

Adult Teaching Resources

January 24, 2016



A Good Way to Begin — Psalm 147:12-20

Jesus: The Curtain Rises

Of Water and Fire — Luke 3:15-22 (RCL 3:15-17, 21-22)

Of Water and Wine — John 2:1-11

An Old Scroll and a New Mission — Luke 4:14-21

A New Prophet and an Old Response — Luke 4:21-30

www.baptiststoday.org

Subscribe to *Baptists Today* to access the core Bible content for this lesson.

www.nurturingfaith.net

Find links and videos related to this lesson.

An Old Scroll and a New Mission

Luke 4:14-21

FIT Teaching Guide

by Rick Jordan

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Before the Lesson: : Print the handout to be used for the Transformational Exercise.

Fellowship Question

Use *one* of the following to break the ice, to begin discussion, and lead into the study:

If you were to write an autobiography, what would be the chapter title for your youngest adulthood years?

Think of the time in your life when you were the poorest. What was the hardest thing about that time?

Information

In the four Gospels, we have nothing of Jesus' life from age 12 to 30. These are sometimes called "the missing years." We can make some assumptions from reading between the lines of some texts. For example, we know from the sacrifice offering that Joseph and Mary presented at Jesus' infant dedication that it was the offering that poor people were allowed to give, so he was raised (at least at the beginning of his life) in a poor family. Joseph was a carpenter, so we assume he taught Jesus this trade. We read of Jesus' brothers and sisters, so we assume he lived as the oldest brother in a relatively large family. We do not read of Joseph after Jesus is 12, so we assume that Joseph died sometime before Jesus began his public ministry. If this is true, the widow Mary had few financial resources to raise all of these children, so they were almost certainly raised in poverty.

How do you imagine Jesus' experience in poverty affected his perspective on life?

Spiritually speaking, we can make some assumptions, also. We must assume that Jesus, as fully human, learned about God from his family and his society. Children of this culture were taught to read and write by using the Hebrew books of the Bible as their text. Jesus was raised by parents who had had unique spiritual experiences that included visits from angels. Mary, Jesus' mother, sang a psalm in her sixth month of pregnancy.

Let's hear a bit of Mary's song.

[Have a class member read Luke 1:50-53.]

How do you think being raised by a mother who created this psalm affected his perspective on life?

Information *continued*

Another thing we learn about the spiritual life of Jesus is that the Spirit of God was with him. Let's listen to these scriptures, paying attention to what they say about God's spirit.

[Have class members read Luke 3:15-16; Luke 3:21-22; Luke 4:1-2a; Luke 4:14-15.]

Here are four testimonies that the Spirit of God and Jesus have a unique relationship. John preaches that Jesus will baptize with the Spirit. When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends on him visibly, in the form of a dove. Immediately following that, the Spirit drives him into the wilderness where he will be tempted by the devil. And then, Jesus begins preaching/teaching in the synagogues, "filled with the power of the Spirit."

Jesus knew he had a special relationship with the Spirit of God, and other people seemed to sense it as well.

One New Testament scholar says, "The most crucial fact about Jesus was that he was a 'spirit person,' a 'mediator of the sacred,' one of those persons in human history to whom the Spirit was an experiential reality." (Marcus J. Borg. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith*. HarperSanFrancisco. 1994. p. 31f)

Borg emphasizes Jesus' role as a 'spirit person' above Jesus' other roles such as a teacher of wisdom, a social prophet, and a movement founder.

He says, "[Spirit people] share a compelling sense of having experienced something 'real.' They feel strongly that they now know something they didn't know before. Their experiences are noetic, involving not simply a *feeling* of ecstasy, but a *knowing*. What such persons know is *the sacred*. Spirit persons are people who experience the sacred frequently and vividly. ...they become funnels or conduits for the power or wisdom of God to enter into this world. (Ibid. 33)

There are people who are very close to the Spirit. Their experiences with the Spirit of God give them different perspectives from those of us who are fixated on family or career or church, even. Who have you known that you would consider a "spirit person"?

Jesus, the spirit person, has spoken to gatherings around his hometown of Nazareth. Then, there came the day he had the opportunity to speak to his own in his own hometown.

How you imagine the townspeople felt as they anticipated hearing Jesus teach them? (some may have been proud, some skeptical, etc.)

[Have a class member read Luke 4:16-20.]

Apparently, Jesus was given the opportunity to read from wherever he chose from Isaiah's scroll. The passage that is quoted in Luke actually comes from a couple of chapters in Isaiah. We will talk further about the scripture Jesus chose, but notice the first words of the passage: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me." Jesus is reading, but he is also testifying. We could imagine him not even looking at the text as he spoke these words, but looking directly into his listeners' eyes.

Information *continued*

Everyone had heard this text before, but no one has heard Jesus' take on it. They are anxious to hear how he will interpret this passage. They are "eyeing" him.

I have received that look. As a hospital chaplain, I was sometimes asked to accompany physicians as they gave bad news to a family about their loved one. As we entered the room, all conversation ceased, all eyes turned toward us. Our faces were scanned for any hints of hope. The doctor spoke, "As you know, this was a very serious situation." She described the accident or the injury or the aneurism or whatever the "serious situation" was. Everyone sits on the edge of their seat. All are studying every motion, every blink, and every tone of the doctor's voice. Is this good news or bad news? Will their loved one live or have they gone? Maybe Jesus' audience had similar questions about their people as they awaited his "report."

[Have a class member read Luke 4:21.]

That's a fairly short sermon. Of course, it may be that Luke is only recording the gist of what Jesus said. Still, the impression Luke gives is that *what* Jesus said was more important than *how much* he said.

Listen again to the passage Jesus read to them. This is what Jesus said was now being fulfilled.

[Have a class member read Luke 4:18-19.]

Jesus is making a huge claim. The Spirit of God is on *him*. The Spirit of God is going to be working through *him*. Why do you think Jesus' hometown congregation might have been skeptical?

We are not told if any "outsiders" got to hear Jesus' sermon. The poor, the blind, and the prisoners were probably not seated among the comfortable, the whole, and the free. But Jesus had a heart for the excluded. How do you think they would have felt when they heard of Jesus' sermon?

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. always had two books in his briefcase. The Bible, of course. And, a book by Howard Thurman titled, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Here is a passage from that book:

"The basic fact is that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became, through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing it was this in the mind and life of Jesus. 'In him was life; and it was the light of men.' Whenever his spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them." (Howard Thurman. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. Boston: Beacon Press. 1976. p. 29.)

How have the powerful and the dominant used Christianity as "an instrument of

Information *continued*

oppression” rather than a “technique of survival for the oppressed”?

What are some examples of Christians behaving in such a way that “the oppressed gather fresh courage”?

Jesus reads from Isaiah 61. Let’s listen carefully to that passage again, because something is left out.

[Have a class member read Isaiah 61:1-2.]

Why do you think Jesus left out the part about vengeance?

Vengeance may have been the part of this passage the typical Jew heard when this passage was read. They wanted Rome out. They wanted enemies punished. The “day of the Lord” was to be a “day of vengeance.” But Jesus left that part out. As we will read next week, that did not sit well with the congregation.

Transformational Exercise

[Read this passage:]

“The spiritual life and the world of the everyday are not split apart in the message and activity of Jesus, as they sometimes have been in the history of the church and the live of Christians. Rather, for Jesus, the relationship with the Spirit led to compassion in the world of the everyday...For Jesus...life in the Spirit begins a deepening process of internal transformation whose central quality is compassion. Indeed, growth in compassion is the sign of growth in the Spirit.” (Borg. 61.)

If “growth in compassion is a sign of growth in the Spirit,” how does our church nurture compassion?

[Distribute the handout.]

We cannot measure compassion in pounds or yards or cups. But maybe we can do some self-inventory on our personal growth of compassion and our tangible acts of compassion.

On your paper, let the bottom of the page symbolize zero compassion. It represents apathy. The top of the page represents the deepest act of compassion, martyrdom. As you read these categories, put a dot on your page to represent your level of compassion, today, for this type of person. There is also a place for “other,” so you may put in a category that is not listed — a group of persons for whom you have compassion.

1. The poor.
2. Poor children.
3. The poor who abuse the system.
4. The blind.

Transformational Exercise *continued*

5. The spiritually blind.
6. The prisoner of war.
7. The innocent prisoner.
8. The guilty prisoner.
9. The illiterate.
10. The homeless.
11. The 1% - the wealthiest.
12. Other.

Now, put an “x” to mark your level of compassion for this type of person five years ago.

[After time to mark the graphs, ask,]

What did you learn from this exercise?

Are you more compassionate than when you first chose to be a disciple of Jesus? Why or why not?

[Close in a prayer something like this: *Caring God, you have compassion for us all. Help us to be more like you. Grow your spirit of compassion within us. Amen.*]

Comments or Questions for Rick Jordan? You may send comments to the lesson plan author at rjordan@cbfnc.org. Rick is also available to lead workshops and conferences on Christian Education, with particular emphasis on how best to use the FIT Faith model.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

The text — Luke 4:14-30 should be read together as a single pericope, but the Revised Common Lectionary, for reasons that are not evident, has split it into two readings over consecutive weeks (vv. 14-21, 22-30). This divides the text at the point of its greatest drama. Wanting to stay with the gospel texts for a while, we will follow that scenario. It’s really a two-part lesson, but there is plenty to think about in each part.

The Spirit — Old Testament narrators described persons who demonstrated the power and presence of God as being filled with (or overcome by) the power of God’s Spirit, especially when they adopt new or unexpected behaviors. This was said of Othniel (Judg. 3:10), Gideon (Judg. 6:34), Jephthah (Judg. 11:29), Samson (13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14), Saul (1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6), and David (1 Sam. 16:13), among others. Often, the Spirit of God empowered persons to save Israel from an enemy through military action (all of the references in Judges point to this, as does 1 Sam. 11:6). At other times, the Spirit of God was seen in the wisdom or leadership demonstrated by one’s daily actions. Such was the case with Joshua (Deut. 34:9), and with David (1 Sam. 16:13). People could also be granted the gift of prophecy when the Spirit of God spoke through them (2 Chr. 15:1; 24:20; Mic. 3:8).

Synagogues — Early synagogues were typically rectangular in shape, with benches around at least three edges where men would sit and a raised platform for the speaker. It is likely that Jesus may have taught at this recently discovered first century synagogue at Migdal (Magdala), near Capernaum. It included two rows of benches surrounding a rectangular room, and a special carved table that probably served as a place for the Torah to be placed.



Digging Deeper *continued*

Jesus' calling, and ours — In today's text, Jesus said he had been called to a ministry of bringing good news, releasing captives, giving sight to the blind, and helping the oppressed find freedom. In Matt. 26:31-46, Jesus says that the judgment will be based on our willingness to carry out the same kind of ministries to those who are dispossessed and powerless to care for themselves. If that is the case, how confident do you feel about facing the judgment? What are some specific ways we can join Jesus in his ministry to those who are oppressed?

Isaiah — The book of Isaiah may have been written by as many as three prophets, and over a considerable period of time. Scholars conjecture that Isaiah of Jerusalem (probably responsible for most of Isa 1-39) exercised such influence that his disciples wanted to continue his work. So, they continued to add to his scroll during and after the exile, continuing to write in Isaiah's name. The text quoted here probably belongs to the post-exilic period (4th - 5th century BCE).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Why is Jesus' quotation of Isaiah so different from the Hebrew?

Readers who don't pay careful attention may not realize that Luke's account of Jesus reading the Isaiah scroll does not follow the Hebrew text that Jesus would have read, but the Greek Septuagint (LXX) translation with which Luke would have been more familiar.

This actually occurs quite often: New Testament writers who quote the Old Testament use the LXX version more often than not, and even then tend to cite it very loosely.

The NRSV translation of Luke 4:18-19 reads like this:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Isaiah 61:1-2a, from the same translation, reads as follows:

*"The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,
because the LORD has anointed me;
he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,
to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor ..."*

A comparison shows that the quotation in Luke omits "to bind up the brokenhearted" while adding "and recovery of sight to the blind," both in keeping with the LXX translation. While the Hebrew text has "and release to the prisoners," Luke has "to let the oppressed go free," from a similar text in Isa. 58:6.

Differences such as this are a reminder that there was no scribe taking dictation during Jesus' first appearance in the synagogue, or during any of Jesus' other speeches. They would have been remembered and talked about, and no doubt different versions of the story would have been told. We cannot assume, as some do, that God miraculously revealed to the New Testament writers exactly what was said, for different gospel writers give different accounts of the same story.

It is helpful to realize that this is the way history was written in the ancient world, as can

The Hardest Question *continued*

be shown from different Greek histories of the same events, as well as from stories in the apocrypha that are told more than once (for example, see how 2 Maccabees 7:7-8 is rewritten in 4 Maccabees 9:29-32). At appropriate junctions in the story, when a speech was expected, the narrator would create a speech from whatever source materials he had, along with his idea of what should have been said.

The text Luke quotes provides a rough outline of Jesus' ministry of preaching, healing, and proclamation of the kingdom, so Luke would have considered it an appropriate speech for Jesus to have made.

