

Bible Exploration Workbooks

Introduction to the Series

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The Project

Generations have grown up in this country and abroad with no knowledge of even the basic narratives and teachings in the Bible. Not only is the Bible unfamiliar to them, but also the thorough, personal way in which Christians study it and the ambiance of our small-group Bible discussions. The workbooks in this series emphasize careful reading and open, interactive discussion in order to motivate readers to observe important details, to think deeply and inductively about the meaning of the text, and to discover the truth of the scriptures for themselves. The goal of the series is to lead people to Jesus as he comes alive to them through the Word and by the Spirit of God.

The Students

They are thoughtful adults and teenagers who want the language in the workbook to be understandable and clear. Thought-provoking questions and an informal yet structured atmosphere communicate to participants that their intellect, opinions, and questions are being taken seriously as well. The inductive approach to the scriptures helps them to take the text seriously. They will be comfortable with the language level, but they will be challenged with the level of thought.

They are reluctant to answer obvious questions. Questions are foundational to any inductive study, but many Bible studies err in asking obvious questions, in asking far too many questions, or in jumping to the application without clarifying its connection to the text. People who are not familiar with a typical Bible study format have little patience for this. In the *Bible Exploration Workbooks*, participants are trained to observe by initiating their own questions and marking the text in specific ways. This active approach appeals to their intellect and helps them see how the more challenging interpretation and application questions arise from the text.

They have little or no knowledge of the scriptures, and little understanding of a supernatural God. The workbooks introduce the structure and overall themes of the Bible. They provide background information through an annotated text, historical and cultural notes, and links to other parts of scripture. Old Testament background is added to *Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus* through a study of the first three chapters in Genesis and a comparison of the temptation of Jesus with the temptation of Adam and Eve. The readers' knowledge base builds as they progress through the studies, especially in the Gospel of Luke where they can follow Jesus and his disciples through a continuing narrative.

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They have various levels of spiritual interest, and they may be unaccustomed to personal, interactive group discussions. Although the goal of the series is to lead people to Jesus, there is nothing coercive in this Bible study. The tone is exploratory, and participants are not required to publicly declare their own spiritual beliefs. As they encounter Jesus in the Bible, they will be able to decide for themselves what is true. The questions challenge them to think and to respond, but the level of the class discussion is kept comfortable for non-believers.

The Lessons

Community-Building Activities

Objective: To develop a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere, build friendships, and give each person a chance to talk.

Activities: Each lesson begins with an optional communicative activity. In some lessons, it is a discussion question in the opening lines, and in others it is a footnote suggesting an activity.

LOOK OVER the Text

Objective: To build schema for the Biblical text and thus aid comprehension

Activities: Before reading the text, students scan for specific details or skim to determine the genre, purpose, organization, or gist of the text. These schema-building skills improve with practice, so as the workbook progresses, the scanning activity increases in difficulty.

The Annotated Text

The biblical text for each lesson is included in the workbook. It is double-spaced and annotated with vocabulary and background notes. The translation has not been set, but the current version has a combination of the *New International Version* of the Bible, published by the International Bible Society, 1982, the *Good News Bible: Today's English Version* published by the American Bible Society, 1992, and *The English Standard Version* is published by Good News Publishers, Crossway Bibles, 2001.

LABEL the Text

Objective: To enhance comprehension through observation

Activities: Readers need to look back over the text in order to complete the tasks in this section. When they find what they are looking for, they will mark the text, fill in a chart or map with information from the text, or prepare their own observation questions.

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LINK to the Text

Objective: To incorporate outside resources, including the rest of scripture

Activities: Observation questions go a long way in giving the reader a feel for the setting and mood of the situation described in the text. Occasionally, however, it is necessary to bring in additional information. The activities in this section "link" the text to historical and cultural reference material or quotes from elsewhere in the Bible.

LEARN from the Text

Objective: To interpret the meaning of the holy text and ponder its implications

Activities: Meaning is discussed throughout the Bible study, but this section focuses on a few thought-provoking questions that explore the intended meaning of the text, relationships between characters, and truths about God. These questions challenge the readers' thinking and perhaps their language ability, so they are limited in number but discussed at length. The questions seek the Divine and human authors' intentions rather than opinions about the issues, yet readers are encouraged to interact honestly with what they read and to communicate their thoughts.

LIVE What You Learn

Objective: To respond to the holy text by pondering its truthfulness and discussing how its admonitions can be put into practice.

Activities: There are three parts to this section.

Discuss one of these questions:

This is a time for people's opinions and reactions. It is also a time to discuss implications for living that arise from the text. In order to allow for comfortable exploration by non-Christians, there is usually a choice of questions: one addresses a direct spiritual application and another explores a Christian value or attitude.

Consider:

A good Bible lesson concludes with a summary of the main points and a personal, spiritual challenge. They are provided here as a way for individual readers or group leaders to close the lesson. Leaders can use this challenge to stimulate conversation with individuals after the group time has concluded.

The Final Word:

A related Bible passage stimulates those who want something extra. The passages may be difficult for some to understand, but they are worth the effort.

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Background Papers

Several lessons have a corresponding background paper on an historical, cultural, theological or philosophical topic related to the lesson. Many of the topics arose from questions that students have asked in the past.

Rationale for Beginning with Luke

The power of *The Gospel of Jesus Christ According to Luke* is in its divine authorship, but that is combined with the authorship of a respected doctor and historian. Luke's sources were eyewitnesses to the events in the gospel. His "orderly account" contains historical details and precise descriptions. The order and flow of the book clarify Jesus' purpose and integrate his actions and teachings, such as his embodiment of servant leadership.

Luke, writing to the Greeks, does not assume that his audience is familiar with the Old Testament or even the land and customs of the Jews. He includes references and explanations to aid their comprehension. On the other hand, he does not avoid the Old Testament, for his goal is to "draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us." He links prophecies in the Old Testament to Jesus and shows how those prophecies have been fulfilled.

Furthermore, Luke involves his readers in the life of Jesus. He shows the personalities and everyday activities of Jesus, and the men and women who follow him. The readers watch the disciples struggle with Jesus' true identity and find themselves asking the same questions the disciples ask, "Who is He?"

Jesus' claims of divinity run counter to the naturalistic worldview of many of our readers, yet they are drawn to the One they meet in this gospel. They often come to "wish it were true," and can then do some serious thinking about the truth of Jesus' claims.

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Contents of Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus

Workbook One: Exploring the Identity of Jesus, Luke 1-9

Welcome and Introduction

Prologue: "Getting to Know the Bible"

1 God Has Spoken (Luke 1:1-4, Genesis 1-3)

"The First Humans"

2 God Has Spoken Again (Luke 3: 1-22)

"The Christmas Story"

3 Son of Adam (Luke 3: 23 to 4: 1-13)

"God's Laws"

4 Spirit of the Lord (Luke 4: 14-44)

5 Rabbi (Luke 5: 1-32)

"Following Jesus: A Personal Story"

6 Lord, Lord (Luke 6:20-36)

7 The One? (Luke 7: 11-23)

8 Teacher (Luke 8: 4-18)

9 Rescuer (Luke 8: 22-39)

10 Messiah (Luke 9:10--27)

"Messiah: Introduction to the Oratorio"

Epilogue: "The Turning Point" (Luke 9:28-36)

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Contents of Luke's Ancient Biography of Jesus

Workbook Two: Exploring the Mission of Jesus, Luke 10-24

Welcome and Introduction

Prologue: "The Prayers of Jesus"

- 1 Priorities (Luke 10: 25--42)
 "The Lord's Prayer"
- 2 Lost and Found (Luke 15: 3-32)
- 3 His Mission (Luke 18:31-19:10)
- 4 The City of Peace (Luke 19:28-44)
- 5 The Opposition (Luke 19:45-20:26)
 "Understanding the Passover Festival"
- 6 The Last Supper (Luke 21:37-22:30)
- 7 The Arrest (Luke 22:31-65)
 "God's Forgiveness"
- 8 The Trials (Luke 22:66-23:25)
 "Trial Systems in the Roman Empire"
- 9 Death and Empty Tomb (Luke 23:26- 24:12)
- 10 The Resurrection (Luke 24:13-53)
 "Historical Evidence for the Resurrection"

Epilogue: "What Happened to Simon Peter"

Personal Background of the Author

My two professional strengths are teaching and developing materials for English as a Second Language. I have a lifetime teaching credential from California and an MA in Education (1978). For the master's degree, I wrote a thesis on second language acquisition in children. I was able to put that degree to use with my own children and in private ESL courses while living in Mexico City. Back in the U.S., I taught elementary school and then moved into beginning adult ESL at a community college in 1987. I developed an off-campus multimedia lab while at that college. After having taught beginning levels for several years, I concentrated on advanced writing during my MA studies in Teaching English as a Second Language (1994). I have taught classes at Eastern Michigan University, and have been an ESL technology consultant for the University of Michigan and the Ann Arbor Public Schools.

In addition to teaching and family, most of my time in the past few years has been dedicated to international women, graduate students, and writing projects. I have taught an investigative Bible study for international women for eight years, and I have discipled a few Christian international women each year. Since coming to Michigan in 1991, I have been working with my husband's ministry to graduate students and faculty at the University of Michigan. However, the writing projects are now taking priority. In addition to the *Bible Exploration Workbooks*, I have been writing software for ESL. I have a beginning adult ESL CD-ROM on the market with lifeskill-oriented lessons.¹ This first project was published in 1992 and the second CD-ROM, a sequel, has just come out on the market.

My husband is now an apologetics specialist with InterVarsity. He has worked for IV since college with the exception of our years in Claremont, California where he worked on his Ph.D. in Philosophy. Our time in Mexico was unofficially with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students. We have worked with and lived with international students for all of our twenty-six years of married life, even in Mexico. Our sons are both recent graduates of the University of Michigan.

¹ *Sound Sentences*, Educational Activities, Inc., Baldwin, NY, 1992. The new CD-ROM is *Sound Sentences II*, 2002.