

FEATS MODULE: The Gospel of Luke

Preparation Exercises for Learning Session 1

Introduction

In the fourth chapter of Luke, Jesus declares that he “must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God” (4:43). The rest of Luke’s Gospel helps us understand what exactly Jesus means.

In this module you will study Luke, paying particular attention to one of its major themes: the gospel of the Kingdom. In your first article you’ll read Scot McKnight ask whether our conventional understanding of the gospel is too small. That’s a question we hope you’ll wrestle with throughout this module. And, fortunately, it’s a question that Luke can certainly help us with. For whereas Luke tells a story about mangers, mustard seeds, and poor widows, there’s nothing small about this story. He repeatedly urges us to recognize the magnitude of what he’s describing. Therefore, as you study, reflect, and engage in ministry we hope that your eyes will be increasingly opened to the beauty and bigness of the Kingdom of God.

Learning Outcomes

Knowing

- Theological: To understand one of the Bible’s most important themes: the Kingdom of God.
- Biblical: To engage in serious study of Luke’s Gospel.
- Exegetical: To explain the importance of a methodical approach to studying Scripture, to introduce and use an exhaustive concordance, and to develop basic observational skills.
- Pastoral: To think about the task of bearing witness to the “good news of the Kingdom”—both individually and corporately.
- Contextual: To learn about the Western Church’s ongoing tendency to reduce the gospel to either a spiritual or social/political message, and to consider how this tendency might be overcome.
- Historical: To learn how John Woolman’s understanding of God’s Kingdom informed and energized concrete, social action.

Being

- Prayer: To introduce and encourage simple prayer, the prayer of adoration, and the practice of praying the ordinary.
- Spiritual Disciplines/Christian Practices: To introduce and integrate the discipline of service.

Doing

- Ministry Experiences: To communicate the gospel with biblical integrity, cultural sensitivity, and personal creativity.

1. This module will be dealing with some of the most fundamental themes found in Scripture. However, as the ancient philosophers repeatedly pointed out, ironically we tend to think *less* about the things that matter *most*. Instead of thinking clearly and carefully about ideas like justice or freedom, we usually take their meanings for granted. Therefore, it is important to start by clarifying how you presently understand these ordinary, yet enormously important biblical concepts. (A) Begin by writing a one sentence response to the following questions: First, what do you typically mean by “the gospel?” Second, according to your understanding, what is the Kingdom of God? And third, how in your mind do these two things relate to one another? Don’t worry. The goal here isn’t to provide a “correct answer.” It’s just to clarify your starting point.
2. Throughout FEATS, you’ll not only study Scripture, you’ll be learning *how to* study Scripture. Each module will impart new study skills and introduce you to different study tools. (A) Read chs. 1-2 in Oletta Wald’s book, *The New Joy of Discovery Bible Study* (DBS). If you need this, or any other required material, please contact the Evangelical Friends Church office at 714-779-7662. (B) How would you typically describe your approach to Bible study? How much is serious, systematic Bible study a part of your life and ministry? Write down your response. (C) If you aren’t familiar with the study tools listed on p. 14, visit a Christian bookstore or library and familiarize yourself with these important tools. You’ll be asked to make use of them later.
3. (A) Continue reading DBS, pp. 15-19. (B) Now read the Gospel of Luke in its entirety—if you can, try to do so in a single setting—if not, read it in as few sittings as possible. (C) As you do, underline or highlight any key words. (D) Make a list of what you believe are the five most important key words in Luke.
4. As we all know, prayer is at the heart of the Christian life. Yet most of us will acknowledge that prayer is something we have trouble with. Throughout FEATS we want to introduce you to different approaches to prayer. Some of these approaches you’ll likely find more helpful than others. That’s to be expected. The goal is for you—in your own way—to enter into and enjoy a deeper life of prayer. (A) Read pp. 1-15 in Richard Foster’s book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*. (B) Attempt to engage in the practice of simple prayer throughout this month. (C) In a journal make regular, brief entries describing your experience. You’ll be asked to make various journal entries throughout the course of FEATS, so you will want to acquire a journal if you don’t already have one.
5. (A) Read “The Eight Marks of a Robust Gospel” by Scot McKnight.. (B) Write a half page response in which you reflect upon the following questions: What were the major points of the article? What

did you learn? What questions do you have? In what ways has your own understanding of the gospel been too small? How might a more robust understanding of the gospel alter or impact your life and ministry?

6. You've begun to clarify your own preexisting ideas about God's Kingdom and the gospel. Now is the time to discover what others think about these basic biblical themes. (A) Interview five people and ask them the following three questions: First, what is the gospel? Second, what do you think Jesus meant when he spoke about the "Kingdom of God"? Third, what is the basic Christian message? Feel free to phrase these questions differently, if necessary. Try to interview a variety of people—more mature Christians, new believers, and non-Christians (preferably people you have regular contact with). The goal of this exercise is to simply see what others believe about these major themes.
7. Many biblical scholars consider Lk. 4:16-21 the interpretive key to the whole Gospel. (A) Begin by identifying and reading the Old Testament passage that Jesus refers to there. (B) In order to get a better sense of its context, read Isaiah 60-62. In general, what do you think Isaiah is talking about throughout these chapters? Write down your response. (C) Now write down side-by-side Lk. 4:18-19 and Is. 61:1-2. (D) Using a yellow marker highlight the parts that appear in both Lk. 4:18-19 and Is. 61:1-2. Using a blue marker highlight the parts that appear in Is. 61:1-2, but don't appear in Lk. 4:18-19. Using a red marker highlight the parts that appear in Lk. 4:18-19, but not in Is. 61:1-2. (E) Write down any observations, comments, or questions.
8. The next article helps us understand what the Bible means by "the Kingdom of God." (A) Read "Thy Kingdom Come: Living the Lord's Prayer" by N.T. Wright. (B) Underline any points that stand out to you. Circle any words or phrases that you don't understand. (C) Write a series of three discussion questions for the article. You may be asked to lead a group discussion regarding the article at the next learning session.
9. Having completed the assignments in the first part of this module, now how would you respond to the following three questions: What is the gospel? What is the Kingdom of God? How do these two things relate to one another—in other words, what did Jesus mean by the "good news of the Kingdom"? Write down your responses.