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# PRAISE FOR *DETERMINED*

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Heather Dixon inhales and exhales Jesus! Even as she is living a storyline that is hard, she is determined to make every day of her life count for eternity. In her study *Determined*, powerful Bible teaching meets encouraging practical application, giving you the opportunity to soak and study through large chunks of Scripture as well as thoughtful personal questions that challenge and nurture new insights. If you long to follow Jesus' example of determined living, this study will encourage and equip you along the way.

—**Barb Roose**, speaker and author of *Joshua: Winning the Worry Battle* and *Winning the Worry Battle: Life Lessons from the Book of Joshua*

The abundant life isn't a distant dream but a reality for every believer who follows Jesus' example. What we should determine most is that what was true for Jesus is true for us. Thankfully, Heather specifies the footsteps we can follow.

—**Micca Campbell**, author of *An Untroubled Heart: Finding a Faith Stronger Than All Your Fear*

We live in an era where it's easier to give up and tune out than to stay the course and determine our hearts and minds to be the change this world needs. In *Determined*, Heather challenges us to leave apathy behind and dive deeper into an unwavering, joy-filled faith—a faith that mirrors the faith of our Savior, Jesus Christ. If you are ready to embrace life to the fullest while making an impact for the Kingdom, this study is for you!

—**Lauren Gaskill**, speaker and author of *Into the Deep: Diving into a Life of Courageous Faith*

This study is practical as well as insightful. Learning the aspects of a determined life such as Jesus exemplified is worth our time and attention, offering us the opportunity to realize the hope of living more like Jesus every day.

—**Gretchen Fleming**, author of *Press On: Encouragement to Keep You Moving When You Feel Overwhelmed*

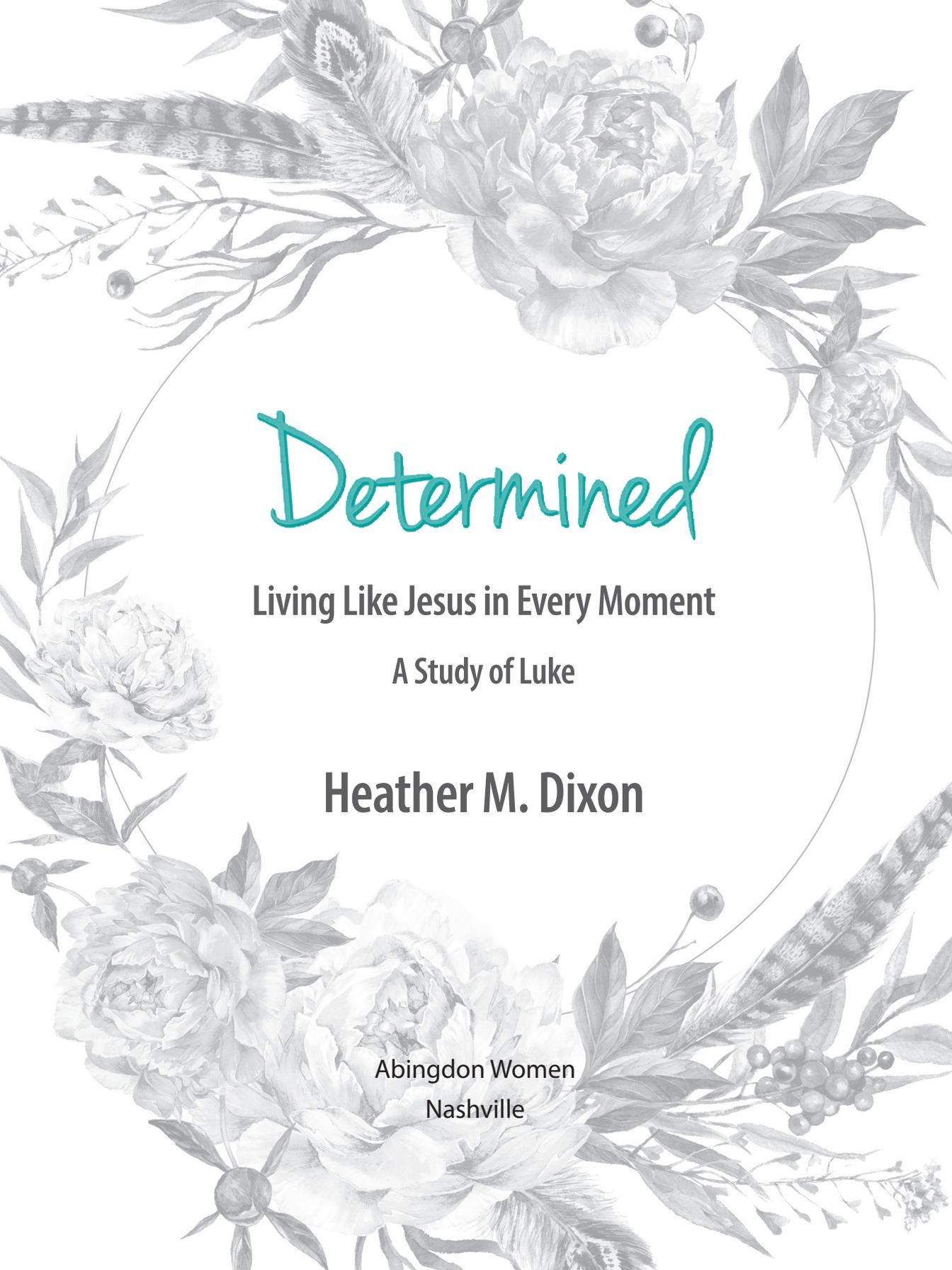
*Determined* is an edifying and sound Bible study for those of us looking to make our precious minutes with God and others count. This study of the Gospel of Luke shows us how to let go of burdens so we can live with more freedom, intention, and abundance. Heather helps us determine how to be completely committed to Jesus, inspiring us to live lives of purpose and praise just as Jesus did.

—**Tracy Steel**, speaker and author of *A Redesigned Life: Uncovering God's Purpose When Life Doesn't Go as Planned*

*Determined* will help you make a big impact in God's kingdom! Heather is a dynamite speaker and equally powerful author. Whether your life is turbulent or smooth sailing, this study of Luke will show you how to be guided by Jesus through your day-to-day journey.

—**Sarah Philpott**, author of *Loved Baby: 31 Devotions to Helping You Grieve and Cherish Your Child After Pregnancy Loss*





# Determined

Living Like Jesus in Every Moment

A Study of Luke

Heather M. Dixon

Abingdon Women  
Nashville

**Determined**  
**Living Like Jesus in Every Moment**

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## About the Author

**Heather M. Dixon** is an author, speaker, and Bible teacher who understands living with a story that is not easy. Diagnosed with an incurable and terminal genetic disorder that she inherited from her mother, she is passionate about encouraging and equipping women to trust in God, face their greatest fears, and live with hope, especially in the midst of difficult circumstances. When she is not blogging at The Rescued Letters or speaking at women's conferences and events, Heather loves to make the most of everyday moments such as cooking for her husband and son, brainstorming all the possible ways to organize Legos and superheroes, checking out way too many library books, or unashamedly indulging in her love for all things Disney. Heather is the author of *Determined: Living Like Jesus in Every Moment*, *Ready: Finding the Courage to Face the Unknown* and a regular contributor to *Journey* magazine.

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Her blog: [therescuedletters.com](http://therescuedletters.com)

(check here also for event dates and booking information)

# Introduction

For most of us, life is busy. On some days simply accomplishing the tasks set before you can seem like the hardest of feats. In the midst of all the usual busyness, there are inconveniences such as last-minute errands, family obligations, or perhaps a new puppy that won't stop chewing your furniture. Then there are the heavier things: a family member is walking through something you're not equipped to handle, you have to process the death of a loved one, your health falters under stress, or there's a sudden but all-encompassing change that throws the routines you've come to depend on into disarray. Life is full of distractions, pulling us in every way but God's way. And sometimes the most challenging thing we have to do is simply stay the course.

It's easy to wander through life without appreciating the gift of every moment we've been given. When we're driven by distraction, we overlook the rich rewards of walking hand in hand with Jesus. The result? An unsatisfying life, missed opportunities to experience the joy of being in sync with God, and days marked with apathy and anxiety instead of passion and peace. Our time on earth is measured. We should want to make *every* moment count—not only because we aren't guaranteed the next one—but also because this is exactly how our Savior spent His time here.

How, then, do we walk out unwavering and joy-filled faith every day, determined to let go of the things that keep us from experiencing abundant life and fulfilling the plans God has for us? The answers are found in following the footsteps of the One who lived fully, because He was determined that we might do the same.

As I wrote this study, Jesus gave me a master class in determined living, because I had to fight to stay focused and finish in the midst of all the distractions of life—many of them good things. I wrote in my office surrounded by books and in my kitchen with my goldendoodle biting my toes; in a hockey rink during my son's practice and in the car as my husband was driving us three hundred miles down the road; on an ironing board in a closet on vacation and on the back porch with the breeze blowing my papers away; in the carpool line, on the couch, at the coffeehouse, and in between sessions at a conference. Even now I'm writing this introduction from the parking lot of a fast-food restaurant in the middle of a fierce storm.

But through it all Jesus taught me what we are about to study together, and it begins with this: the first step to living with determination is laying *everything* at Jesus' feet. Whatever you are bringing into this study, Jesus is ready to pick it up; so let's agree to start there. Take a moment now to release the worries of your heart to Him before you read any further. We'll only be as determined as we are willing to trust our Teacher.

My prayer is that through our time together Jesus will reveal to you that the burdens you carry do not determine your capacity for contentment or your ability to make a kingdom impact for Christ. Only by learning from His example will you determine to live like Him in spite of what life throws your way. If the burdens you carry ever pose a threat to your peace, you're in the right place. We're not going to learn how to *live with* them; we're going to learn how to *live abundantly through* them.

In this six-week study of Luke, we will follow the life and ministry of Jesus as we consider the choices He made on His way to the cross. We'll intimately connect with a Savior who remained laser-focused on His mission to love the world. In return, we'll receive a model for intentional living that we can replicate to ensure we are living each day to the fullest and making a difference for God's kingdom. And together we'll determine to embrace the abundant life we are promised in Jesus.

It's time to stop wandering and start living!

## Getting Started

As we dive into the Gospel of Luke, we will be equipped for determined living, learning to emulate Jesus every day. Here's what you'll find within these pages:

- **Five days of lessons for every week of study.** If we want to hear from God, we've got to be in His Word. There isn't an easy way around this. To get the most out of this study, this is where you'll want to spend the bulk of your time. Each day's lesson will guide you through personal study of a passage from Luke as well as application of what you've learned.
- **Extra Insights.** These are additional thoughts and comments in the margin to help you dive deeper into the cultural context or theological topic for a particular passage.
- **A suggested Reading Plan for the entire Gospel of Luke.** To stay focused on our scope of determined living, we won't study every passage in the Gospel of Luke in detail. But the reading plan provides an option for a full survey of Luke's Gospel. (Watch for the notes in the margin.)
- **A Video Viewer Guide for each group session.** Although you can do this study individually and reap benefits, it is designed to be done with a group for encouragement, support, and accountability. The weekly video teaching compliments all that you have studied on your own throughout the week. You can use the Video Viewer Guide at the end of each week's lessons to follow along and jot down any additional notes from the video teaching.

I recognize that certain stages of life allow for certain levels of participation. I've had times in my own life when finding just five spare minutes for Bible study presented a challenge as well as quieter seasons of life that allowed for leisurely time in God's Word. I understand different times call for different commitments. So I have designed this study to meet you where you are. With God's guidance, only you can determine the level of participation that suits your season of life. Remember to strive for the maximum amount of time in God's Word that you can with the least amount of anxiety. And remember: what works for your Bible study sisters may not work for you. Whatever you decide, I hope you'll find that the more you study His Word, the deeper you'll connect with Jesus.

Here are the levels of participation:

- LEVEL 1:** Read the content from the weekly lessons and participate in the group sessions.
- LEVEL 2:** Read the content from the weekly lessons, answer the questions, and participate in the group sessions.
- LEVEL 3:** Read the content from the weekly lessons, answer the questions, complete the reading plan for each week, and participate in the group sessions.

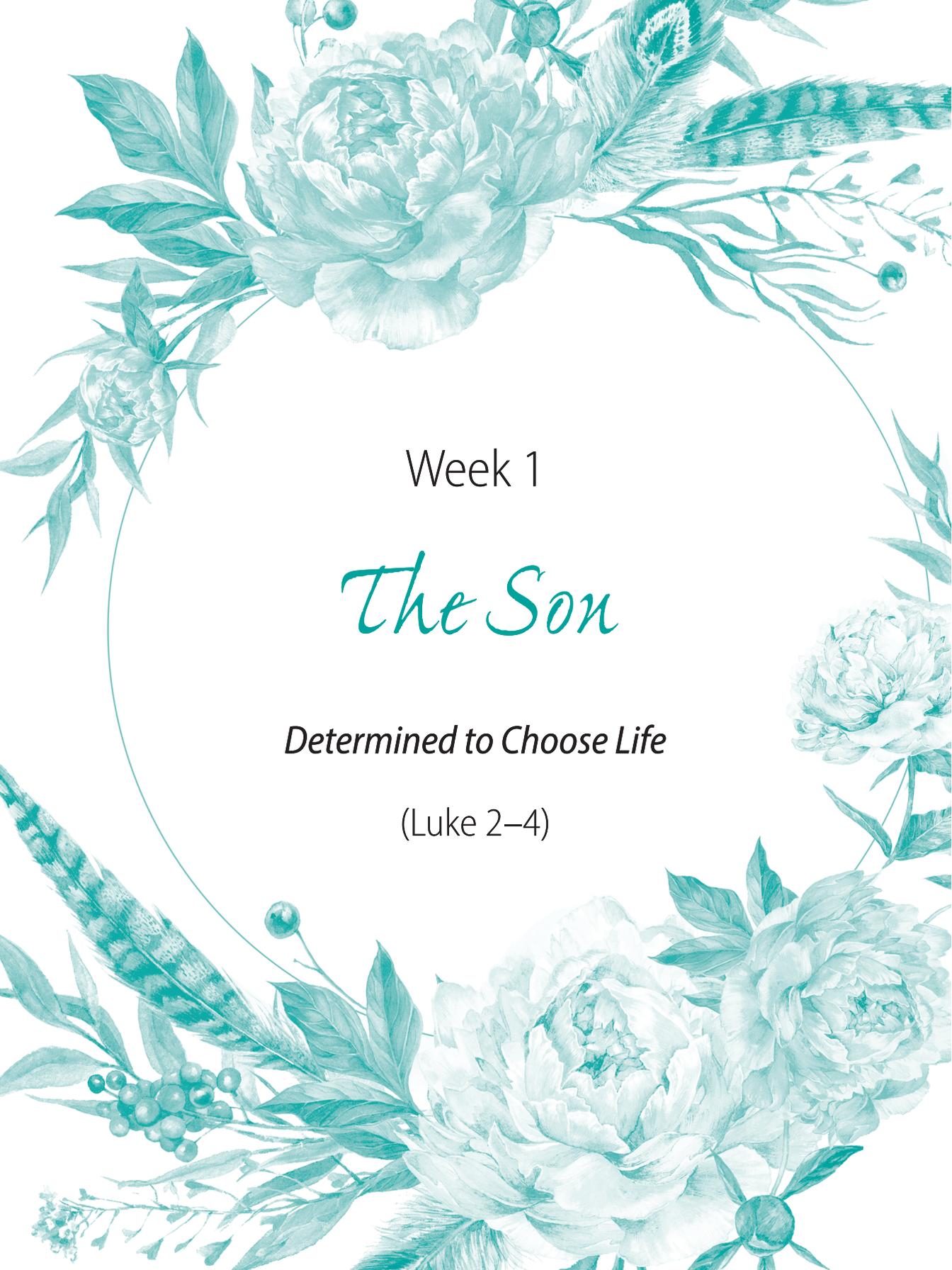
After prayerfully considering your season of life and how God is leading you in this study, which level of participation seems to be the best fit for you? Circle it below:

**1      2      3**

One final word: determined living doesn't happen overnight, and it doesn't happen without the study of God's Word and the help of the Holy Spirit. If you will be in the Word, be faithful in prayer, and be bold in asking for the Spirit to move in you, I guarantee you that He will!

*Much Love,*

*Heather*



Week 1

# *The Son*

*Determined to Choose Life*

(Luke 2–4)

**Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children.  
(Ephesians 5:1 ESV)**

I have not always been an early riser. I have clear memories of waking to the constant shrill of my alarm clock, fingers scrambling to find the button that would halt the noisy interrupter so I could continue my lazy morning dreams. Youth is blissfully ignorant of to-do lists and adult responsibilities, so I often indulged in the luxury of sleeping in when I was younger.

But family and jobs and laundry have a way of pulling us out of bed, do they not? There are people to love and work to do, and lazy morning dreams won't help us accomplish either. And so, my habit of sipping an early morning cup of coffee began out of necessity—with whipped cream, of course, and always before anyone else in the house was up.

As youth faded away, a steady routine began to form: stumble out of bed before the sunrise, press start on the miraculous coffee machine, brush teeth, pour coffee, and make my way to the back porch with my Bible in hand. I never wanted to get out of bed so early; but I knew that if I didn't, the rest of my day would feel unsettled. I needed the focus of my morning habit to set the intention for my day.

But what started as a necessity turned into a blessing. The quiet morning when no one else was awake gave way to peacefulness in my heart. The beauty of the sunrise, each one unique and never the same, was a faithful reminder of God's glory and provision. The sweet birdsongs as they greeted the new day became my own private symphony. And the memories I've collected spending one-on-one time with Jesus in those wee morning hours are some of the most precious that I know.

I don't know if you are an early riser or not. The answer doesn't matter much to the goal for our study. What does matter is our willingness to develop a habit of showing up. You and I are committing to six weeks of intimately connecting with a Savior who was determined to love us. What does He ask of us in return?

Show up.

Early morning? Lunch break? Right before bedtime? Pick the time that works for you and show up to meet Him in the pages of Luke. Some days it will feel like a necessity. Some days it will feel like a luxury. But I can guarantee you that pursuing a habit of meeting with Jesus will become one of your richest blessings.

In this inaugural week of our study, we're about to find that we are not the first to develop habits for success. Jesus is going to pave the way for us by His example, and I can't wait to dive into this first week with you. I am praying for your time in the Word, that in every moment you show up to meet with Jesus, He would nourish your heart with truth and wisdom.

## Reading Plan

Read Luke 1–4:30  
this week.

# DAY 1: WITNESS TO WORSHIP

Throughout our study we will be following in the footsteps of Jesus as we examine the choices He made on His way to the cross. Every day when we meet here together, we'll consider His words and actions—what He did and sometimes what He didn't do. Along the way, we'll apply His example for determined living so that we might emulate it and find the abundant life He has promised. For each day of our homework, we will focus our study solely on the miraculous life of Jesus. Except today.

The baby Jesus is just eight days old when we meet Him in the second chapter of Luke, and He certainly has something to teach us here. But there is someone else I'd like to introduce you to as we embark on our path toward determined living—someone we will meet in the Court of Women outside the Temple. I think you'll understand in a moment why we are starting with this woman. This week we are developing habits for success toward determined living, and today's heroine—or rather, today's witness—displays a habit that will be critical to our mission.

**Read Luke 2:21-39, and put a placeholder there for future reference.**

There are a lot of moving pieces, parts, and people in the Gospel of Luke. To help solidify them in our minds, we'll begin each day by briefly summarizing what we have just read before we dig deeper. This will get us into the habit of looking for narrative details as we read, paying attention to setting and character information as well. We'll call this section The Quick Three, and you'll see it just below the reading assignment for each day.

### The Quick Three

**What happened?**

**Where did it happen?**

**What characters are mentioned in this reading?**

Determined living. It's what we are after in these six weeks together. Here's something you probably already know: determined living won't happen by accident. It will take a focused and intentional heart to move past the things that hinder us from living like Jesus. But by the end of our study together, we'll find that determined living is easier than we might think. The first step is always

the hardest, and you've done that by opening this study. You're already on your way.

**Take a moment now to jot down a few examples from your life of things that have kept or might be keeping you from determined living. You might also want to add a description of what determined living means to you today. There isn't a right or wrong answer here. We're just opening our hearts to set the tone for our time together.**

## Setting the Scene

Now, let's set the scene for today as we see Jesus in His infancy, and then we'll settle in with what our heroine witness has to teach us. When we meet the Holy Family in this second chapter of Luke, we find them participating in two traditional Jewish ceremonies.

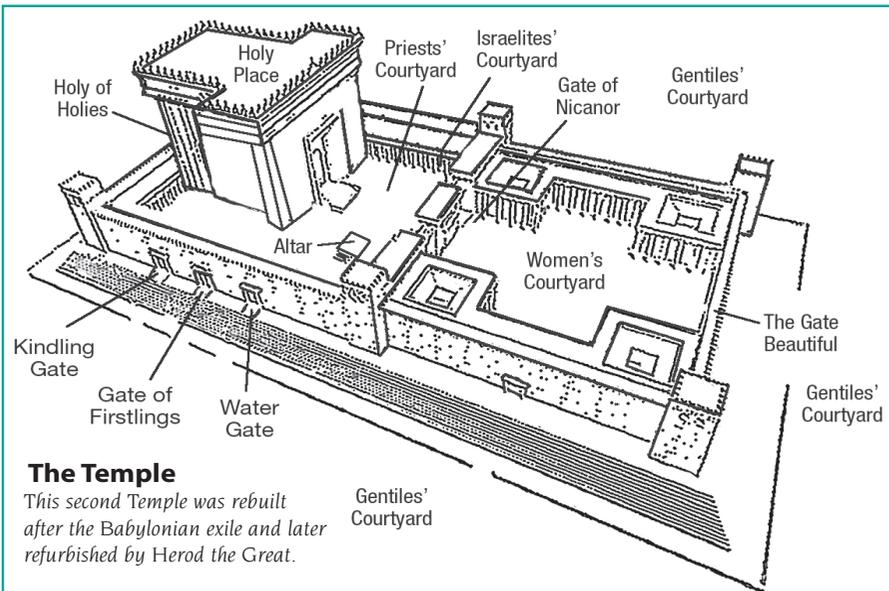
**Read Genesis 17:12. What does this verse tell us about the first of these ceremonies?**

**What additional information about the child are we told in Luke 2:21?**

After Jesus' circumcision, the family would travel to Jerusalem for the second ceremony because this ceremony had to take place in the Temple.

## Extra Insight

Just outside the four walls housing the Holy of Holies, into the open-aired Court of Israel and through the Gate of Nicanor, a curved staircase descended into what was known in first-century Jerusalem as the Court of Women. The Court of Women was not necessarily labeled as such because it was where women gathered, but rather because it marked the boundary into the Temple where women were not allowed to pass.<sup>1</sup>



*“Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The first offspring of every womb among the Israelites belongs to me, whether human or animal.”*  
(Exodus 13:2)

**Read Exodus 13:2 in the margin. What does it reveal about what is unfolding in this ceremony in the Temple?**

**These two ceremonies represented long-standing Jewish observances that were set in place centuries before Jesus was born. Why do you think it was important for Jesus’ parents to fulfill these traditional rituals after His birth?**

## Extra Insight

Mary and Joseph’s sacrifice at the Temple fulfilled the requirements of a mother’s purification after childbirth and a firstborn male’s dedication to the Lord (Leviticus 12:1-8, Exodus 13:1-13). They were likely too poor to afford the standard offering of a lamb, so they brought the two turtledoves or pigeons deemed acceptable as a substitute. All the while, they have brought the Lamb Himself, who would become the sacrificial offering for sins of the entire world! (1 Peter 1:18-19).<sup>2</sup>

The Savior of the world had finally come, yet He would still have to abide by the sacred habits established by His heavenly Father. From the start of His life on earth, Jesus set the precedent that divine rules still applied, even for the one true King. There were no exemptions. There were no hallway passes out of what God had ordained as necessary and required for His people. As Warren Wiersbe explains, Jesus would obey His Father’s wishes “perfectly.”<sup>3</sup> And so, a circumcision was in order, along with a dedication ceremony where He would be set apart for God. Then we find Jesus and His family in the Court of Women, just outside the Holy of Holies in the Temple of the Lord (see the Temple diagram).

**The scene that Mary and Joseph would have observed in the Court of Women would be similar to what is portrayed in Acts 2:46a and 3:1-2. Read this passage in the margin on page 15 and describe the activity in your own words:**

**Write the name of the gate mentioned in verse 2 here:**

It was through the Beautiful Gate that the Jewish people would enter the Court of Women. The reason? As we just read in Acts 2:46, they were coming to the Temple to worship God. A rather aptly named gate, is it not? We are our most beautiful when our faces are turned toward the heavens in praise of who God is and all that He has done for us.

It’s not easy to concisely define what worship means to me personally. So complex is the act of praising our Creator that even the original biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek employ many different words to describe it.

Read these verses that express God's vision for our worship, and put a check mark beside the ones that resonate most strongly with you today.

*Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things;  
let this be known to all the world.*

**(Isaiah 12:5)**

*Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;  
worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.*

**(Psalm 29:2)**

*<sup>6</sup>Come, let us bow down in worship,  
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;*

*<sup>7</sup>for he is our God*

*and we are the people of his pasture,  
the flock under his care.*

**(Psalm 95:6-7a)**

*Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

**(Romans 12:1)**

*<sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*

**(Colossians 3:15-17)**

Feel free to jot your favorite verse on worship in the margin if it's not listed above. Based on this selection of verses, how would you define God's vision for worship?

Do you have a habit of worship? If so, describe it here. If not, consider what a habit of worship might look like based on the verses above.

<sup>46</sup>They worshiped together at the Temple each day . . .

<sup>3</sup>Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service.

<sup>2</sup>As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in.

Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple.

(Acts 2:46a; 3:1-2 NLT)

**How have you seen the act of worship positively change your life? If you can't think of any examples, how might a consistent habit of worship impact your day-to-day attitude?**

## **And There Was a Prophetess**

Our heroine for today knew the value of worship. In fact, she determined to dedicate her life's work to praising God. It's time that we meet her. Other than Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus, there are two additional characters mentioned in our reading for today.

**Write their names here (see Luke 2:25, 36):**

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*One witness is not enough to convict anyone accused of any crime or offense they may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

*(Deuteronomy  
19:15 NIV)*

As one scholar notes, Luke often places both a male and female character in specific situations in his writings to serve as dual witnesses.<sup>4</sup> Deuteronomy 19:15 might explain the reasoning behind this: two witnesses helped validate a testimony (see margin). The voices of Simeon and Anna together help to validate the birth of the Savior in a time when not everyone would readily recognize Him.

It's Anna's voice that I want us to hear. Although Luke doesn't record her actual words, her actions are more than enough to boldly proclaim the message that is on her heart.

**Based on Luke 2:36-38, what do we know about Anna?**

**About how old was she?**

**Was she married?**

**How does Luke describe her occupation?**

I really adore the way Luke introduces Anna's story in the New American Standard Bible translation: "And there was a prophetess, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher" (Luke 2:36a). *And there was a prophetess.* Anna was

no ordinary worshiper. She was God’s spokesperson. A prophetess was simply a female prophet, one who “had a special gift of declaring and interpreting God’s message.”<sup>5</sup>

As a widowed woman in first-century Jerusalem, Anna didn’t find herself daily praising God in the Court of Women by accident. In fact, societal trends of that time reveal that she was likely a minority in her decision to abandon all that she knew and commit the rest of her life to the Lord. The Apostle Paul gives us a glimpse of what would have been expected of widows.

**Read 1 Timothy 5:3-16. Based on what verse 14 says, what would Anna have been strongly encouraged to do after her husband died?**

We don’t know what prompted Anna to make her home at the Temple after the death of her husband, but we can tell from her actions that she professed a deep devotion to her Lord.

**Turn again to Luke 2:36-38 and answer the following questions:**

**How did Anna spend her days at the Temple?**

**Did she recognize Jesus as the Savior of the world, or did she treat Him as just an adorable baby in the courtyard?**

**Why do you think she recognized His identity so easily?**

**What was her response to seeing the baby Jesus?**

We can tell from Anna’s story that she was determined to worship her King against all odds. Societal customs for widowed women could not keep her from devoting her life to God. Because worshiping God was a priority for Anna, she is an example of a believer we want to emulate. And that’s why we are beginning our journey to determined living with her: she was a witness who was determined to worship.

**Can you recall a time when the choice to worship God conflicted with what was expected of you? If so, how did you respond?**

## **Extra Insight**

There are other prophetesses mentioned in the Bible. You can find them in Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Isaiah 8:1-4; and Acts 21:9.

**A worshipful heart prepares us for what we may meet in the coming day.**

## **And There Was a Woman Determined to Worship God**

I asked you earlier how the act of worship has positively changed your life. For me, I am never more starkly aware of worship's value than when it is absent from my daily habits. A day without a few moments spent worshipping my heavenly Father guarantees that I will be reactive instead of ready to face the day. My schedule doesn't go as planned? A phone call brings bad news? A last-minute e-mail arrives that must be handled above all other tasks? My son's homework assignment requires more time when I should be cooking dinner? My husband needs a listening ear and supportive advice? Without worship, my response to all of these things will likely include a grumpy attitude because I've failed to focus my perspective on what matters most. Worship centers our hearts on God and helps us remember His plan over our expectations. A worshipful heart prepares us for what we may meet in the coming day.

I think Anna knew this. I think that's why she walked through the Beautiful Gate and never looked back. Let's do the same, sister. Imagine Luke were to write a story about our lives today; let's have it start with—"And there was a woman determined to worship God."

**Take a moment to fill in your name below as a commitment to the habit of worship:**

**And there was a woman named \_\_\_\_\_  
who was determined to worship God.**

Close your time today by jotting down ways in which you might embrace a worshipful heart. Then spend some time doing just that: ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name. We are never more beautiful than when we are praising Him. Let's start today!

**Ways I might embrace a worshipful heart:**

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## DAY 2: FINDING WISDOM IN THE WORD

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Look closely at the cover of this book. It's filled with beautiful things: flowers and feathers and berries and branches. All lovely items meant to represent the

beauty of the One we are here to learn from. What you see on the cover is not unlike how He is depicted in Isaiah 4:2:

*In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.*

If you'll trace your finger along these lovely details on the cover, you'll find that you are tracing the shape of a circle. Some might call it a wreath, or perhaps more accurately for our assignment today and beyond: a crown.

You can find the image of a crown peppered throughout the Bible. It might designate, as one source explains, "[someone] set apart...for a particular task...high priest or...king...[or simply someone in an] exalted position."<sup>1</sup> A crown might bestow a special honor upon the wearer, a blessing of character, riches, or good harvest. Often in the New Testament, the crown represented a prize to the victor, a lavish garland placed on the winner of a race.<sup>2</sup>

But sometimes the image of a crown represents a slightly different attribute, one that we will seek together today.

**Read Luke 2:41-52, and put a placeholder there for future reference.**

### The Quick Three

**What happened?**

**Where did it happen?**

**What characters are mentioned in this reading?**

### Extra Insight

According to Jewish custom, biblical manhood began at age thirteen. In today's reading, Jesus was just shy of that by one year. By the age of thirteen, He would be expected to assume adult responsibilities and to know and "follow the Law of Moses."<sup>3</sup> As Numbers 4:46-47 tells us, the traditional age of full manhood would be reached at age thirty, which is the age Jesus was when He began His earthly ministry.

### Setting the Scene

Twelve years have passed since we last saw Mary, Joseph, and Jesus in the Court of Women with Anna, the determined. The baby Jesus is now a youthful boy, having grown into adolescence in His hometown of Nazareth (Luke 2:39). Like most Jewish families of the day, Mary and Joseph are traveling again to Jerusalem for a specific purpose.

**What does Luke 2:41 tell us about why they were journeying to Jerusalem?**

The Passover, followed immediately by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, was one of three annual festivals celebrated by the Jews: the Passover and

Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. Each of these festivals required male Jews to travel to Jerusalem, commemorating significant moments of God's provision for the Israelite nation. And often their families would travel with them.

**Exodus 12:24-28 and Deuteronomy 16:1-17 explain the law prompting the Holy Family to travel to Jerusalem for these three feasts. What details do these passages give us about these annual pilgrimages? Make a few notes below:**

### **The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread**

### **The Feast of Weeks**

### **The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths**

Imagine a sixty-mile road trip that you embark upon with several hundred of your closest friends and relatives. Now imagine that you are making this road trip via donkey and wagon, with several of you traveling on foot. It would have taken three or four days for the Holy Family to reach Jerusalem in this way.

Once there they celebrate the Lord's great mercy for sparing their people in the first Passover over fourteen hundred years ago, and then they begin the arduous journey back home. But something peculiar happens along the way.

**Summarize Luke 2:43-44 below:**

How could Mary and Joseph not know Jesus was with them? Biblical scholar Warren Wiersbe offers this insight, which might help provide an explanation:

People traveled to the feasts in caravans, the women and children leading the way and setting the pace, and the men and young men following behind. Relatives and whole villages often traveled together and kept an eye on each other's children. At the age of twelve, Jesus could easily have gone from one group to another and not been missed. Joseph would think Jesus was with Mary and the other children, while Mary would suppose He was with Joseph and the men, or perhaps with one of their relatives.<sup>4</sup>

**After returning to Jerusalem—frantic, I am sure—where do Mary and Joseph find Jesus? (See Luke 2:46.)**

And so, we are back to the Temple courts once more. Not far from where Simeon and Anna held Him and rejoiced at His birth, Jesus sat with the religious teachers having deep discussions in the Temple.

**Can you remember a time when God spoke something so clearly that it was impossible to doubt His voice? Perhaps it was a verse that leaped off the pages of the Bible, an answer to a heartfelt prayer, or a gut-conviction that you needed to do something specific in order to obey God. Take a moment to describe what He told you here:**

**Fast forward a few days, months, or maybe even years. How long did you remember what God told you? Why do you think this was so?**

There is a page in my journal where I've recorded several of God's promises in Scripture. Some of the promises I have seen come to pass; some are still yet to happen. Even though I know that God is a keeper of promises, I still have to turn to it often to remind myself of its truth. I easily forget what God has guaranteed.

Why do you think we have a hard time remembering what God has told us?

We have the luxury of reading these two Temple stories recounted in Luke 2:21-39 and Luke 2:41-52 back to back. But twelve years had passed since Mary and Joseph had heard Simeon's prophecy and Anna's praise, and it seems they have forgotten the divine truth uttered in those encounters.

**How does Jesus' reply to His parents in Luke 2:49 echo the divine truth shared by Simeon and Anna?**

If only Mary and Joseph had remembered! It's easy to hold their memory-retaining ability to a higher standard, but there are more times than I'd like to admit when I have forgotten God's promises and the sound of His voice. If we want to retain what God speaks, we'll have to determine to keep returning to Him. Hold that thought while we take a closer look at Jesus' conversation with the religious leaders.

## **Extra Insight**

Glance ahead at Luke 20:1-8, 19 and consider that some of the teachers amazed at twelve-year-old Jesus might be the same ones who will want to kill Him later.

## Amazed at His Understanding

As I am writing this, my son is eleven years old. By the time you hold this study in your hands, he will be twelve, the same age as Jesus in our reading for today. The topics of discussion my son is mostly obsessed with these days are, in no particular order, monkeys, hockey, food, and bathroom visits. Ahem.

I would be quite speechless if he came home from school one day and capably discussed, as one source puts it, “the interpretation of the [Old Testament] law and its implications for both theology and ethics,”<sup>5</sup> but that’s exactly the topic of conversation Jesus is having at the Temple with the astonished Jewish teachers.

His reply to His parents gives us an important glimpse into the heart of our Savior.

**Rewrite Jesus’ reply in Luke 2:49 word for word here:**

In two rather profound sentences, Jesus’ first recorded spoken words establish two things: (1) that He was the Son of God; and (2) that He came to do His Father’s work.

**What do these two things reveal about Jesus’ priorities, even as a twelve-year-old boy?**

**Compare the words of Jesus in Luke 2:49 with His words in Luke 4:43; Luke 9:22; and John 3:14. What does Jesus’ use of the word *must* in these verses tell us about His commitment to pursuing God’s will?**

**According to Luke 2:52 (NIV), how did Jesus grow as He matured?**

**Jesus grew in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, and in \_\_\_\_\_ with God and man.**

It’s the first of these attributes, wisdom, that I want us to focus on today.

## Wisdom Is Our Father’s Business

When examining the biblical topic of wisdom, the Book of Proverbs offers relevant teaching.

In particular, Proverbs 4:1-13 details the value of wisdom and why we should seek it. Take a few minutes to read these verses and list some of the benefits of gleaning wisdom that are mentioned:

Note the specific benefit mentioned in verse 9 (NIV):

*“She will give you a garland to grace your head  
and present you with a \_\_\_\_\_.”*

Jesus understood that He was put on this earth to do His Father’s will. As we walk through this study together, we’ll witness Jesus in many necessary encounters before He reached the cross. We should not consider it an accident that the first of these recorded encounters—Jesus in the Temple at age twelve—is a conversation about Old Testament law and Scripture and its implications for godly living.

Note what the following passages tell us about the Hebrew Bible that Jesus would have been familiar with at age twelve:

Luke 24:44

2 Timothy 3:14-15

What does John 1:14 tell us about Jesus and the Word of God?

The Hebrew Scriptures were Jesus’ Bible. He knew them, studied them, valued them, and recited them. What’s more, we know from John 1:14 that Jesus was the very Word of God Himself. He understood that knowing the Word of God would be critical in fulfilling the will of God.

Sister, we are diving into the Gospel of Luke together to seek wisdom. There is a very specific path both of us must walk to bring about the plans God has set in motion. You and I have a job to do, and we’ll need to retain His Word to see it through. By prioritizing the pursuit of wisdom, we’ll take the first step toward accomplishing God’s will for our lives.

How do we grow in wisdom?

## Extra Insight

Written in Greek and produced in the third and second centuries BC, the Septuagint was “the oldest written translation of the Bible.”<sup>6</sup>

**By prioritizing the pursuit of wisdom, we’ll take the first step toward accomplishing God’s will for our lives.**

1. Choose three verses below to read carefully.
2. Circle the one that resonates most with you today.
3. Rewrite it in your own words in the space below.

Deuteronomy 11:18-23

Joshua 1:8

Psalm 1:2

Psalm 119:11

Proverbs 3:1-2

John 1:1

Ephesians 6:11-17

2 Timothy 3:16-17

James 1:22

**My paraphrase:**

Are you ready for a high-five? You've already taken the first step. The study of God's Word will shine a bright light on the next step God needs you to take. There is a direct correlation between what we know of God's Word and how well we accomplish God's will. And I'm so glad we are here doing this thing together.

Trace your fingers along the cover of this book once more. Close your eyes and imagine your heavenly Father placing a crown of wisdom upon your head today. And then spend some time in prayer, asking God to flood you with the wisdom of His Word.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.*

(James 1:5)

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## DAY 3: A PROMISE TO PRAY

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Have you ever had a particular moment when everything changed—when there would be no going back, no do-overs or second chances? There would simply be a new normal with new rules. I have had this experience a few times in my life.

If I were to compare my short list of such moments, the one thing they have in common is that they all marked the definite end of something. The end of a job, the end of a loved one's life, the end of an awareness of something that no longer holds true. And then, change. The end of something is always followed by striking change, and that change is often accompanied by chaos.

**Think back to a moment in your life when everything changed.  
Consider these questions as you describe it below: What ended?  
Did something begin in its place? What were the new rules? How did**

**you respond to the change? Was there chaos? Was God a part of your response? Was prayer?**

I imagine that some of us can look back on our seasons of change and see God's perfect timing in it all. Or maybe your season of change has brought so much disorder and confusion that you can't see the movement of God in it just yet. That's okay. We're here to find Him together.

Today we are going to step into a time in history when there was no scarcity of chaos. Everything was about to change. And as always, even though it looked like things were in an uproar, God's timing in the middle of it all was perfect. These verses summarize this time of change:

*<sup>4</sup>When the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup>to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.*  
(Galatians 4:4-5)

With this backdrop, we're ready to jump into our passage for today.

**Read Luke 3:1-23, and put a placeholder there for future reference.**

The Quick Three
<b>What happened?</b>
<b>Where did it happen?</b>
<b>What characters are mentioned in this reading?</b>

## Setting the Scene

I don't know if you noticed, but Luke throws a lot of characters at us in the first two verses of our reading. That's intentional. If you'll glance back at Luke 3:1-4 to see Luke's objective in writing this Gospel, you'll see that he wants his reader to understand the world he is describing in detail. So before we continue any further, let's try to make sense of the five rulers and two high priests Luke mentions.

**Reread Luke 3:1-2 and fill in the blank boxes in the chart.<sup>1</sup>**

Character	Job	Reign	Notes
	Emperor of the Roman Empire	AD 14–37	Succeeded Octavian Augustus Caesar
Pontius Pilate		AD 26–36	Will appear later in Luke 23 during Jesus' trial and crucifixion.
	Tetrarch* of Galilee and Perea	4 BC–AD 39	Son of Herod the Great; See Luke 1:5
Philip		4 BC–AD 34	Son of Herod the Great
	Tetrarch of Abilene	Specific dates unknown, but during the reign of Tiberius Caesar	Abilene was north of Mount Hermon
Annas		AD 6–15	Caiaphus's father-in-law; See Acts 4:6
Caiaphas		AD 18–36	Annas's son-in-law
*Tetrarch = "the governor of a region" <sup>2</sup>			

The third chapter of Luke takes us to around AD 28–29, and although the Greek Empire had conquered much of the world a few centuries prior, the Roman Empire was now in control of Palestine. Between the mingling of Greek and Roman cultures, along with a myriad of different groups of Jews, we can rightly imagine a vibrant melting pot of languages, beliefs, and priorities as leaders within these factions challenged one another for political prominence.<sup>3</sup>

There are two words that come to mind when considering each of the political leaders we've just charted together: *soap opera*. I'm not joking. Understanding their roles and responsibilities is one feat; understanding their behavior choices is another challenge altogether. As Charles Swindoll has observed, just among the seven characters named above there is murder, adultery, jealousy, insatiable greed, incest, exile, and cruelty.<sup>4</sup> He writes of this bleak time in history: "John began his ministry during a time of political fracturing in Israel. While priests and procurators vied for power, the people desperately longed for a leader."<sup>5</sup>

Sounds like chaos, right? And into this divided political climate entered John the Baptist, who was the son of Zechariah, cousin of Jesus, prophet of God, and undoubtedly a societal misfit living in the wilderness. We've considered the political climate at this time, but what about general society?

**Based on the questions the crowd asks of John and his responses in Luke 3:7-14, how would you describe the cultural climate of the day? How do you think the people of first-century Israel treated one another?**

And into this swirling cultural climate entered the Son of God.

## **The Opening of Heaven**

The first-century world was about to change, and the crowds in the wilderness that day knew it. Let's find out why.

**Take a look at Luke 3:21-22. What was Jesus doing, and what happened as He did this?**

**Read the words of the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel in Ezekiel 1:1. What happened after the heavens were opened?**

I have several notification sounds programmed into my smart phone. One sound notifies me of updates within certain apps, one signals an approaching thunderstorm, and one tells me that my phone battery is about to die. They all sound different, but the notification that sounds like a bell tells me that I have a new incoming text message. I know when I hear that particular bell that someone is trying to communicate with me.

The opening of heaven described by both Luke and the prophet Ezekiel served in a similar way as a notification. In each instance, divine communication followed. The opened heavens were God's way of saying, "Listen up! Pay attention! I am about to speak!" This moment described in Luke 3:21 was an especially unique circumstance considering that the Israelites had not received direct communication from God in about four hundred years.<sup>7</sup> *Everything was about to change.*

You'll recall that Jesus was praying as heaven was opened. Three other things happened as Jesus was praying.

**Review Luke 3:21-22 and fill in the blanks that follow:**

**Jesus prayed and . . . heaven opened.**

## **Extra Insight**

John taught a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). If Jesus was the faultless Son of God, why was His baptism necessary? Scholars have varying opinions on this, but Jesus gave his answer in Matthew 3:14-15.

## **Extra Insight**

If you compare the Gospel of Luke with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John, you'll find that Luke portrays Jesus in prayer more often than any other Gospel author.<sup>6</sup> You can also find Jesus at prayer in Luke 5:16, 6:12, 9:18, 9:28-29, 11:1, 22:41-44, 23:34, and 23:46.

## Extra Insight

Luke 3:21-22 records the appearance of the Trinity together: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

the \_\_\_\_\_ descended.

a \_\_\_\_\_ came from heaven (the voice of God Himself).

Jesus was declared as God's \_\_\_\_\_.

**Do you think it was a coincidence that these things happened as Jesus was praying? Why or why not?**

After all these remarkable things happened as Jesus prayed, something just as remarkable was about to begin.

**Luke 3:23 records the start of something that changed everything. What was it?**

## A Commitment to Prayer

As we continue through our study of Luke, we'll see Jesus at prayer regularly; but this first observance of Him in communication with His Father is not a minor one. Big things happened after Jesus prayed here. It marked the end of a silent era for the people of God and the beginning of His ministry to the entire world. Jesus' prayer paved the way for the movement of God. As I think of the Savior of the world on His knees before the start of something that changed everything, I have to ask myself if I am as committed to prayer as He was.

**Do you have a habit of prayer? Is it consistent? Sporadic? Heartfelt? Need-based? Jot a few words below to describe your current prayer life.**

If what you just described didn't include words such as *consistent*, *rewarding*, or *regular*, let me ask you this: what would it take for you to start defining prayer as *required*? Not in the sense of an expectation or obligation but in the sense of a necessity for daily life. What perspective shift do you need in order to move the habit of prayer from a rote behavior you are simply checking off the list to an absolute necessity for your potential to thrive as a follower of Jesus?

Last year my husband and I committed to daily prayer together over our son's schooling choices. We thought we might be praying over this decision for a few weeks, but God had another time line in mind. A few *months* later, as we were still praying over the decision, the rich rewards of our commitment became evident:

**A commitment to prayer increases intimacy with our heavenly Father.**

1. **Daily prayer is a constant reminder that God is in control.** Even though we are walking into the unknown, the habit of continually bringing our hearts to God soothes anxiety and worry that might threaten to creep in. Comfort is found in our daily pause to acknowledge that God's ways are higher than ours.
2. **A prayerful heart is a thankful heart.** What began as a request for answers turned into an outpouring of gratitude. As Tom and I waited for God to reveal Himself, God grew an attitude of thankfulness in us both. The language of our prayers shifted from "God we need this answer please" to "God you have blessed us so."
3. **Prayer gives birth to emotional intimacy.** Prayer connects us to the people with whom we are praying. I look forward to my prayer time with Tom because I know it will be precious time spent together. If you want to build a closer bond with someone, praying together is a wonderful way to start.

It's this last reward that echoes in my mind as I read of Jesus' prayer and the heavens opening in Luke 3. Prayer draws us close to our heavenly Father because it's how we communicate with Him. A commitment to prayer increases intimacy with our heavenly Father.

Like the divine communication following the opening of the heavens, we can know that the deepening of our relationship with God will follow the bowing of our heads in prayer. And that changes everything.

Spend some time in prayer as we close out this day, perhaps writing your thoughts in the margin as you pray. Ask Jesus to give you a heart that yearns for prayer because you yearn for Him.

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## DAY 4: AN OBLIGATION TO OBEY

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There is a purpose to my pain. I often whisper this to myself in seasons of hardship, whether I believe it in the moment or not. When we're in the middle of such a moment, in a place that feels like either a test or a temptation, it's difficult to imagine that anything good might follow. Our eyes can only see what's right in front of us, and maintaining the awareness that there is value in hardship requires patience and a perspective we don't readily choose. We are human, after all.

But again and again, God's Word reminds us that the pain we experience today can be used to prepare us for our godly designed purpose. So the question remains: How do we bridge the gap between what we see and what lies ahead—between the pain of today and the hope found in tomorrow? The moments

between these two are where our faith is built; and if we want to please God, we'll have to hold them with reverent hands.

We'll find the way to do that today by looking to the One who was both fully divine and fully human. He understands our pain and knows that the path to finding our purpose is marked with obedience.

*I will hasten and not delay  
to obey your commands.  
(Psalm 119:60)*

**Read Luke 4:1-13, and put a placeholder there for future reference.**

The Quick Three
<b>What happened?</b>
<b>Where did it happen?</b>
<b>What characters are mentioned in this reading?</b>

## Setting the Scene

As you'll recall from Luke 3:23, which we read yesterday, Jesus was about to launch His ministry. Think for a moment about the launch of a new business, a new product, a new church, or a new campaign. If you were managing such a launch, you would want the public to know. There would be announcements. Advertisements. Brochures to send to interested individuals. Parties, even. As we consider that this is the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, we might assume this would be the perfect time for Him to go public. Instead we find Him going into the wilderness.

**What does Luke 4:1-2 tell us about His experience in the wilderness?**

**Carefully consider Hebrews 2:14-18. Based on what this tells us, why might the Spirit have led Jesus into this encounter?**

There is a purpose to Jesus' pain in the wilderness. Here God is preparing Him to come to our aid when we need it the most. Not unlike those who undergo

first aid training to assist someone in medical crisis, Jesus undergoes humanity training in the wilderness to assist us in a spiritual crisis. His experience here enables Him to understand our plight and proclaims that He is worthy to redeem it:

*We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.*

(Hebrews 4:15)

But there is more to this scene that is unfolding. As we see Jesus fasting, hungry, and alone, Luke sets forth the entire premise of Jesus' ministry. Charles Swindoll writes that our passage for today "sets the tone for the rest of Luke's Gospel, which is essentially an account of the war between the Son of God and Satan."<sup>1</sup> There is a battle waging between good and evil, and Jesus has come to end it.

## **The Three P's of the Wilderness**

Luke tells us in verse 13 of chapter 4 that the devil tempted Jesus in every possible way, but he describes three of them in detail. Let's consider them together.

### ***The first temptation***

**How is Jesus tempted in Luke 4:3-4?**

**Circle the phrase that describes this temptation:**

**To doubt God's provision**

**To desire God's power**

**To embrace selfish pride**

The devil knows that Jesus is hungry, and he tempts Jesus to doubt that God will provide for His physical needs.

**Can you think of a moment of hardship when you were afraid your needs would not be met? How did you react or communicate with God in that moment?**

## Extra Insight

The word choices and narrative details in Luke's telling of Jesus' encounter with the devil in the wilderness echo the Israelites' experience in the wilderness, as told in the book of Exodus.<sup>2</sup>

How did Jesus respond to the devil?

### ***The second temptation***

How is Jesus tempted in Luke 4:5-8?

Circle the phrase that describes this temptation:

To doubt God's provision

To desire God's power

To embrace selfish pride

The devil is the prince of the world (John 12:31), and he tempts Jesus with the lie that what the world offers is greater than what God offers.

Can you think of a moment of hardship when you were tempted to put something worldly before God? How did you react or communicate with God in that moment?

How did Jesus respond to the devil?

### ***The third temptation***

How is Jesus tempted in Luke 4:9-12?

Circle the phrase that describes this temptation:

To doubt God's provision

To desire God's power

To embrace selfish pride

The devil recognizes Jesus as the Son of God, fully divine and capable of saving Himself, and he tempts Jesus with the prideful lie that He doesn't need God.

**Can you think of a moment of hardship when you were tempted to believe that you could do it all on your own? How did you react or communicate with God in that moment?**

**How did Jesus respond to the devil?**

In each of these temptations, Jesus responds with wisdom from Scripture, saying “It is written . . .”

**If you were to tell how Jesus responded to the devil in all of these temptations with a summary of just a few words, what would you say?**

I like to think on the following words when referring to the example Jesus sets for us here: *Jesus obeyed His Father*. In the throes of hunger, Jesus obeyed. When enticed with worldly power, Jesus obeyed. When seduced to engage his ego, Jesus obeyed. When we are in a place of hardship that feels like either a test or a temptation, we can remember that Jesus has shown us the way out. The way to bridge the gap between what we see and what lies ahead is found in the simple act of obeying our heavenly Father.

## **Daughters of the Creator**

Consider for a moment the thought patterns running through your head during seasons of hardship. Not the ones you tell your best friend. The ones you keep to yourself. The thoughts you’re afraid to say out loud. The patterns you might not even be able to articulate clearly.

Do any of them resemble the following statements?

- God won’t take care of my needs.
- This thing that the world offers is better than what God offers.
- I can do this on my own. I don’t need Jesus to save me.

**If so, take a moment to confess these thoughts to the Lord. Write a brief prayer in the margin, if you want:**

I’ve experienced each of these thought patterns during my faith journey. When I was finally able to apply some hindsight to the fallacy of these lies, what hurt the most wasn’t that I had believed them. It was that I had let them separate me from God.

Look closer at the enemy’s end goal. While it may seem that the devil’s sole aim is to entice Jesus into disobeying God’s written commands, what he is

## **Extra Insight**

The devil subtly misquotes Scripture in Luke 4:10. Compare this verse with Psalm 91:11 to see what he left out.

## Extra Insight

All three of Jesus' responses to the devil are taken from Deuteronomy 6–8, where Moses reminded the nation of Israel what they had learned by wandering through the wilderness.

really after is to alter Jesus' perfect relationship with His heavenly Father. And Jesus will have no part in it because the Father and the Son are not meant to be separated. Instead, He shows us that the way to preserve our relationship with God is to obey His will for our lives. This isn't about works over faith. This is about doing what God tells us to do because He loves us as His children and we are meant to be in relationship with Him.

Twice the devil refers to Jesus as the Son of God, not only acknowledging Jesus' divinity but also showing that He is beloved family to God Himself. Only Jesus can emerge from temptation unscathed and still holy. Biblical commentator R. T. France suggests that this is Luke's primary purpose in sharing this encounter: to prove that Jesus is the holy and righteous Son of God.<sup>3</sup>

Our faith walk will require consistent requests for forgiveness, even as we are made more and more like Jesus. We will not be perfected until we see Him face to face. But, sister, we are part of that same family. In Romans 8 we read, "If we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory" (v. 17). We are the daughters of the Creator of the universe. Our response to both tests and temptations should be just like that of Jesus. We overcome the enemy's attempts to separate us from God when we determine to obey God's will.

Just as this experience helped to prepare Jesus for His earthly ministry, so seasons of hardship can prepare us to move forward in God's will for our lives.

How do we determine to obey?

1. Remember that just as the devil pursued Jesus when he was hungry and alone, we can expect to be tempted when we are weak and isolated.
2. Be ready to respond with truth from the Word. We cannot be obedient to what we do not know.
3. Don't give up. Keep applying God's truth to our hard places, being determined to obey God over and over again.

Let's close by penning a prayer to Jesus. I'll get us started and you can continue it with your own words as you are led. If you are walking through a season of hardship right now, write it in the blank below and allow God's grace to wash over you as you pray these words:

**Jesus, I know You understand what it feels like to be led into the wilderness. I know You understand what it feels like to be tempted in every way. Thank You for walking through these moments of hardship so that You can guide me through mine. There can be purpose in my \_\_\_\_\_, because You can use it prepare me for what is to come. Help me trust in You as I walk through this season.**

**We overcome the enemy's attempts to separate us from God when we determine to obey God's will.**

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# DAY 5: DETERMINED PATTERNS OF FAITH

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In 1517, a local professor of biblical studies walked up to the Wittenberg church in Germany and hung a document on its door. His name? Martin Luther. His document, known as the “Ninety-Five Theses,” would be translated into German and published for the general public, where it would become the foundation of one of the largest revolutions known to church history. We know it as the Protestant Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

The humble document posted to the Wittenberg church door was Luther’s manifesto, a public declaration proclaiming why he believed what he believed and what he was going to do about it.

It wasn’t the first time a religious leader publicly declared his mission to the world.

In an ordinary Nazarene synagogue, surrounded by those who had watched Him grow in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and men, our Savior did the same.

**Read Luke 4:14-30, and put a placeholder there for future reference.**

## The Quick Three

**What happened?**

**Where did it happen?**

**What characters are mentioned in this reading?**

## Setting the Scene

When we read of Jesus returning to Galilee, His ministry has already begun. His early actions are recorded in John 1:19–4:45, but Luke wants his readers to begin here, in Jesus’ hometown of Nazareth. Like any faithful Jewish worshiper of the day, Jesus attends regular services at the synagogue on the Sabbath.

One source explains that a typical first-century synagogue service would have looked like this:

1. Invocation for God’s blessing
2. Recitation of the traditional Hebrew confession of faith, found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and Deuteronomy 11:13-21

3. Prayer
4. Readings from the Law and from the Prophets
5. Brief sermon
6. Closing benediction, if a priest was present. If not, a layman would pray and dismiss the meeting.<sup>2</sup>

Recall from Day 3 of our study this week that Jesus is beginning His ministry during a time of political turmoil for Israel. Like Anna and Simeon, whom we met earlier in the Jerusalem Temple, some Jewish listeners still hear the Minor Prophets of the Old Testament echoing in their minds and are eagerly anticipating the coming Messiah. One source notes that others are hungry for a charismatic leader who might overthrow the Roman empire.<sup>3</sup>

Another commentator notes that many in Nazareth would remember the destruction of the nearby city of Sepphoris by the Roman army in response to a Jewish rebel uprising. Tensions were high. Messianic announcements and anything pertaining to the plight of the Jewish nation were not received with indifference.<sup>4</sup>

And so enters the Messiah Himself as the designated speaker for the synagogue service on this particular day.

## The Messianic Manifesto

**According to Luke 4:17, what scroll of the Hebrew Scriptures was handed to Jesus?**

We don't know whether this particular passage was chosen because it was from a predetermined schedule of Scripture readings in the synagogue for that day or because Jesus selected it Himself.<sup>5</sup> But Jesus reads the words recorded in Isaiah 61:1-2, which were spoken about the coming Messiah. The Messiah had indeed come, and He wanted to make clear His purpose. We can never accuse Jesus of being ambivalent or unintentional. In fact, from the onset of His ministry, Jesus is quite determined about His mission.

What was His specific mission? Let's explore it together.

**Read Luke 4:18-19 (NIV if possible), and fill in the blanks to indicate what five things the Spirit of the Lord anointed Jesus to do:**

To proclaim \_\_\_\_\_ to the poor

To proclaim \_\_\_\_\_ for the prisoners

To proclaim \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ for the blind

To set the \_\_\_\_\_ free

To proclaim the year of the \_\_\_\_\_

These two verses hold Jesus' manifesto. Everything that He would accomplish in His earthly ministry would be done with these five things in mind. He was determined to fulfill His purpose from the start, and let's not gloss over the fact that even then He had His mind set on *you*.

**Of the five intentions Jesus mentioned, which one resonates most with you today? Why?**

**Describe the initial response of Jesus' hometown listeners in Luke 4:22.**

**Now describe their later response in Luke 4:28.**

**What caused the reversal in their response? The clues are found in the stories Jesus tells in Luke 4:25-27, which are recorded in full in 1 Kings 17:7-24 and 2 Kings 5:1-14. Read the Scriptures and complete the chart below.**

	1 Kings 17:7-24	2 Kings 5:1-14
What prophet is mentioned in this passage?		
Who does he minister to?		
How was the favor of the Lord given?		
From where is the person who received the Lord's favor?	(Luke 4:26)	(Luke 4:27)

### Extra Insight

Luke 4:23 makes mention of acts that Jesus had already done in Capernaum. These "events recorded in John 1:19–4:45 took place at this time, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke did not record them."<sup>6</sup>

Of all the stories from the past that Jesus could tell that day, He chose these two for a reason. As one source notes, "Both Sidon and Syria were traditional enemies of Israel."<sup>7</sup> This means that both Zarephath and Naaman were Gentiles. As He preached to the crowd of hometown listeners, Jesus was not painting a picture of God's privileged favor upon the nation of Israel. Jesus' mission was radical: He had come to save the entire world. Both Jews and Gentiles were invited to be part of the kingdom of God, but this was not what the people of

## Extra Insight

A Gentile was any person not in the Jewish nation or faith. As one writer notes, "The Messiah didn't come to rescue only one particular race; He came to save those who wanted a Savior. His domain is the whole world, and His subjects are all those who call Him King."<sup>9</sup>

Nazareth wanted to hear. One commentary notes that Jesus' listeners expected to be saved because of their ancestry, not their faith, and they preferred exclusivity over the acceptance of Gentiles.<sup>8</sup>

### How do the synagogue listeners act upon their anger in Luke 4:29?

Scripture doesn't tell us how Jesus evaded His first murder attempt. Luke just tells us that He moves on, determined to fulfill the mission He so clearly articulated to the crowd that now wants to kill him.

### Read Luke 4:30 and describe how Jesus might have been feeling.

## Habits for Success

*Jesus, I don't want to waste my time on earth. Teach me to choose determined living so that I can make a difference for your Kingdom with the days that remain.*

This was my prayer after receiving a diagnosis of Vascular Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome. Living with a condition that threatens the spontaneous rupture of blood vessels, arteries, and organs has taught me that life is precious. Every choice matters. A yes to one thing now means a no to something else later. And none of our yeses will make any difference at all if they are not grounded in God's will for our life.

What we are studying together is the central truth God taught me about determined living: Jesus did it first. His is the only example we need to follow. One of the questions I asked of God as I considered the choices that Jesus made on His way to the cross was this: Is there a sustainable template for daily living that would produce the maximum impact for His kingdom?

In these first few chapters of Luke, I think we've found it.

### Glance back at your homework from this week and summarize in your own words what we've learned so far:

**Day 1:** Anna was determined to worship.

**Day 2:** We can find the wisdom of Jesus in God's Word.

**Day 3:** A commitment to prayer increases intimacy with our heavenly Father.

**Day 4:** Jesus thwarts the enemy's attempts to separate Him from God by obeying God's will.

**Worship. Word. Pray. Obey.** These are our habits for success. This is our sustainable template for daily, determined living. If we want to live like Jesus, we will seek to engage in these actions every day.

We have seen Jesus display His manifesto in today's reading. But what about ours?

**If you know your God-given purpose in life, describe it here:**

A year ago, I would have responded to that question by telling you that God has called me to women's ministry as a Bible study writer and teacher. But I am telling you today that my response isn't exactly accurate. What God has called me to is this: to glorify His name by spending time with Him, reading His Word, talking to Him in prayer, and worshiping His faithfulness. And out of the overflow of that obedience comes the fulfillment of God's will for my life. The details may vary from season to season, but the ultimate goal of glorifying God remains. The same is true for you.

**Read these verses and describe in your own words what each says or implies about our God-given purpose:**

**Proverbs 16:9**

**Isaiah 43:7**

**Ephesians 2:10**

**We will fulfill our purpose on earth when we routinely display patterns of determined faithfulness.**

God isn't looking for perfect people who know how to do everything right. He's looking for people who are willing to choose habits of faithfulness. He will direct the outpouring of our time spent with Him to spill over where it needs to.

This is our manifesto as emulators of Jesus: Worship. Word. Pray. Obey. We will fulfill our purpose on earth when we routinely display these patterns of determined faithfulness.

**Let's close out this week by acknowledging the ways in which we already do this and noting areas where we can deepen our determination. In every day, how do you or how can you:**

**Worship God?**

**Study His Word?**

**Pray to Him?**

**Obey what He says?**

Sister, I am so proud of you! More important, so is your heavenly Father. You are displaying patterns of faithfulness right now and are well on your way to determined living. Next week Jesus has much to teach us about God's kingdom. Until then, let's live like Jesus in every day: worship, word, pray, and obey.

# VIDEO VIEWER GUIDE: WEEK 1

*Luke* 1:67-79

*Luke* 2:14

Because Jesus was determined to choose life for us, we can \_\_\_\_\_ with Him even when we are walking through darkness.

*John* 10:10

The path of peace is not found by \_\_\_\_\_.

We are changed by the \_\_\_\_\_ we make and only Jesus can help us make the right ones.

*Luke* 1:37

