

Impossible?

Reading Schedule

- Week of June 22-28 – Read Mark 5 through Luke 3

Introduction

- As you finish Mark and read through Luke, you'll notice the **differences in style and themes**. Mark is punchy and spare on details, while Luke is a storyteller with style and careful research. In the original Greek, Mark's writing is basic, while Luke's writing is sophisticated.
- Luke used Mark as the main source of his Gospel; in fact, **Luke incorporates 80% of Mark** into his narrative.
- Luke's Gospel is **part one of two works**, the second part being the Acts of the Apostles. Both are addressed to Theophilus, which means "God lover."
- Luke has **special themes** in this Gospel. These are a few:
 1. **Social Justice** – Luke frequently talks of the poor, outcasts, sinners, and the lowly, and how God's work through Jesus is the elevation of these people to exalted status in the Kingdom of God.
 2. **Universality** – The Jesus of Luke is the savior of all people of all nations and classes.
 3. **Holy Spirit** – Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in fulfilling God's purposes.
 4. **Women** – In Luke, women are not spectators, but meaningful participants. This is unusual for the time of his writing in the First Century.
 5. **On the Move** – Jesus is constantly on the move, going from town to town.
 6. **Mercy, Compassion** – Notice how many times these are mentioned as essential for followers of Jesus because they are qualities of God.
 7. **Miracles** – There are over 20 miracles described in Luke.
 8. **Fulfillment of the Old Testament** – In Jesus, Luke finds the answer to what the Hebrew prophets foretold.

Scripture Passage – Luke 1:37-38, Good News Translation (GNT)

³⁷ [The angel said,] "For there is nothing God cannot do."

38 "I am the Lord's servant," said Mary; "may it happen to me as you have said."

Discussion Questions

1. Luke begins with two childless women—Elizabeth and Mary—who become pregnant and bear sons. Elizabeth was too old and Mary was a virgin, so both births are miraculous. What is your view of miracles? Do miracles happen today?

2. In Luke 1:49-55 you read the Song of Mary, also known as the Magnificat. What themes do you find in her song of praise?

3. In Luke 1:37-38, the angel Gabriel finishes the declaration about Mary’s miraculous pregnancy with Jesus. Who initiates the miracle? Was Mary forced to accept God’s intentions? What was Mary’s response to the impossible becoming possible? Do you think she had any idea what she was going to experience?

4. “Hard things take time to do. Impossible things take a little longer.” This quote and variations of it are attributed to various people. What’s the difference between something “hard” to do and things that are “impossible?” Have you ever experienced something others might have considered impossible?

5. Consider the parallels between Hannah in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and Mary in Luke 1:46-55. Both were childless but bore children due to God’s power in the Holy Spirit. The sons they birthed—Samuel from Hannah, Jesus from Mary—were essential to God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. They both offers prayers/songs of praise to God for these miracles. Why do you think Luke so closely paralleled the story of Hannah?

Emphasis	Hannah in 1 Samuel 2	Mary in Luke 1
Praise and Thanks	2:1-2	1:46-50
Remembrance	2:3-4	1:50-51
God’s Values Oppose the World’s Values	2:5-8	1:52-53
God’s Faithfulness	2:8-10	1:54-55

Prayer

O God,

As I read through the New Testament, may I read humbly, asking the Holy Spirit to give me understanding.

When I face challenging situations, give me the encouragement and resolve I need to meet those challenges and to overcome them.

Give me new insights into the people the world does not value—the poor, the outcasts, and all unfairly oppressed and persecuted—so that I may bear witness to your compassionate concern for them. Use me as your servant.

Thank you for your gift of Jesus.

Thank you for your love for all people. In Jesus’s name, Amen.