

 **highrock**  
CHURCH

**THE COMING**  
*Kingdom*

SERIES COMPANION



# INTRODUCTION

What is it that you're waiting for? Peace, in a time of confusion and struggle? Hope, during a season of discouragement and despair? Healing, for places of sickness and pain? Our world is filled with people who are waiting for things to be different because we are so tired of the way the world often works. But the hope of the Advent season—the weeks leading up to Christmas—is that God is coming to make things new. God is making a new world, a new Kingdom, where we won't have to wait any longer. The life we yearn for will be here. We hope you join us this Advent as we begin an exploration of the Gospel of Luke, and are reminded that the birth of Jesus is good news of great joy for all people.

## RESOURCE OVERVIEW

Here we provide space to take notes on the sermon and Scripture text and answer reflection questions that you can discuss with others. When considering the reflection questions, remember that the goal is not to have all the “right” answers—instead, let these questions serve as a starting point for curiosity in your conversation with God and others. See the Appendix of this guide for more resources and opportunities to engage with this study.

Please note this discussion guide is created before the series begins. Discussion questions are prepared before the sermons are written and based on the theme and text for the week. Thank you for your understanding that the topic and focus of the sermon as the pastor writes it may differ from what is written in the discussion questions.

## APPENDIX (PAGE 10)

Offers a deeper dive into the topic as well as resources for Bible study, leading small groups, and links for further support.

Works Cited & Links

Luke Bible Study Tools

“Icebreaker” Questions

Tips for Guiding Conversations

General Resources for Individual Support

## SERMON SCHEDULE & REQUIRED READING

*\*Subject to change at the discretion of the pastors.*

Along with the sermons and the questions in this guide, there will be weekly reading for participants to complete.

Book: [“Luke: the New Testament for Everyone,”](#) by N. T. Wright

Sermon	Topic	Assigned pages from N.T. Wright
Week 1	Luke 1:1-17	1-7
Week 2	Luke 1:26-33	8-11
Week 3	Luke 1:46-55	12-15
Week 4	Luke 2:1-20	20-23

## WEEKLY FORMAT

**REFLECT:** Listen to the sermon, read weekly selections and scripture passages, and answer questions. (30-40 min)

**RELATE:** Discuss reflection questions with your small group. (60 min)

**PRAY:** This series includes many ways to practice prayer together. It will be important that you do this! Try one that is suggested, or bring another regular rhythm to your group

# CONVERSATION COVENANT

We hope that all small group discussions are lively and enriching, but sometimes tough topics will be discussed. The Conversation Covenant\* is an agreement to hold respect and grace toward all participants within a small group, no matter the conversation. Please adhere to the Conversation Covenant or think about creating one that fits your context.

\*Adapted from <https://conversational-leadership.net/conversation-covenant/>

I pledge:

**To act in good faith, with curiosity.** I will assume the best about my conversation partners when entering into our groups. I will give the benefit of the doubt, recognizing that they may know something I don't.

**To show respect.** I will show respect. I will be polite and give due regard to the feelings and traditions of others. I understand that I do not have to agree with someone to show them respect.

**To speak the truth.** I won't use rhetorical tricks to try to win an argument. I will speak what I genuinely believe is the nuanced truth.

**To aim to discover the truth.** I will not enter into a conversation with the purpose of changing the mind of anyone to my way of thinking.

**To focus on what we can change.** I will focus on what we can do differently in the future since we cannot change what we did in the past.

**To take responsibility for the conversation.** I will take responsibility for the quality of the conversation and the abidance of the rules both in principle and in spirit.

**To follow the covenant even when others fail to do so.** I will abide by the rules regardless of whether another person breaks them.

**To respect the confidentiality of the group.** I will not share the stories of group members verbally or in written form (including on social media and online outlets).

**To lighten up and approach the conversation in good humor.** I recognize that humor is a hallmark of a constructive, generative conversation and take the conversation in good humor.

# PREPARE

The following questions are jumping-off points for personal reflection. Engage with them to awaken your awareness to the themes in this sermon series. Pay attention to the questions that stand out to you and look back on them throughout the series to see how God might be speaking to you.

## CONSIDER

- How, if at all, has engaging with the Bible, particularly the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, & John) been part of your faith life? How has it shaped you and your relationship with God? List some of these things.
- What factors help you get the most out of reading and studying Scripture with others? Is there anything that makes it hard for you to read and study the Bible? Write down one or two of these reflections. What might enrich your experience with this sermon series on Luke?
- What questions do you have about the Gospels (perhaps, Luke's Gospel in particular) or the teachings of Jesus? List them below.



# WEEK 1

## Luke 1:1–17

**REFLECT** | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had – curiosities, concerns, or delights.
- Read pages 1–7 in "[Luke: the New Testament for Everyone](#)," by N. T. Wright

**RELATE** | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation or personal reflection:

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. What do you see as Luke's goals in writing this Gospel (i.e., Gospel = the book of Luke; 1:1–4)? Luke says that his goal is to provide readers/listeners with "secure knowledge" about the life and ministry of Jesus (1:4). What do you think we can gain from a better understanding of Jesus' life and ministry?
3. This section of Luke can be characterized by the word "preparation." God is preparing others for what God is about to do. Looking at these verses, where or how do you see this happening? How do you think this sets up the Gospel story?
4. After reflecting on this question consider your own life. How might God be preparing something for you? What does faithfulness to God look like for you right now?
5. Is there an invitation you sense God is making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

**PRAY** | Ask God to make you open and ready to hear God's voice. Confess ways where that might be difficult for you at this time, and ask God to strengthen you and help you in these things.

## Luke 1:1–17

1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.

5 In the time of Herod king of Judea there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly division of Abijah; his wife Elizabeth was also a descendant of Aaron. 6 Both of them were righteous in the sight of God, observing all the Lord's commands and decrees blamelessly. 7 But they were childless because Elizabeth was not able to conceive, and they were both very old.

8 Once when Zechariah's division was on duty and he was serving as priest before God, 9 he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to go into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. 10 And when the time for the burning of incense came, all the assembled worshipers were praying outside.

11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. 12 When Zechariah saw him, he was startled and was gripped with fear. 13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to call him John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even before he is born. 16 He will bring back many of the people of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous—to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

# WEEK 2

## Luke 1:26–33

**REFLECT** | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.
- Read pages 8–11 in "[Luke: the New Testament for Everyone](#)," by N. T. Wright

**RELATE** | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Discuss the interaction between the angel Gabriel and Mary. What about their conversation stands out to you?
3. God's people had been waiting on God to act for a long time. How would this story have been both comforting and, given its peculiarity, surprising at the same time?
4. Likewise, where in your life do you see God acting? How can you open yourself up to be surprised by God? What might help you be prepared for God to work in unexpected ways?
5. How does a story like this, where God's rule in the world comes through this young woman and her child,, help you understand what God's kingdom is like?
6. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

**PRAY** | Ask God to help you see the unexpected and beautiful ways God is working in your life and in this world through Jesus.

## Luke 1:26–33

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you."

29 Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. 30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. 31 You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

# WEEK 3

## Luke 1:46–55

**REFLECT** | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.
- Read pages 12–15 in "[Luke: the New Testament for Everyone](#)," by N. T. Wright

**RELATE** | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener options are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Mary's story in Luke's gospel involves (and invites) many thoughts and feelings, from surprise to sadness. This moment, though, is reserved for celebrating God's work. What role does celebration play in your faith? Or what role would you like it to play?
3. Look at what Mary celebrates in this passage. What does it bring to mind for you? How might Mary's song guide the way you practice celebration? How might it help you pray this week?
4. Reflect on some/all of the following, and share with others: What is one small thing you can thank God for today? What's one big thing? What's one thing from your past that you can thank God for? What gives you hope (and how can you show gratitude for that)?
5. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

**PRAY** | Pray that you, others in your group, our local communities, and the world around us will experience moments of God-given joy this week. Pray that our hope in God brings us joy, and our joy in God leads to more hopefulness in our lives (and in this world).

## Luke 1:46–55

46 And Mary said:  
"My soul glorifies the Lord  
47 and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,  
48 for he has been mindful  
of the humble state of his servant.  
From now on all generations will call me blessed,  
49 for the Mighty One has done great things for me—  
holy is his name.  
50 His mercy extends to those who fear him,  
from generation to generation.  
51 He has performed mighty deeds with his arm;  
he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.  
52 He has brought down rulers from their thrones  
but has lifted up the humble.  
53 He has filled the hungry with good things  
but has sent the rich away empty.  
54 He has helped his servant Israel,  
remembering to be merciful  
55 to Abraham and his descendants forever,  
just as he promised our ancestors."

# WEEK 4

## Luke 2:1–20

**REFLECT** | Before your small group gathering, complete the following and reflect on the discussion questions. These will be the basis for your small group time.

- Listen to the Sermon on Highrock's [YouTube channel](#) and note any reactions you had- curiosities, concerns, or delights.
- Read pages 20–24 in "[Luke: the New Testament for Everyone](#)," by N. T. Wright

**RELATE** | Use these questions as a launching point for your small group conversation. Open with a check-in/getting-to-know-you question. Group opener questions are available in the Appendix.

1. What from the sermon or reading has brought up new questions or interesting points you would like to discuss?
2. Consider Mary and Joseph's precarious situation. What does this re-affirmation of who Jesus is to Mary and Joseph (i.e., the messiah, savior of the world; 1:31–32; 2:11) tell you about God's care and provision?
3. Many things call for our attention during the Christmas season. Read the following passage by N. T. Wright and reflect on what devotion to Christ might look like for you in the remaining days of Advent.

"The point Luke is making is clear. The birth of this little boy (Jesus) is the beginning of a confrontation between the kingdom of God – in all its apparent weakness, insignificance and vulnerability – and the kingdoms of this world. . . . When you see the manger (a feeding-trough) on a card, or in church, don't stop at the crib. See what it's pointing to. It is pointing to the explosive truth that the baby lying there is already being spoken of as the true king of the world." (23–24)

4. Is there an invitation you sense God making through your conversation or reflections this week? Is there a next step you could take in how you engage, act, or relate to others?

**PRAY** | Have a time of quiet reflection – remembering, imagining, and simply enjoying what God has done and who God is for us in Jesus, the savior of the world.

## Luke 2:1–20

2 In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. 2 (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) 3 And everyone went to their own town to register.

4 So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. 5 He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. 6 While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, 7 and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them.

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."

13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,

14 "Glory to God in the highest heaven,  
and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

15 When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about."



16 So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. 17 When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, 18 and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. 19 But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. 20 The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

# APPENDIX

Below are resources to look into if you are interested in diving deeper into some of the topics covered in this series. If you need resources that more specifically address your own experience, demographic, or faith journey, please reach out to a Highrock pastor or to [smallgroups@highrock.org](mailto:smallgroups@highrock.org) and we will be happy to help!

## PRAYER TOOLS

- [The Prayer of Examen: Tracking Our Moods](#)
- [Breath Prayer/Prayer of the Heart](#)
- [Divine/Fixed Hour Prayer](#)
- [Imaginative Prayer/Ignatian Contemplation](#)
- [Lament](#)
- [Laughter and Prayer](#)
- [Palms Up, Palms Down](#)
- [Pray a Psalm in a Nature Setting](#)
- [Praying with your Body](#)
- [Welcoming Prayer](#)

## LUKE BIBLE STUDY TOOLS (Books, Podcasts, Videos, etc.)

- ["Luke: the New Testament for Everyone."](#) by N. T. Wright
- [Dr. Amy Peeler on Luke 1:46–55](#) (12 mins)
- [BibleProject videos: Luke 1–9](#) (8 mins)
- [BibleProject podcast series on Luke-Acts](#) (see episodes 1–4)
- [Blue Letter Bible](#)
- [Bible Gateway](#)
- [Dr. Justo González on Luke](#) (16 mins)

## "ICEBREAKER" QUESTIONS

- What was a small win from your week?
- Share a High/Low from your day or week.
- On a scale of 1-10, how are you doing coming into this meeting?
- If you were to describe yourself as a weather forecast today, what would you be? Example: sunny, partly cloudy, rainy with a chance of snow, etc.
- What song would be the theme track for the day you had?
- What is the season of Advent/Christmas usually like for you? Joyful, challenging, 'is it spring yet'?

## GENERAL RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

- [Spiritual Practices](#)
- [Mental Health Resources](#)
- [Parenting & Kids—Understanding each other through Milestones](#)

## TIPS FOR GUIDING CONVERSATION

- Allow everyone space to share. It's ok to ask what people are thinking even if they don't volunteer to share right away. But always give people the option to decline to share. Example: "Hey, Fred, you've been a little quiet and I'm curious to know what you think. Would you like to share anything?"
- Remember there aren't necessarily "right" answers. Encourage participants to simply be curious about what came up for them or others without the pressure of feeling like they "should" have thought or felt anything in particular. Example: Instead of asking "what is this story supposed to be communicating?" ask "what did you notice?"
- Embrace the differences. Affirm that different people can come to different conclusions regarding the same thing. Example: "It is really interesting that the text reminded Susie of ABC, while it reminded José of XYZ. Both can be present and true."

- Adapt to suit your group's needs. Sometimes conversation is free-flowing and sometimes it's easier to move through discussion questions one at a time. Do what feels suitable for your group, but don't feel pressured to answer/discuss every single question.
- Encourage curiosity by modeling curiosity. Asking someone "Tell me more about XYZ" can be a really simple but effective tool to go deeper in conversation.
- Don't be afraid of silence. It's natural to want to fill silences or pauses in a conversation. But don't be afraid to sit in silence with your group members. Sometimes thoughts just need time to percolate, so don't feel like you have to rush to another question if no one shares immediately.
- Refer back to the Conversation Covenant. This is the posture that we as Highrock hold as we gather in groups. When the conversation gets tough, you can always refer back to the Conversation Covenant to remind the group that everyone has agreed to abide by this covenant in small group meetings.