

October 2017 Leadership Community Discussion Guide

Thanks to all of you who attended the “You Asked for It” event in September! In that session, we learned a new approach for interpreting a passage of Scripture. Since the best way to learn something is to practice it several times, this month, we are going to work together to use this new approach to interpret a passage of Scripture together. Here is the passage:

Luke 4:16-21

So He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

*¹⁸ “The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
¹⁹ To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.”*

²⁰ Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

Read in isolation, this story of Jesus’ ministry can be hard to grasp. Jesus goes to his local synagogue, stands up in front of the crowd gathered there, and reads from Isaiah. He then tells the crowd that Isaiah’s prophecy is being fulfilled in that very moment in time. This seems like a very significant moment, but why is this scene so important?

To figure this out, let’s walk through the process for interpreting this passage together.

Revelation

First, let’s read the passage immediately before this one, which is Luke 4:1-14. This is the famous story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. We see Jesus fast for 40 days, then face three tests from Satan. Jesus passes these tests. Particularly important are the verses found in Matthew 4:13-15:

¹³Now when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time. ¹⁴Then Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit to Galilee, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding region. ¹⁵And He taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all.

What transformation did Jesus experience after he defeated Satan's attempts to tempt Him?

We can now see that when Jesus walked into the synagogue in Nazareth, it was not just a normal event. In that moment, Jesus was kicking off his ministry to the Jewish people. How does understanding this help you better appreciate the significance of what Jesus did in this passage?

Now let's take a closer look at the prophecy from Isaiah that Jesus read in the synagogue. Let's open our Bibles and read Isaiah 61:1-7. This is a very famous passage in the Old Testament. Written several centuries before Christ's birth, Isaiah was prophesying that a Messiah would come to rescue the Jewish people from oppression and sin. In Jesus' time, this passage was known to all Jewish people. They would read it together in their synagogue and pray for God to send His Messiah to rescue them.

How does studying Isaiah 61 and understanding what it meant to the Jewish people in Jesus' time help you understand the significance of Jesus' actions in the synagogue in Nazareth?

Given what we've learned so far about this passage in Luke, you would expect the crowd listening to Jesus to be overjoyed at His words. The long-awaited Messiah was here to save them from oppression! However, the story takes a very different turn. Let's read Luke 4:22-30:

²²So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" ²³He said to them, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.'" ²⁴Then He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; ²⁶but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian." ²⁸So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, ²⁹and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to

the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff. ³⁰ Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.

Why do you think the people in Nazareth rejected Jesus' teaching on that day?

Finally, let's see what the experts have to say about this passage. Here are John Corzine's thoughts in his *Application Commentary*:

"As was the tradition in those days, Jesus, a visiting Rabbi, was afforded the opportunity to read and comment briefly on Scripture. And the text for that given day being Isaiah 61 – a prophecy concerning the coming Messiah – Jesus first sermon would be about himself. I am so impressed with Jesus. He is the One who is patient with those who are bruised, who listens to those who are blubbing, who continues to take time with those who just can't see, who works with the one who is in bondage. Lord, move me in this direction. Make me more like You. Here, an itinerant Rabbi had opened the Scriptures and shared with the people in such a way that they marveled at the gracious words He spoke. He hadn't come down on them. He hadn't preached at them. Rather, He shared with them in a way they had never heard before."

How do John Corzine's comments help shape your understanding of Luke 4:16-21?

Interpretation

We have gathered some good information on Luke 4:16-21. Let's put it all together.

In 3-4 sentences, try to summarize what you think God is saying in this story in Luke. How does this story fit in with the rest of Luke 4? How has your understanding of the verse changed over the course of this discussion?

Application

Finally, let's see how Luke 4:16-21 speaks directly to us and our situation:

- **Jesus entered into a new level of influence and anointing after passing the test in the wilderness. Are you currently facing some tests in your life? How might God be using these tests to prepare you for something important in the future?**
- **How can we partner with Jesus to preach the gospel to the poor and brokenhearted?**
- **If Jesus was rejected, we can be certain that some people will not listen to us when we share our faith. Are you dealing with any situations like this? How can you respond in a loving way to them?**

Announcements

We are very excited to announce “The Other Side,” our upcoming Community Series that will launch in January 2018! Just as we did this past January with the “Born for This” series, “The Other Side” will feature a daily devotional that everyone can use for the duration of the series, excellent small group videos and discussion, and of course powerful preaching from Pastor Steve on the weekends.

“The Other Side” will focus on adversity – how we as Christians can trust God to make it through life’s difficult times, not just surviving adversity, but coming out of it stronger! We will have a lot more information for you in the coming months. In November, each small group hub is going to have a “Vision Night” where we will lay out the plan for this series and more. Your small group champion/ministry team leader will have more specifics for you in the near future.

As you know, our annual Community Series is a time when many people get connected at Church of the King for the first time. Every year, we hear stories of folks who took a step of faith and joined a small group, only to see God transform their lives as they developed relationships with other believers.

Because we expect so many new people to step out and join small groups in January, we are starting to prepare now to meet the need. We are asking all of our small group hosts to come up with a strategy to multiply your group for “The Other Side” series in January. Start praying now about the best person(s) in your current small group who can step out and start a new small group in January.

Once you’ve identified those in your group who will step out and host another group in January, you can send them to one of the upcoming small group host training events that will take place on multiple dates in November and December. We’ll have those dates available for you by the end of October.