

Jesus Is Dedicated

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: When Joseph and Mary dedicated Jesus, Simeon and Anna praised God because they recognized Jesus was God's provision to bring salvation.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Luke 2:21-39

God's Word is not *exhaustive* in detail—that is, it doesn't tell us everything we might be curious about. But we must understand that God's Word is *sufficient* for telling us all we need to know for a life of faith and obedience. What God has revealed in His Word is more than sufficient to lead us to salvation, and it is more than sufficient to share with others.

Throughout Christian history there have been attempts to speculate on the life of young Jesus. We don't have many details concerning the early life of Christ in the Gospel accounts, but Luke tells us everything we need to know concerning His first years on earth. These concise stories are full of treasures to be mined by careful observation, and Luke's descriptions of these events, including the specific words he uses, help us to know that our redemption comes with a commission to proclaim the salvation that has come.



How have you found the Bible to be sufficient for your faith in and obedience to the Lord?

Group Time

Point 1: Jesus is dedicated to the Lord's service (Luke 2:21-24).

²¹ And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

²² And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord ²³ (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") ²⁴ and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."

Luke mentions Jesus' **circumcision** and **naming** in this passage to highlight Joseph and Mary's obedience to God's word. Their obedience to the commands of God sets the stage for the perfect obedience that their firstborn Son, Jesus, demonstrates in His life. In these details, Luke not only reveals that Jesus has come to identify with God's people but also that God has identified Him as the Savior of the world, because "Jesus" means "Yahweh saves."



What is the meaning or significance behind your name or some of the names in your family?

Luke recorded the events in this passage to show that Jesus is tied into the entire history of the people of Israel. In short, Jesus begins His life as the "ideal Israelite," circumcised on the eighth day by humble, obedient parents and then **consecrated** to the Lord according to the law of Moses. It is clear that Jesus belonged to God from the very beginning of His life, and the rest of Luke's Gospel, indeed all the Gospels, communicate the full reality of this belonging as Jesus fulfills His identity and mission.



How have you been impacted by the humble and faithful obedience of others?

Point 2: Jesus is recognized as the Lord's Messiah (Luke 2:25-32).

²⁵ Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ²⁷ And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, ²⁸ he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

²⁹ "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; ³⁰ for my eyes have seen your salvation ³¹ that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, ³² a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

By the sovereign providence of God, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Simeon was led into the temple where he would meet Jesus. Simeon had waited his whole life for this moment. Up until this point, he was restless, yearning for the comfort and salvation of his people. And then, at last, the Christ-child was before him. In this one breathtaking moment, all of his longings were fulfilled; he held the life of the world in his arms.



How are you encouraged to know that God orchestrates events and "chance" meetings like this?

Simeon's announcement about the Lord's Messiah was good news for all people—both Jew and Gentile. Jesus is the fulfillment of the deepest longings of all people. He is a light to the dark world of the Gentiles and also the glory of God manifested as the promised hope among the Israelites. In this moment of praise, Simeon proclaimed the coming universal dimension of Jesus' redemptive work—salvation has come to all peoples and nations in Jesus Christ.


God Is Faithful: God's faithfulness means He keeps His _____ and always fulfills His _____. God's faithfulness is demonstrated in His fulfillment of the promises He made to _____, Isaac, and Jacob. We reflect God by keeping the promises we make to Him and to others.

Point 3: Jesus is exalted as the One to bring redemption (Luke 2:33-38).

³³ And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. ³⁴ And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed ³⁵ (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

³⁶ And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, ³⁷ and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. ³⁸ And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

Simeon blessed the new parents, but then he turned to Mary to warn her of what was to come. He declared that her Baby would be the cause of people either rising or falling in Israel. Jesus, the Son of God, had come to lift the humble and bring down the self-righteous. He is the One to bring the salvation of God into the world; He came to redeem sinners. Though Simeon accepted Jesus in his arms with joy, many in Israel would oppose him (see Isa. 8:13-15). This would lead to His rejection and crucifixion, yet also to our redemption and salvation.

 Why is the call to follow Jesus in faith so divisive?

In addition to Simeon’s witness and prophetic words about the baby Jesus, Luke introduces a second witness, a prophetess named Anna. Well advanced in age and widowed for years, this seasoned saint demonstrated exemplary piety in the temple and before the Lord. Her example in this encounter is both **informative** and **instructive** for our *worship* and our *witness* to Jesus Christ.



Voices from Church History

“We may note in passing that [Jesus] was never regarded as a mere moral teacher. He did not produce that effect on any of the people who actually met Him. He produced mainly three effects—Hatred—Terror—Adoration. There was no trace of people expressing mild approval.”¹

—C. S. Lewis (1898-1963)

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Luke 2:8-14

Let us not allow the familiarity of the Christmas story involving the shepherds to numb our hearts to the absolute wonder of God's grace. In the narrative, there are several points of which we need to take note. First, in the presence of the angels, the shepherds moved from the dark coldness of night into the brilliant light of God's glory (Luke 2:8-9). In the proclamation of the good news, the shepherds traded in their "great fear" for "great joy" (2:9-10). The great joy is a response to the good news of Jesus Christ, good news "for all the people" (2:10,14).

May our thoughtful reflection on this narrative warm our often-cold hearts. His salvation moves us from the darkness of sin into the glorious light of His righteousness! His salvation moves us from being outcast peasants in fear to experiencing the riches of joy in fellowship with God.



In what ways has believing the gospel moved you from fear to joy?

Day 2: Read Luke 2:15-20

At the beginning of chapter 2, the story begins with an ordered census from Caesar Augustus, a world ruler announcing a decree from his high and lofty throne. However, there is another announcement in chapter 2, and this time it came from messengers of God. The angels declared with great joy that Christ, the King, had come!

It is interesting how God works. On one level, it was a man's schemes (Augustus) who brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem; but it was God—working through Augustus, Joseph, and Mary—who orchestrated the whole event of Christ's birth in order to bring about His will. Jesus has come, and He has come to deliver His people from the burdensome rulers of this world, rulers greater than Caesar—sin and death. God works out His will so that the good news will be made known so people will humble themselves and find Jesus.



How do the circumstances of Jesus' birth shape the way you think about world events and what is reported by news media?

Day 3: Read Luke 2:21-24

One may find it odd that Luke includes a mention of Jesus' circumcision in the narrative of His childhood, even if in passing. However, modern readers must understand that during the Old Testament period, it was customary for males among God's people to be circumcised on the eighth day according to the law as a covenant sign (Gen. 17:12).

What does a covenant sign signify? In Genesis 17, God promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations. Circumcision was a sign to remember God's promise to Abraham and the covenant that God made with Israel. Thus, circumcision was a physical expression of faith in God and a reminder of His promises. Each generation of Israelites would be a testament to the faithfulness of God.

Luke seems to have noted this in passing, but it is important because it tells the reader that Jesus was born under the law and therefore identified with God's people (Gal. 4:4). More importantly, we understand that Jesus fulfilled the law (every bit of it) as the only perfectly faithful descendant of Abraham. Every law was fulfilled. Now we can look to Jesus and say, "God has fulfilled His promise."



How does Luke's recording of details like Jesus' circumcision instill confidence in you about God's ability to work out His plan?

Day 4: Read Luke 2:25-32

Up until this point he was restless, yearning for the comfort and salvation of his people. Simeon had waited his whole life to see the Messiah. And then, at last, the Christ-child was handed to him. In this one breathtaking moment, all of his longings were fulfilled; he held the life of the world in his arms.

As you read this, Simeon is now at rest. Simeon was like a watcher who has now left his assigned post. His duties have been fulfilled. As the passage tells us, Simeon's life came to an end with him at peace because he had seen the fulfillment of God's long-awaited promise.

Isn't it amazing that Luke included this little narrative in his Gospel account, like a personal note? Consider the testimony of a faithful man who searched his whole life for the Savior whom He eventually held in his arms. What a gift the peace of God is.



In what ways should our longing for salvation be similar to Simeon's?

Day 5: Read Luke 2:33-38

As we learn later, Jesus would divide Israel. Jesus lifted the humble and brought down the self-righteous. The contrast between Simeon (a devout man) and the religious leaders later on in the Gospel accounts is astounding. Simeon accepted Jesus in his arms with joy, whereas many in Israel would reject Him in their hearts (see Isa. 8:14-15).

Jesus divides because He compels us to make personal decisions about Him. In Israel, those who rejected Him saw to it that He was crucified, and then the same group dismissed accounts of His resurrection. Those who accepted Him ultimately understood why He was crucified and later were thankful for His death and resurrection. One day, He will return to separate the righteous and unrighteous, once again causing many to rise and fall.



When might division arise because of who Jesus is and what we believe about Him?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- Jesus is dedicated to the Lord's service (Luke 2:21-24).
- Jesus is recognized as the Lord's Messiah (Luke 2:25-32).
- Jesus is exalted as the One to bring redemption (Luke 2:33-38).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



When was the last time someone's praise of Jesus affected you in a notable way?



What can we do to help one another find more joy in our evangelistic efforts?

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Ed Stetzer
Founding Editor

Trevin Wax
General Editor

Brian Dembowczyk
Managing Editor

Daniel Davis
Content Editor

Josh Hayes
Content and Production Editor

Ken Braddy
Manager, Adult Ongoing Bible Studies

Michael Kelley
Director, Groups Ministry

Send questions/comments to:
Content Editor by email to
daniel.davis@lifeway.com or mail to
Content Editor, *The Gospel Project: Adult
Daily Discipleship Guide*, One LifeWay Plaza,
Nashville, TN 37234-0175; or make comments
on the Web at lifeway.com.

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Trevin Wax

General Editor—*The Gospel Project*
AUTHOR OF MULTIPLE BOOKS, INCLUDING
*This Is Our Time: Everyday Myths in
Light of the Gospel*

With this volume of *The Gospel Project*, the storyline of the Bible shifts from the Old Testament to the New, and we enter the era in which God begins to fulfill His promise of salvation through the person and work of Jesus Christ. In the sessions that follow, you'll take a closer look at the context surrounding the birth of Jesus, the theological parallels between Adam and Jesus (the last Adam), as well as the early ministry of Jesus.

Some of these stories will be familiar to you and the rest of your group—the Christmas story, for example, or the story of Jesus' temptation. In the familiar stories, we want to help you see aspects of the Gospel accounts that you may have overlooked. In the less familiar stories, we want to help you see the beauty of Jesus' interaction with all kinds of people with all kinds of needs and all kinds of backgrounds.

Our hope as you study the Scriptures is that you will be drawn to worship Jesus as the Savior and Lord who fulfills God's original intention for us as His people. Here we see a Jesus withstanding temptation, calling disciples, loving the unlovable, and battling the evil one. May your worship of this Savior lead you to faithful obedience to His call in extending grace and mercy and the message of salvation to those around you.

UNIT 19

SESSION 1

1. "Sin," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, gen. eds. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III (IVP, 1998) [Wordsearch].
2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament* (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1992), 376.
3. Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans 10, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Thabiti Anyabwile, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Luke* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 40-41.
2. Jen Wilkin, *In His Image* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 107.

SESSION 3

1. John Piper, "God Is Always Doing 10,000 Things in Your Life," *Desiring God*, January 1, 2013, www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-is-always-doing-10000-things-in-your-life.
2. Martin Luther, *The Magnificat*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
3. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2013), 690.

SESSION 4

1. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1970), 168.
2. Thomas Becon, *The Sermon of Simeon in the Temple*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 5

1. Bernard Gilpin, *A Sermon Preached in the Court at Greenewich*, quoted in *Luke*, ed. Beth Kreitzer, vol. 3 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015) [Wordsearch].
2. Gloria Furman, *Missional Motherhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 200.

UNIT 20

SESSION 1

1. Eric Mason, *Manhood Restored* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2013), 1.
2. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*, trans. John W. Doberstein (SCM Press, 2015), 91.

EASTER SESSION

1. Basil, *On Humility* 20, quoted in 1-2 *Corinthians*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VII in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Russell D. Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 75.

SESSION 2

1. Jackie Hill Perry, *Gay Girl, Good God* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2018), 171.
2. Martin Luther, *The Large Catechism*, trans. Robert H. Fischer (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 9.

SESSION 3

1. Trip Lee, *Rise: Get Up and Live in God's Great Story* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2015), 47.
2. Ambrose, *Concerning Repentance* 1.12.53, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 14.44, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Jerry Bridges, *31 Days Toward Trusting God* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2013) [eBook].

UNIT 21

SESSION 1

1. Fred L. Horton Jr., "Exorcism," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2003), 533.
2. Dexter Maben, "Mark," in *South Asia Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Brian Wintle (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1290.
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4. Dacher Keltner, "Hands On Research: The Science of Touch," *Greater Good Magazine*, September 29, 2010, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/hands_on_research.

SESSION 2

1. See *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, by C. S. Lewis (New York: HarperCollins, 1978), 89.
2. St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, trans. and ed. A Religious of C.S.M.V. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 35.
3. Kim Cash Tate, "Rejected by Friends, Loved by Jesus," *Desiring God*, December 29, 2015, www.desiringgod.org/articles/rejected-by-friends-loved-by-jesus.

SESSION 3

1. "Kawasaki Disease and Heart Transplant: Kendall's Story," Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, April 2012, www.chop.edu/stories/kawasaki-disease-and-heart-transplant-kendalls-story.
2. Andrew Murray, *Humility, in Humility and Absolute Surrender* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2005), 42.
3. "John," in *Africa Study Bible* (Oasis International LTD, 2016), 1534.

SESSION 4

1. Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Commentary on John* 24.23-24, quoted in *John 1-10*, ed. Joel C. Elowsky, vol. IVa in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1286.