

The Good News Course

Bible Study Edition



The Good News Course Booklet: Bible Study Edition

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Please visit our website for current postal and telephone contact information. This course is for the use of members of St Lucia Bible Church and the people they invite to do the course with them, as a trial during the development of the course. If you are not part of our church, and would like to trial the course, please contact us by email.

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WELCOME

Hi there, and welcome to the Good News Course! We're so glad you could join us.

The whole God, Jesus, Christian thing can be confusing – but it doesn't have to be. The message at the heart of Christianity is really very simple, and it's the best news you've ever heard!

This version of the Good News Course is designed to be done in small groups or one to one with a friend. Each week, our aim is to give you an opportunity to read about Jesus in the bible, ask questions and discuss what you're learning.

The course is built around two key resources: Luke's Gospel and Two Ways to Live. Luke's gospel is a 2,000-year-old document giving eyewitness evidence about Jesus. Two Ways to Live is a succinct summary of the Christian message working through 6 key topics:

Week 1: God the Ruler

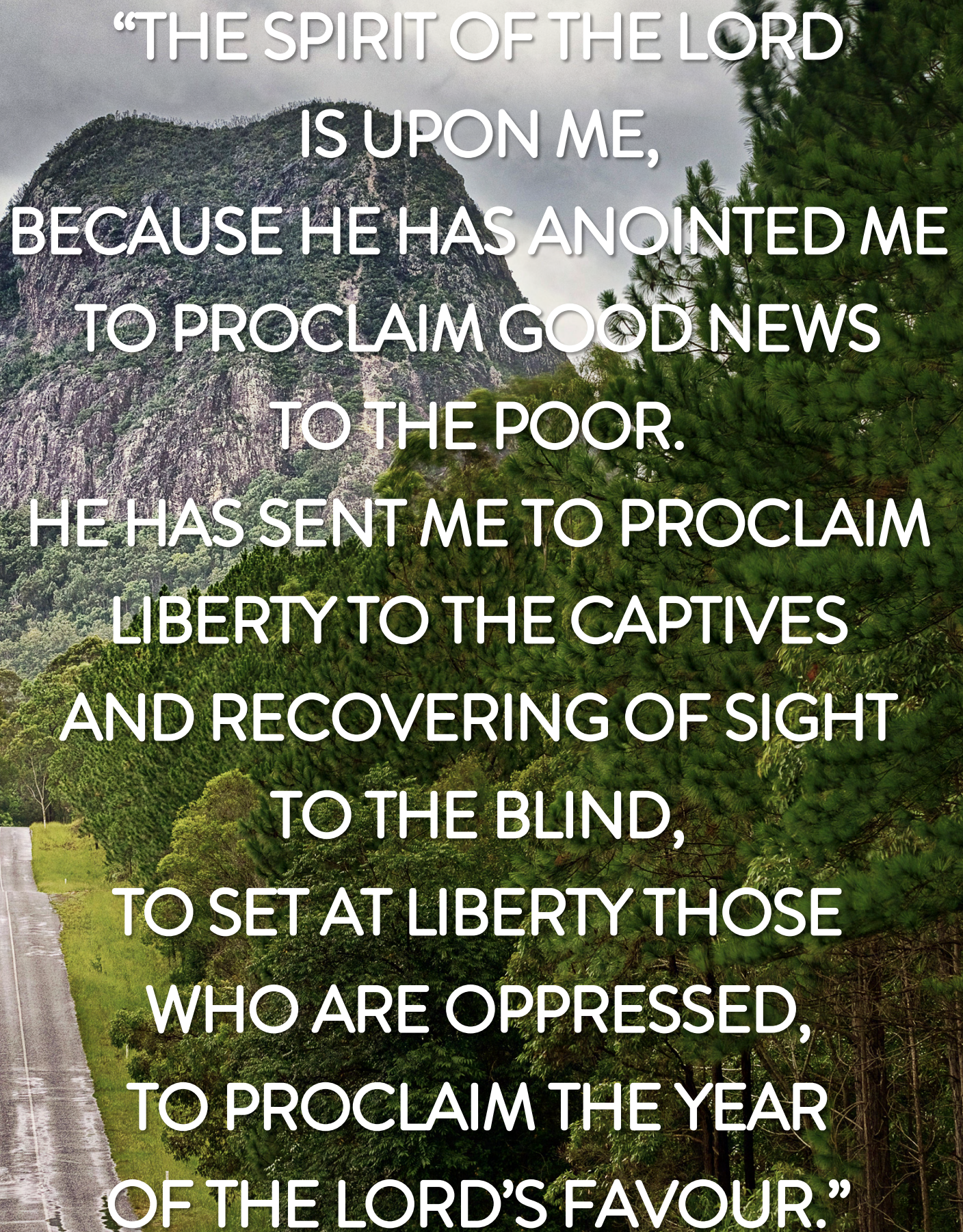
Week 2: Rebellion

Week 3: Judgement

Week 4: The Cross

Week 5: Resurrection

Week 6: The Choice



“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD
IS UPON ME,
BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME
TO PROCLAIM GOOD NEWS
TO THE POOR.
HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM
LIBERTY TO THE CAPTIVES
AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT
TO THE BLIND,
TO SET AT LIBERTY THOSE
WHO ARE OPPRESSED,
TO PROCLAIM THE YEAR
OF THE LORD’S FAVOUR.”

LUKE 4:18-19

Session 1: God the Ruler

Key Passages: Luke 1:1-4; 4:42-43

Discussion Starters:

1. What experiences of Christianity have you had before joining this course?
2. Have you ever had the chance to read the bible for yourself?
3. How would you sum up the main message of Christianity?
4. How would you respond to the idea that there are lots of 'counterfeit versions' of Christianity out there?

Read TWTL Box 1: God, the Good Ruler and Creator

1. What is the connection between God as creator and ruler?

Digging into the Bible:

Read Luke 1:1-4 (Luke Chapter 1, verses 1-4).

1. Where is Luke getting his research from?
2. What is Luke's aim in writing?

3. How will this help us to have certainty about who Jesus really is?

Read Luke 2:8-12 and Luke 4:42-44.

1. What is the Good News about in these verses?

2. What is the Kingdom of God?

3. How does this map onto the first box of Two Ways to Live?

4. How does this connect to the story of the bible?

5. How would you sum up the essence of Jesus' announcement?

Home Assignment: Read Luke 1-4

Ask yourself three questions (and note down any other questions you have / might want to discuss next week):

1) Who is Jesus?

2) Why did he come?

3) How should I respond to him?

Session 2: Rebellion

Key Passage: Luke 5:17-32

Review Luke 1-4:

1. How did you go with this week's home assignment? Do you have any questions or comments about Luke's Gospel so far?

Discussion Starters:

1. Why is it so important to be honest about bad news?
2. What do you think is the root cause of everything that is wrong with the world?

Read TWTL Box 2: Our Rebellion Against God

2. How does this description of Sin differ from seeing sin merely as
 - Breaking rules?
 - Naughty things?
3. Do you think it's possible to be quite religious and yet still to be rebelling against God our creator?

Digging into the Bible:

Read Luke 5:17-32

1. The Pharisees are right that only God can forgive sins (v.21). Why?
2. The Pharisees are wrong to think that Jesus cannot forgive sins (v.24). Why?

Pssst... you will need to pay attention to Jesus' logic in v.24. Read Daniel 7:13-14 to understand the significance of the Son of Man title.
3. What is the connection between forgiveness and healing? Why is forgiveness the key to healing the man?
4. How would you describe your own attitude towards God? Would you be prepared to admit that you are a sinner/rebel? Would you be willing to ask Jesus for forgiveness?

Home Assignment: Read Luke 5-9

Ask yourself three questions (and note down any other questions you have / might want to discuss next week):

- 1) Who is Jesus?
- 2) Why did he come?
- 3) How should I respond to him?

Session 3: Judgement

Key Passage: Luke 13:22-30

Review Luke 5-9:

1. How did you go with this week's home assignment? Do you have any questions or comments about Luke's Gospel so far?

Discussion Starters:

1. What do people mean when they say, "If I were God I'd..." or "I like to think of God as...". What is wrong with this kind of sentiment?

2. What do you think is the root cause of everything that is wrong with the world?

Read TWTL Box 3: God's Justice

3. In Box 3, God is reasserting his rule. Why is this a good thing? Who rules if God does not?

4. Why is God's justice so terrible and so good simultaneously?

Digging into the Bible:

Read Luke 13:22-30

1. The question in v.23 kicks off this whole scene, but Jesus doesn't quite answer it directly, does he? Why do you think he answers the way he does? (v.24)
2. Fill in the table below.

	Outside	Inside
Who is where?		
What are they experiencing?		

3. Pay attention to how the master of the house is described in vv.25-26. Who is the master of the house then?
4. What difference does it make to know that Jesus is the one who will 'lock the door' to the Kingdom?

Home Assignment: Read Luke 10-14

Ask yourself three questions (and note down any other questions you have / might want to discuss next week):

- 1) Who is Jesus?
- 2) Why did he come?
- 3) How should I respond to him?

Session 4: The Cross

Key Passages: Luke 18:31-34, 23:13-25

Review Luke 10-14:

1. How did you go with this week's home assignment? Do you have any questions or comments about Luke's Gospel so far?

Discussion Starters:

1. The cross was a Roman method of execution designed above all to humiliate its victims. Imagine if people wore electric chair jewellery or met in guillotine-shaped buildings. How would you feel about seeing these things around your community?
2. Why do you think Christians celebrate the crucifixion of Jesus?

Read TWTL Box 4: God sent Jesus to die for us

The aim of our session today is to see how each of the points in TWTL are presented in Luke's gospel:

TWO WAYS TO LIVE	LUKE'S GOSPEL
Because of his love, God <i>sent</i> his Son into the world: the man Jesus Christ.	Jesus' journey to the cross was deliberate
Jesus always lived under God's rule.	Jesus was pronounced innocent
But Jesus took our punishment by dying in our place.	Jesus died in the place of the rebel Barabbas

Digging into the Bible:

Read Luke 9:51-53, 13:31-35, 18:31-34

1. Where is Jesus heading?
2. What is he expecting when he gets there?

Read Luke 23:1-16

1. What was the accusation being made against Jesus?
2. How many times is Jesus declared to be innocent in this section?
3. Was Jesus claiming to be a King though? Is Pilate wrong about his innocence?
4. Why is it important to understand the greater significance of Jesus' innocence?
i.e. that he wasn't just innocent according to Roman Law but before God.

Read Luke 23:18-25

1. Why did Jesus die... historically speaking? What caused his death?

2. How does Jesus' death in the place of Barabbas mirror what he has done for all of us?

Food for thought...

1. The bible teaches that apart from the cross there is no other way for God to be both just and merciful. Do you think there is another way to pay for sins?
2. Many people think that Jesus was 'a good moral teacher' and that Christianity is all about teaching people to be good and do good. This misses the point of the cross. How?
3. How do you respond to the idea that God knows you completely and still loves you?

Home Assignment: Read Luke 15-19

Ask yourself three questions (and note down any other questions you have / might want to discuss next week):

- 1) Who is Jesus?
- 2) Why did he come?
- 3) How should I respond to him?

Session 5: Resurrection

Key Passages: Luke 24:1-12, 36-43

Review Luke 15-19:

1. How did you go with this week's home assignment? Do you have any questions or comments about Luke's Gospel so far?

Discussion Starters:

1. The bible says that because of our sin we are not naturally 'neutral observers' who will follow wherever the evidence leads (see for instance Luke 16:30-31)
 - a. What do you think about this? Will you follow where the evidence leads?
 - b. What would it take for you to become a Christian? What kind/amount of evidence would persuade you that the claims about Jesus are true?

In our session today we will focus on two questions about Jesus' resurrection.

1. Did it actually happen?
2. What does it mean?

Did it actually happen?

Read Luke 24:1-12

1. Talk through the eyewitness evidence Luke has gathered. Try and decide if you think these pieces of evidence are decisive, compelling, or irrelevant.

	Decisive	Compelling	Irrelevant
The women found the tomb			
Announced by angels			
Jesus had predicted his resurrection			
The apostles were sceptical			
The burial clothes			
Jesus' appearances			

2. What other factors do you think ought to be weighed when considering the reliability of the resurrection accounts? (e.g. the New Testament's teaching on truthfulness, the spread of the early church, the willingness of the apostles to be martyred for their testimony etc.)

What does it mean?

Read TWTL Box 5: Jesus, the Risen Ruler and Saviour

1. Look back over the TWTL outline so far. Box 5 is the climax/goal of everything that has gone before.
 - a. What does Jesus' resurrection have to do with the Kingdom of God / God's Rule?

 - b. What does Jesus' resurrection mean for sin (Box 2) and death (Box 3)?

Read Luke 24:36-49

1. What is the significance of Jesus' announcement of Peace (v.36)?
 - *Jesus' resurrection signals an end to our hostilities with God, and the restoration of harmony to the whole universe. The Old Testament word is Shalom.*

2. Why does Jesus emphasise the fulfilment of the Old Testament (v.44)?
 - *This is the climax of the whole Bible. The promised Kingdom has finally been established. (See for example, Psalm 16, 110, Isaiah 52:13-53:12)*

3. Why does Jesus' resurrection usher in the proclamation of forgiveness to all nations (v.47)?

- *In his death, Jesus took the punishment for our sins. Only now, on that basis, can he offer us full forgiveness.*

4. What is the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit (v.49)?

- *The Holy Spirit empowers the new age of life and restoration. By applying Jesus' death and resurrection to the disciples, they will be born again, empowered for witness.*

Home Assignment: Read Luke 20-24

Ask yourself three questions (and note down any other questions you have / might want to discuss next week):

1) Who is Jesus?

2) Why did he come?

3) How should I respond to him?

Session 6: The Choice

Key Passage: Luke 18:9-14

Review Luke 20-24:

1. How did you go with this week's home assignment? Do you have any questions or comments about Luke's Gospel so far?

Discussion Starters:

1. Define Humility.
2. How would you differentiate true humility from false humility?

Digging into the Bible:

Read Luke 18:9-14

In the bible, the word "faith" just means to trust, or rely, or depend on someone. It is not an especially religious word. Faith is something we all have because we are all limited, finite creatures.

1. Who do you trust? Your Parents? Spouse? Teachers? Scientists? Journalists? Politicians? Doctors?
2. How do you decide who to trust?

3. In the modern world, faith is often thought of as something irrational or mystical. How does Luke's approach to faith differ from this?
4. In the original Greek, v.9 literally talks about those who "trust in themselves, that they were righteous..." Do you trust in yourself?
5. Two very different men:
 - a. What do you know about the differences between Pharisees and Tax Collectors in Jesus' day? (v.10)
6. Two very different prayers:
 - a. The temple represents the throne-room of God. Imagine it like a courtroom. How would you characterise the Pharisees prayer in vv.11-12? How does he plead? Does he have any evidence?
 - b. How would you characterise the Tax collector's prayer (v.13)? How does he plead? Is he right?
 - c. How does the tax collector's prayer relate to Box 2, 3, and 4 of TWTL?
7. Two very different verdicts:
 - a. Why is the Pharisees approach to God fundamentally sinful?
 - b. By contrast, why is the Tax Collector justified?

Next Steps:

1. Do you want to become a Christian?

You could pray a prayer like the tax collector's prayer and go home justified today.

Dear God,

I know that I am not worthy to be accepted by you. I don't deserve your gift of eternal life. I am guilty of rebelling against you and ignoring you. I need forgiveness. Thank you for sending your son to die for me that I may be forgiven. Thank you that he rose from the dead to give me new life.

Please forgive me and change me, that I may live with Jesus as my ruler.

Amen.

2. Do you have more questions?

3. Would you like to come to church?

4. Do you want to keep reading the bible?

A classic way to go is to organise a weekly catch up over coffee. Spend a few minutes catching up, but then open up the bible together and dig in.

You could kick off with the Good Life Course, which works through Paul's letter to the Ephesians and looks at fundamental topics of the Christian life.



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