

Be Comforted By God's Love

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1-4)

It is stunning and wonderful to think that the longest book of the New Testament was written to one person, Theophilus. Does God love the world? Yes. Does God love all the nations? Yes. Does God love all the cities? Yes. Does he love individuals? Yes, he does. What a great comfort that he would go to such great lengths to actually have one book of the Bible given to one person. This indicates that God is very loving and he knows us all and doesn't deal with us as a herd but individually. The same God who loves the whole world also knows and loves you. You are loved by God.

Theophilus was possibly a non-Christian, or a new convert to Christianity. Perhaps he is wondering if everything he's heard about Jesus is really true—walking on water, casting out demons, multiplying fishes and loaves, healing the sick, resurrection from the dead. Did Jesus really say he was God? Can he really forgive sin? Is he really God become a man to reconcile us back to God?

The affluent, prominent, “most excellent Theophilus” has a lot to lose by publicly declaring himself to be a Christian. In that day, Caesar was lord. And as a Christian, Theophilus would pledge higher allegiance to Jesus the Lord. This could result in personal and financial ruin. He is likely a man wrestling with the implications of true faith, perhaps as you

are: “Do I really believe in Jesus? Do I love Jesus? Do I belong to Jesus? Am I willing to go public and tell the world I am a Christian? Am I willing to give generously to the cause of Jesus?”

What are the first five things that come to mind when you consider the practical ways God has shown his love to you?
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Mark Driscoll is a Jesus-following, mission-leading, church-serving, people-loving, Bible-preaching pastor and the author of many books, including *Spirit-Filled Jesus*, which you can order [here](#). He currently pastors *The Trinity Church* in Scottsdale, Arizona, with his family. For all of pastor Mark Driscoll’s Bible teaching, please visit or download the app. You can download a free devotional e-book from pastor Mark [here](#).

A Guide to Luke, the ‘Beloved Physician’ Who Wrote Luke and Acts

“Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you” (Col. 4:14).

Luke is mentioned three times in the New Testament, each time by his close friend Paul. Scholars have noted the amount of medical language used in Luke-Acts as an indicator that Dr. Luke was the author. Paul refers to Luke in Philemon 24 as his “fellow laborer.” Luke spent lots of time traveling and laboring side-by-side with Paul in the work of the gospel.

While many of Paul's companions deserted him as he neared the end of his life, it appears Luke remained steadfast. Paul writes to Timothy in his last known epistle, "Only Luke is with me" (2 Tim. 4:11). In light of his medical background, Luke may have also been Paul's physician tending to his various ailments and injuries in their travels together.

Paul does not include Luke in the group referenced in Colossians 4:11b: "These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are of the circumcision. They have been a comfort to me." Therefore, most commentators have concluded that Luke was probably a Gentile and not a Jew.

Throughout the book of Acts, which is also written by Luke, there are numerous "we" passages indicating that someone was traveling with Paul on his various missionary journeys (Acts 16:10–17, 20:5–15, 21:1–11, 27:1–28:16). Many Bible scholars have concluded that Luke was the traveling companion of Paul mentioned in the "we" passages, which meant he had firsthand knowledge of and access to people who were at the center of Jesus' life and movement of early Christianity. This would have provided Luke incredible opportunities to conduct his historical research.

We do not know a lot about Luke's personal life, but an early historical account outside of Scripture says, "Indeed Luke was an Antiochene Syrian, a doctor by profession, a disciple of the apostles: later however he followed Paul until his martyrdom, serving the Lord blamelessly. He never had a wife, he never fathered children, and died at the age of eighty-four, full of the Holy Spirit, in Boetia [Greece]."

Luke's name (*Lucas*) is a Greek word, indicating his non-Jewish Gentile background. Scholars have pointed out that his written language and style are distinctively Greek, displaying a high level of sophistication similar to classic Greek writers. This is due to the fact that Luke is well-educated as a medical doctor. Bible commentator I. Howard Marshall writes:

The literary style of Luke and Acts demonstrates that their author was a well-educated person with considerable gifts of expression. The traces of medical language and the interest in medical matters displayed in them are consistent with authorship by the "beloved physician." Luke's gifts as a historian have been recognized by many scholars who have viewed his work against its classical background and compared him favorably with the best of ancient historians.

It is clear from the opening of Luke's Gospel (1:1–4) that he was not personally an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus. Rather, he personally investigated the life and ministry of Jesus Christ by interviewing those who were eyewitnesses. He writes that "those things which are most surely believed among us" were delivered or handed down to us from "those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" (1:1–2).

Archaeologists and historians who have studied Luke's works have only confirmed the accuracy of his methodical research. For example, Sir William Ramsay, former professor of classical art at Oxford University, was at one time very opposed to Luke being considered an accurate historian. But after undertaking his archaeological research in Asia Minor, Professor Ramsay was convinced that he was wrong and Luke was right on the points where they had disagreed. Recanting his previous statements that Luke got some things wrong, Ramsay said:

Luke is an historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy, he is possessed of the true historical sense; he fixes his mind on the idea and plan that rules in the evolution of history, and proportions the scale of his treatment of the importance of each incident. He seizes the important and critical events and shows their true nature at greater length, while he touches lightly or omits entirely much that was valueless for his purpose. In short, this author should be placed along with the very greatest of

historians.

Luke's goal was to follow the truth wherever it led, and it led to Jesus Christ. In studying Luke, we should aim to likewise follow the truth wherever it leads.

Do you regard Luke's Gospel as a credible source for the truth about Jesus? If not, why not? {eoa}

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Who Was Theophilus?

Whereas many have undertaken to write a narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having accurately investigated all things from the very beginning, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you might know the certainty of the things which you have been told (Luke 1:1-4).

Luke's massive investigation that culminated in his Gospel was motivated by his concern for a man named Theophilus and others like him. This friend was possibly not yet a Christian, but wanted to know the truth about Jesus. So, after doing thorough

research, Luke wrote the facts about Christ (the Gospel of Luke) and early Christianity (the book of Acts) for his friend so “that you might know the certainty of the things which you have been told” (Luke 1:4).

This makes Luke the most prolific New Testament writer. Altogether, his writing accounts for more of the New Testament than any other author, including Paul and John. Luke is also the longest book in the New Testament, with 1,151 verses (586 are Jesus’ very words) whereas Matthew has 1,071 verses, Mark has 678 and John has 869.

The expenses for Luke’s travels had to have been immense. Any researcher can attest to the costs involved with a lengthy project that includes travel, housing and possibly support staff for weeks or months or more, possibly years. How did Luke pay for all of these costs? Theophilus was the man who underwrote Luke’s investigation and thereby paid for his travel, salary and expenses. He is mentioned at the beginning of both Luke and Acts, which was commonly done in that day to honor those who funded a project, much like the name of a generous donor often appears on a placard in a building in our day. Theophilus’ title “most excellent,” was used of nobility and likely indicates that he was a successful business and/or political leader. This title is also used for governors in Acts (for example, Felix and Festus in 23:26, 24:2, 26:25).

The name Theophilus means “lover of God,” an appropriate title because the book of Luke is for anyone who loves God. According to A.A. Just’s *Luke*, Ambrose, the fourth-century church father, says it this way: “So the Gospel was written to Theophilus, that is, to him whom God loves. If you love God, it was written to you.” Luke is for all who love God, and it goes out in an effort to encourage others to be lovers of God.

Are you a generous person? Is there a ministry or person you should be giving toward but you are not? {eoa}

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Why Luke Is the Indiana Jones of the New Testament

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught (Luke 1:1-4).

There is a seemingly insatiable appetite for books, movies and television shows where someone with a keen mind is on the hunt to find the truth about an important event. This explains our fascination with detectives, forensic scientists, historians, archaeologists and crime scene investigators.

Their equivalent in the Bible is Dr. Luke, who is the Indiana Jones of the New Testament. He penned the two lengthy historical books, Luke and Acts, which function as a prequel and sequel of sorts. In them, he is on the hunt to track down the facts about Christ and Christianity.

In the opening lines of Luke's Gospel, we are told that Luke is aware of other biographies about Jesus Christ, which likely includes Matthew and Mark, as they were probably written before Luke. Even so, he was compelled as a historian to have personally "investigated everything carefully" (Luke 1:3, NASB) so that there would be "an orderly account" (Luke 1:1-4, MEV). According to Bible scholar J.C. Ryle, every Christian should feel indebted to the Gospel of Luke because several wonderful passages of Scripture are only found in Luke's Gospel:

The Gospel of Luke, which we now begin, contains many precious things which are not recorded in the other three Gospels. Such, for instance, are the histories of Zachariah and Elizabeth, the angel's announcement to the Virgin Mary—and, to speak generally, the whole contents of the first two chapters. Such, again, are the narratives of the conversion of Zacchaeus and of the penitent thief—the walk to Emmaus, and the famous parables of the Pharisee and Tax-collector, the rich man and Lazarus and the Prodigal Son. These are portions of Scripture for which every well-instructed Christian feels peculiarly thankful. And for these we are indebted to the Gospel of Luke.

How did Luke undertake his epic investigation? He hit the road. We have no idea how many miles he traveled or how many months or years he investigated. But we can presume he interviewed the people Jesus met and went to places Jesus went. Luke probably sat down with Jesus' mother Mary, Jesus' brothers and sisters, people who knew Jesus as a child, any of Jesus' disciples who were living, Jesus' personal friends and those who were among the crowds who were eyewitnesses to his preaching, miracles, deliverances and resurrection, along with individuals Jesus ministered to and healed.

Are there specific and practical things you could be doing to learn more about Jesus (e.g. reading your Bible, praying,

attending church, joining a small group, reading a Christian book, listening to teaching online, etc.)? {eoa}

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Whenever You Suffer, Ask This Question to the Holy Spirit

But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak on His own authority. But He will speak whatever He hears, and He will tell you things that are to come. He will glorify Me, for He will receive from Me and will declare it to you. All that the Father has is Mine. Therefore I said that He will take what is Mine and will declare it to you (John 16:13-15).

As Christian leaders and counselors from a range of backgrounds ministered to us, the variety of what they taught us thoroughly blessed us. I believe this has ignited a new understanding on how to best help people, gleaning from all that the Holy Spirit says in the Bible without being limited to one tradition and its emphasis on one paradigm for helping people.

We came to appreciate each approach and grieve the pride and

cynicism that often divides these biblical insights into warring camps. To be truly helpful we need to be deeply Spirit-led. The Holy Spirit knows exactly how someone is suffering and what the solution is.

Every honest pastor and Christian leader reaches a point where they realize the same truths taught in the same way bring the same incomplete results. Who in your immediate world would bring a new biblical perspective to your struggles as a follower of Jesus?

There's a good chance you stand on one side of various theological, methodological, and relational divides, and the help you need is right on the other side. Ask people who aren't in your tribe for practical wisdom drawn from real ministry. Invite them to tell you their case histories of real change. Let them enthusiastically draw out their biblical emphasis and challenge yours. Why? Because every problem you face isn't a nail, and every solution doesn't require a hammer.

When you suffer, it is essential to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you why you are suffering and how you can be growing. Your suffering is so expensive that you should not waste it on sin, folly or rebellion. Instead, you would be better served to invest it by reflecting on Jesus' suffering for you so that you can become more like Him.

I admit that at times I have wished there were another way. I wish we could go online and shop for character, punch in our credit card information and have it delivered to our house along with the rest of our Amazon order. But that is not how the Christian life works. When Jesus says to pick up our cross and follow Him, He is inviting us to suffer with our Savior so that we can become like our Savior. Often our healing from suffering begins by forgiving those who hurt us. {eoa}

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Your Greatest Ministry Will Come From Your Deepest Pain

Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we also have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and so we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also boast in tribulation, knowing that tribulation produces patience, patience produces character, and character produces hope. And hope does not disappoint, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us (Rom. 5:1-5).

It has been rightly said that the greatest ministry comes from the deepest pain. Jesus' greatest ministry came from His deepest pain. The same is true of you and me. Your greatest ministry comes from your deepest pain.

Suffering not only sanctifies you to make you like Jesus, but it also sends you out into the suffering world to minister like Jesus. Your experiences, lessons learned and empathy

gained through suffering are the very things that make you a better minister. What suffering have you endured? How has it changed you, taught you and improved you? How can you use your suffering to serve others who are suffering?

After roughly two decades of teaching, I took a break for healing and learning during the most difficult season of life for my family and me. As Grace and I met with godly ministry couples, professional counselors and deeply spiritual leaders to process what we had been through, every meeting was markedly different and yet incredibly helpful. Each person asked very different questions, saw things from very different angles and provided very different biblical insights and points of view.

In each meeting, I took notes to help me remember what God was doing for us through these wonderful people. Within months, I had filled numerous notebooks. After I had met with multiple people and considered things from various perspectives, I started putting it together. I realized they *all* offered biblical, godly, wise, helpful and necessary counsel. Had we been ministered to from only one perspective, there would have been much we missed and a lot misdiagnosed.

During this time out of ministry set aside to learn and grow, I noticed various Christian leaders had a paradigm by which they saw my problems and through which they offered solutions. Each had obvious biblical moorings, and it seemed that various teams, tribes and traditions had one predominant paradigm through which they ministered to Grace and me. We found it unbelievably beneficial that instead of sitting in the “helper” seat, we were sitting in the “helped” seat. {eoa}

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7 Reasons Christians Should Lament More

But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weaknesses, for we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. We know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose (Rom. 8:25-28).

I remember a stormy season of life when I realized I'm guilty of one of Western culture's most unhelpful habits: celebrating victories publicly and mourning defeats privately. This results in very few of us knowing how to lament. We isolate ourselves when we hurt the most, whereas Bible guys, including fierce warriors like David, knew how to lament like men.

Here are some benefits of God-centered, tear-soaked, Spirit-filled, Bible-based, gut-level lamenting.

When you lament, you allow yourself to feel. Numbing yourself to the hurt means you stop feeling everything else in life.

Lamenting helps you feel life's full range of normal emotions.

When you lament, you process pain. Lamenting helps you work through your heartaches. You have to feel so you can heal.

When you lament, you grieve your involvement and shed your victim mindset. Lamenting allows you to evaluate what you have done, where you must change and how you can act differently in the future.

When you lament, you don't lash out in vengeance at others. Lamenting helps you work out with God the energy and frustration that naturally comes from pain.

When you lament, you empathize with others who are hurting. After you have lamented your pain with the Lord and experienced healing in your soul, you can invite people who have experienced similar pains to share those with you.

When you lament, you feel hope for the future. Failing to lament leaves you forever circling the drain of the past, never escaping the toxicity that surrounds. Lamenting allows you to look up from your tears to see what God might have on the horizon.

When you lament, you escape anger and depression. Some people stuck in a spiral of grief are prone to depression. Lamenting allows you to avoid depression—as well as depression masked by anger.

How did Jesus deal with His suffering? By Spirit-led lamenting. Isaiah 53:3 calls Him our suffering servant, a “man of sorrows,” and “acquainted with grief.” Emotional and tear-filled New Testament scenes let us see the Lord Jesus weep over Jerusalem, mourn the death of His dear friend Lazarus and agonize on the cross. Jesus worked through His suffering by lamenting, and He helps us do the same. {eoa}

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What We Mean When We Say Jesus Was 'Made Perfect' Through Suffering

For in subjecting all things under him, He left nothing that is not subjected to him. Yet now we do not see all things subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels to suffer death, crowned with glory and honor, so that He, by the grace of God, should experience death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all of One (Heb. 2:8-11).

We've all been to different schools where we learned different things. But every Christian attends one school in particular and learns one lesson. That school is suffering, and that lesson is how to become more perfectly like Jesus.

In Hebrews 2:10 we read this astonishing statement regarding Jesus' suffering: "For it was fitting for Him, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through suffering."

What does it mean that Jesus was made perfect through suffering? Jesus was perfect before He came to earth and suffered. But He became perfectly perfect through the experience of suffering. One Bible commentary explains it this way:

Christ always has been perfect in a moral sense. He is sinless. The word translated perfect here frequently recurs throughout this letter. It signifies the completion of a process ..."its use here means that Jesus became fully qualified as pioneer of man's salvation by undergoing experience of human sufferings, inasmuch as through suffering is the way to salvation." Although Christ was morally perfect and sinless, his life and work were brought by suffering to a form of perfection or completion which cannot have been possible without them.

There are some things you can learn by watching others experience that you cannot completely understand until you share that experience.

So it is with Jesus. From heaven He watched our suffering and knew *about* suffering. But He added the experience of His suffering. In this way His learning was perfected so that He now completely understands our suffering.

Jesus, our King, came to earth to pioneer a path for His people to march into His eternal kingdom. This plan required our King to leave His throne in glory where angels served Him and come to the earth in humility to serve us. Our humble King Jesus suffered because of our sin and died to deliver us from death.

Today, our humble King has returned to His throne. Today Jesus can thoroughly empathize with you as you suffer. He has faced what you face, He has endured what you must endure and He has defeated what is opposing you. He loves you, He helps you and He has sent the Spirit so you have the power to endure suffering as He did. {eoa}

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The Holy Spirit Will Help You

Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which means, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of those who stood there heard it and said, "This Man is calling for Elijah." Immediately one of them ran, took a sponge, filled it with wine, and put it on a stick, and gave it to Him to drink. The rest said, "Leave Him alone. Let us see if Elijah will come to save Him." And Jesus, when He had cried out again with a loud voice, released His spirit (Matt. 27:45-50).

All of the suffering Jesus experienced culminated on the cross. There, He suffered completely and totally in every category simultaneously. We do not worship a God who stands back at a safe distance viewing the horror story of human history, but rather a faithful High Priest who empathizes with us. He's been through what we go through, felt what we feel, and conquered what we face.

We spend our energy seeking to run from these things, but Jesus willingly ran to them.

Crucifixion was and is brutal. In recent times, crucifixion continues by extremist terrorist groups such as ISIS. The goal of such horror is always the same—to strike terror in the hearts of others. To crucify one person publicly is to send a chilling fear into the hearts of anyone and everyone who might agree with them or follow them. The message is clear: Do not believe what they believe, or you will endure what they endure.

All of human history had been marching to the cross of Jesus. As Jesus hung there bleeding, weeping and dying, the visible mob of humanity as well as the invisible legions of angels and demons were anxiously awaiting His response. Jesus suffered nobly, humbly and lovingly. Then He died—and needed to wait for time to vindicate Him. The same is true for you. If history does not vindicate you, eternity will.

What I'm sharing in these devotionals on suffering are things I've learned as I walked through my own valley of the shadow of death. When suffering comes, it does feel as if we are in a wilderness. You feel overwhelmed, discouraged, fearful and even hopeless. In your worst moments, the Holy Spirit cries out to you, begging you not to harden your heart toward God or rebel against God's will for your life. Our greatest need when suffering is the Spirit. He reminds us of Jesus' suffering for us and comes to help us suffer well. {eoa}

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How Jesus Broke 15 Centuries of Hebrew Tradition

And He took the cup and gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Then He took the bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me." In like manner, He took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you" (Luke 22:17-20).

By the time Jesus reaches His final week, He has already been run out of His hometown as a prophet without honor. Jesus ominously begins talking openly about His impending death. Jesus sits down with His Jewish disciples to eat the traditional Passover meal that God's people have been eating ever since their deliverance from bondage and slavery in Egypt as recorded in Exodus.

Today we call this meal the “Last Supper,” and it has been memorialized in the painting by Leonardo da Vinci. Passover is about forgiveness and deliverance. Passover memorialized the night in Egypt when in faith God’s people painted the doorposts to their home with the blood of a lamb.

The lamb had to be unblemished, showing its purity, and slaughtered as a substitute in the place of the sinner. The Israelites painted the doorposts with the blood as an act of faith, showing that the household believed they were sinners deserving death but that through the death of a substitute without spot or blemish they received forgiveness and God’s wrath passed over them. Conversely those who were not covered by the blood of the lamb saw death come to their home.

This ritual foreshadowed the coming of Jesus in John 1:29 when John the Baptizer said, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” Reflecting back, Paul would later write in 1 Corinthians 5:7, “Even Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.”

Sitting at the Passover, Jesus broke with 15 centuries of tradition. The Scriptures to be read and words to be spoken had remained virtually unchanged from generation to generation. However, everything was about to change at the cross of Jesus.

As Jesus was eating, His suffering was beginning. He has endured every category of suffering and has compassion for you. What kinds of suffering have you endured? {eoa}

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