

Gospel of St. Luke: Program Guide 2016

This program is designed to take about six weeks which will allow you plenty of time for reading and meditation. You may begin any time you like, but if you are using this as a Lenten activity you should begin the week of February 14th in order to complete the Gospel during Holy Week. (If you undecided about committing time to this program, see the short essay, *Why Read the Gospel of St. Luke?*, posted on this guide below.)

Before you begin obtain a copy of the Gospel, or a Bible or a Study Bible. You can get a copy of The Gospel According to Saint Luke produced by the American Bible Society for the Papal visit, either from the Knights or Father John. This gospel book uses the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) translation which is read at Mass. Introductions and notes for each biblical book are integral parts of this translation. These aids help you understand the passages you are reading. If you decide to purchase a Bible, make sure it is the NABRE translation. (See also **Bibliography & Resources for the Gospel of Luke**, posted below on this guide.)

In this program each week has its own reading guide. Week 1 features introductory articles to provide some background. Weeks 2 – 6 divide the Gospel into 5 parts (the readings vary from 8 pages to 28 pages in the American Bible Society edition). This year I have provided a Picture Portfolio containing artwork, photos, archeological illustrations, and maps related to the material covered during the week.

I suggest the following steps when reading the Gospel each week:

1. Set aside about an hour of quiet time to do your reading. Work through each of the steps below. It may take three or four sessions to work through them all for each part of the Gospel.
2. Begin each session with prayer. We believe that Sacred Scripture is inspired by the Holy Spirit. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand what you are reading.
3. Read the designated passage straight through to get its overall sense.
4. Read the commentary in the Reading Guide for that week's readings. It will give you some added background as to St. Luke's overall themes, describe the literary forms he is using, and point out connections with the Old Testament. Look through the Picture Portfolio for the week to help you visualize what you are reading about.
5. Read the passage again more slowly and try to understand what St. Luke was telling his 1st century audience.

6. Think about the meaning that this gospel has for you today. Ask yourself what you will do, or what you will think differently about, after reading this gospel. Use the questions for reflection to stimulate your thinking.

Program Outline:

Week 1: Read the Introductory Articles.

Week 2: Read **Luke 1:1- 4:13** - Introduction, Infancy Narratives, and Preparation for Public Ministry

Week 3: Read **Luke 4:14-9:50** - Teaching in Galilee

Week 4: Read **Luke 9:51-19:27** - Journey to Jerusalem

Week 5: Read **Luke 19:28-21:38** - Teaching in Jerusalem

Week 6: Read **Luke 22:1-24:53** - Passion and Resurrection

Why Read the Gospel of St. Luke?

Sacred Scripture is an important part of our faith. Consider, for example, its role in the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word of God in Sacred Scripture precedes and prepares us to receive the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, in the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Unfortunately, listening to small portions of the Bible at Mass is not enough to familiarize us with the richness that the Bible offers or its function in the Church.

You may have tried to become more familiar with the Bible by trying to read it at home on our own only to be discouraged by the difficulty of understanding a complicated library of books written a long time ago by a culture very different from our own.

One way to overcome the obstacles to understanding is to read one of the books of the Bible in a guided program. The basic unit of the Bible is the book, not the passage. When you study a biblical book you begin to uncover the meaning that God and the inspired author intended. If you continue to read other biblical books your understanding of the Bible will grow.

Reading one of the Gospels is an excellent place to begin. You are most familiar with the Gospels because the Church focuses on one of the Gospels as part of the Sunday readings in a three year cycle, reading the Gospel of St. Matthew in Year A, St. Mark in Year B, and St. Luke in Year C. This is the Year of St. Luke which began with Advent. During the Sundays of Ordinary Time, that is the Sundays outside the Advent/Christmas and Lenten/Easter seasons, our Gospel readings will systematically work through St. Luke's Gospel.

A second reason is that reading one of the Gospels is a good introduction to the Bible. The Church considers the Gospels the most important part of the Bible because they are the written witness to the deeds and actions of Jesus. They tell his story and explain who he is from several points of view. There were stories and sayings of Jesus that originated with the apostles and those who had known him that circulated orally, but the Church realized it needed to capture these stories and sayings in a way that explained the significance of Jesus while those who had known him were still alive. The Gospels are meant to be read through as we would read any book in order to understand what the author is trying to tell us. When we study the Gospel of St. Luke we gain something important for our faith.

By following the program on the “The Year of St. Luke” website, you will be introduced to and become familiar with resources (a Bible translation with notes and introductions to the individual books, for example) that will you can apply to future Bible study efforts.

I hope you enjoy this program and that it encourages further Bible study.

Bibliography & Resources for the Gospel of Luke

The information in the introductions and study guides on this website has been adapted from the resources listed below. For this on-line program I have tried to present the insights they offer in simplified and summarized form. Much more detail is available directly from them.

Recommended Bible translation:

There are many translations of the Bible and most provide only the basic text without any notes or explanatory materials. I strongly recommend the *New American Bible, Revised Edition* (NABRE) published in 2010. This is a modern translation approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the translation you will hear read at Mass. This translation is available from a number of publishers in hardcover or paperback editions. Every edition includes introductions to each of the biblical books as well as explanatory notes that accompany the text. Both of these features are extremely helpful in reading the Gospel of Luke. The translation is also available (with Introductions and Notes) free on-line at the websites listed below under “**Other Resources.**”

Commentaries:

Commentaries examine the biblical text in detail and discuss the meaning of each passage. For those who want to more fully understand the Gospel of Mark these commentaries are helpful:

Harrington SJ, Daniel J. **Meeting St. Luke Today: Understanding the Man, His Mission, and His Message**, Loyola Press, 2009. *This is a recent, easy to read, elementary Catholic commentary.*

Johnson, Luke Timothy. **The Gospel of Luke** (part of the *Sacra Pagina Commentary Series*), The Liturgical Press, 1991. *This is an excellent, college level Catholic Commentary.*

Fitzmyer, Joseph A. **The Gospel According to Luke I-IX** and **The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV**, 1981, 1985; Doubleday. *This is the most authoritative and detailed commentary by a Catholic scholar.*

Study Bibles:

A study Bible contains, along with the biblical text, a variety of additional resources including: reading guides for each book, general and introductory articles, maps, and a concordance. The following use the New American Bible Revised Edition (NABRE) and are highly recommended:

Hiesberger, Jean Marie., ed. **The Catholic Bible: Personal Study Edition**, Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-19-529791-1. *An excellent resource for adults beginning the study of the Bible.*

Senior, Donald; Collins, John J; Getty, Mary Ann. eds. **The Catholic Study Bible**, Second Edition with NABRE, Oxford University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-19-529775-1. *The more advanced study Bible on which the above is based.*

New Testament and Gospel Introductions:

These textbooks treat the entire New Testament and its environment. Their chapters on the Gospel of Luke are helpful.

Brown, Raymond E. **An Introduction to the New Testament**, Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, 1997.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. **The Writings of the New Testament**, Third Edition, Fortress Press, 2010.

Perkins, PHEME. **Reading the New Testament**, Third Edition, Paulist Press, 2012.

Perkins, PHEME. **Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels**, Eerdmans Publishing, 2007. *This is a helpful study of how the Gospels arose and how they relate to each other. It also addresses the “gospels” that are not part of our Bible that make headlines in the popular press.*

Other Resources:

Shorter introductions to the Gospel of Luke by the authors of the more lengthy commentaries above include:

Fitzmyer, J. A. “*The Gospel According to Luke*” in Metzger et al. ***The Oxford Companion to the Bible***, Oxford, 1989.

Perkins, Pheme. “*Reading Guide - Luke*” in Senior et al. ***The Catholic Study Bible***, Second Edition with NABRE, Oxford University Press, 2011.

<http://usccb.org/bible/index.cfm>

The official website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops offers free on-line versions of the New American Bible and the Catechism.

<http://www.vatican.va/archive/index.htm>

The official Vatican website also offers free on-line versions of the New American Bible and the Catechism.

S. Csontos, revision 2, January 31, 2016