



“What book of the Bible would you recommend as a first book for a new Christian or someone interested in finding out about Jesus?”

Another great question! The Bible is a mini-library containing 66 books where do you start? The first book (Genesis) is a great place to start to get the foundation for everything that follows, but for someone new to the faith and God’s Word, I’d suggest they start with one of the Gospels that record for us the facts about Jesus’ birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection.

John’s Gospel is the book of the Bible that I’ve often recommended for people who are interested in finding out about Jesus. More than any other gospel, John highlights the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and was sent by the Father to save the world from sin, and that the proper response to Jesus is to “believe in him.” That message is summed up in the passage most people have heard: John 3:16. It makes sense if the goal is for people to “believe in Jesus” and be saved, you’d want them to read the book that stresses over and over the desired response God wants from us is to “Believe in Jesus”

But as I read through - and watched - John’s gospel during Lent it struck me that it might not be the best book to recommend to new believers, because one of the other characteristics of the Gospel of John is that it records lots of things Jesus said that would probably leave people unfamiliar with Jesus scratching their heads, wondering “What on earth does that mean?” For example Jesus telling Nicodemus he must be born again. We know what that means, but it probably sounds very odd to someone not familiar with the saying.

So, I started to think of which other Gospel I would have someone new to Christianity read. And I came up with Luke’s Gospel. For a couple of reasons.

1) Right away in the first paragraph Luke tells us this:

“Since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.” Luke 1:3-4

Doesn’t that make you want to read to find out what Luke’s careful investigation uncovered?! Most people don’t want to believe in Jesus “just because someone told them to.” They want evidence based on research. Luke carefully researched the things people have heard about Jesus, so that the reader might have full confidence that what he wrote is “Gospel truth.”

2) Following that introduction Luke records for us the details surrounding Jesus’ birth: The Christmas Narrative. Even people who weren’t brought up as Christians have some knowledge of that passage. It’s a great place for them to start. A point of connection.

3) Everyone likes stories. A parable is an “earthly story with a heavenly meaning,” a story people can relate to that teaches an important spiritual truth. Luke records more of Jesus’ parables than any other gospel. Including a couple that - again - even people unfamiliar with the Bible have likely heard: The Parable of the Prodigal Son and the Parable of the Good Samaritan. More points of connection!

4) Some of the other accounts that are unique to Luke’s gospel should resonate with people new to the faith: Jesus’ invitation to Zacchaeus in chapter 19; Jesus’ pronouncing forgiveness for the people who are putting him to

death; and Jesus' conversation with the thief dying next to him - both found in chapter 23.

You could not go wrong suggesting either John or Luke as a first book to read. If you'd ask me that question tomorrow, I might answer it with "John's gospel," again. But today my answer is "Luke." (With that in mind, I thought it would be appropriate for us to read through Luke's gospel for our Daily Bible Readings this month. You can find the list elsewhere in this Newsletter.)

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net