his message to your life today.

9. PREPARATION: Some people like to study the passage before they meet and note down their answers in the space provided. Often this makes the discussion more fruitful. But it's not compulsory!

- 10. TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE:** The questions occasionally quote from the ESV (English Standard Version) of the Bible. But it's perfectly possible to answer the questions using any other good modern translation, such as the NIV (New International Version). If you do not have a Bible, we suggest you buy one, perhaps using the same translation as your Bible-reading partner.
- 11. PRAYING:** As the quotation at the beginning of this Introduction shows, Jesus said that his teaching was from God. If so, it seems wise to speak to God and ask for his help before you study God's message together.
You might like to pray this prayer each time before you read the passage and discuss it with each other:
Heavenly Father, thank you for Jesus, his life and his teaching. Help us to listen to you and understand him more as we study this passage, and to find our questions being answered. Amen.
Some Bible-reading partners like to say a prayer after the study, thanking God for what he has shown them about Jesus.
- 12. IF IT DOESN'T WORK OUT:** Sometimes a Bible-reading partnership doesn't really work. Occasionally the partners don't gel, or one partner has to drop out. This is often nobody's fault. We would encourage you to choose a new Bible-reading partner; this new partnership may very likely go well and prove much more helpful.
- 13. WHAT NEXT?** At the end of the course there is a page for you to review what you have gained from your discussions together and decide what the next step for each of you will be (page 60).
You may well want to continue in the same Bible-reading partnership. If so, you could use the further material produced by the Good Book Company:
- One2One Book One (24 studies in the Gospel of John chapters 13 – 17, Paul's letter to the Philippians and the Psalms)
 - One2One Book Two (24 studies in the Gospel of Matthew 26 – 28, Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians and Genesis 1 – 12)

1. Is this book reliable?
2. What was happening at Christmas?
3. What was John the Baptist's message?
4. How was Jesus tempted?
5. Is it worth trying again?
6. How should we treat those who dislike us?
7. Why do people love Jesus?
8. How can I be changed by Jesus' teaching?
9. What does it cost to follow Jesus?
10. How can I love God and my neighbour?
11. How should I pray?
12. Will God answer my prayers?
13. How can Jesus help me with money worries?
14. How can I be ready for Jesus?
15. Can I leave it too late?
16. How does God react to my excuses?
17. How can I come back to God?
18. What kind of person does God accept?
19. What does the communion service mean?
20. What happens when I let Jesus down?
21. How do I respond to Jesus' death?
Where you're at now
22. What happened on Easter Sunday?
23. What's the evidence that Jesus is alive?
24. What am I to do now?
What next?

Slower Route

Quick & Slower Route

Slower Route

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Slower Route

Slower Route

Slower Route

Quick & Slower Route

Quick & Slower Route

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Today's passage: Luke chapter 1, verses 1-4

These sessions should help you understand Jesus Christ more fully: what he did, what his message was, who he claimed to be, why he died and the impact he has had on the people of his own time and on millions from all nations today.

You'll be studying one of the earliest accounts of his life, death and resurrection: Luke's Gospel. But this will only get you closer to the life and teaching of Christ if Luke is an accurate historian. So, after a brief time of getting to know your Bible-reading partner a bit better, this session explores the crucial question: Is Luke's book sufficiently reliable?

A WHERE YOU'RE AT

Each of us has been through different stages in thinking about Jesus. This starts with our childhood and what we were taught then about God or Jesus. Luke's book is all about Jesus.

Write down a brief account of how your thinking about Jesus has changed down the years; perhaps you have sometimes been closer to him and sometimes further away. Where are you at in your thinking about him now?

Begin your session together by each telling as much of the story as you are comfortable with talking about.

B HOW LUKE WROTE HIS BOOK**Read verses 1-4**

- 1 What different kinds of information did Luke have available for writing his book (v 1-3)?